

**PORTAGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL ROOM #1136, 8135 S. WESTNEDGE, PORTAGE, MICHIGAN 49002
SEPTEMBER 23, 2024, 6:30 PM
AGENDA**

VISION STATEMENT

An exceptional, continuously improving learning culture with high expectations, committed to all!

MISSION STATEMENT

Portage Public Schools will educate all students to achieve their potential.

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II. Revisions/Approval of Agenda

Recommended Motion:

Motion offered by _____, seconded by _____, that the Board of Education approve the Agenda as printed (or as amended).

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III. Reports

1. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Bond Project Update

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VI. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes
 - a. September 9, 2024 Committee of the Whole Work Session

**PORTAGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORK SESSION
SEPTEMBER 9, 2024**

The Committee of the Whole Work Session of the Board of Education of Portage Public Schools held on Monday, September 9, 2024, was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Van Antwerp. The meeting was held in Room #1136 of Portage Central High School. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Board Trustees Present: Emily Crawford, Ean Hamilton, Kimberly Larson, Terri Novaria, Bo Snyder, Randy Van Antwerp

Board Trustees Absent: Keith Crowell

REVISIONS/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion offered by Mrs. Novaria, seconded by Mrs. Crawford, that the Board of Education approve the agenda as printed.

The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

Bond Project Update

Mr. Johnny Edwards, Assistant Superintendent of Operations, provided an update on elementary bond projects.

At the new Central Elementary site, work continues on mechanical/electrical/plumbing rough-ins, stairway work and exterior brick veneer installation. Drywall work begins next week.

At the new Haverhill Elementary site, work continues on mechanical/electrical/plumbing rough-ins, framing on the first floor, roofing, and exterior brick veneer work. Framing of the second floor will begin this week, and block walls are going up in the kitchen and boiler room.

For the Woodland Elementary project, the design development stage of the project is complete. A gallery walk through for staff and the community will take place on October 15. The design development budget is within the anticipated projection.

The community is invited to visit the portagebond.com site for updates/photos of the construction projects.

Mr. Edwards addressed questions from Trustees.

OTHER

Superintendent Bielang shared some positive news - our current student enrollment numbers are up slightly from projections, and we've had a great start to the school year across the District.

COMMENTS OR COMMUNICATIONS

President Van Antwerp opened the floor to public comment, and hearing none, he opened the floor to Trustee comments.

Ms. Larson has enjoyed seeing the marching band perform.

Mrs. Novaria was present at one of our elementary schools on the first day for students. The atmosphere was very positive and energetic, a great way to start the school year.

Mr. Snyder remarked this is a very exciting time of the year.

CONSENT AGENDA

President Van Antwerp presented the following Consent Agenda item for approval by the Board of Education: the August 19, 2024 Regular Business Meeting and policy changes – new Policy 2264 and revised Policy 2266, as presented.

There being no objections, the motion carried unanimously.

ASSURANCE OF DISTRICT PERFORMANCE

Monitoring Report 2.6, Asset Protection

Motion offered by Ms. Hamilton, seconded by Mrs. Novaria, that the Board of Education accept Monitoring Report 2.6, Asset Protection, as a reasonable interpretation and evidence of compliance with policy.

Superintendent Bielang highlighted aspects of his report.

The motion carried unanimously.

Monitoring Report 2.10, Communication & Support to the Board

Motion offered by Ms. Larson, seconded by Mr. Snyder, that the Board of Education accept Monitoring Report 2.10, Communication and Support to the Board, as a reasonable interpretation and evidence of compliance with policy.

Superintendent Bielang briefly reviewed the report and thanked those that contribute to the monitoring reports throughout the school year.

Board members were appreciative of the support they receive.

The motion carried unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

New Teacher Appointments

Motion offered by Mr. Snyder seconded by Mrs. Novaria, that the Board of Education approve the appointment of the following teachers for Portage Public Schools:

- **Lauren Flenorl – Engagement Specialist at Haverhill Elementary**
- **Jeanne Friedman – Latin Teacher at Northern High School**
- **Jennifer Wilke – Shared Time Physical Education Teacher**
- **Kylie Wisniewski – Physical Education Teacher at Central Middle School**
- **Adam Wright – Shared Time Physical Education Teacher**
- **Carrie Bellen – Fifth Grade Teacher at Angling Road Elementary**
- **Trevor Cunningham – Math Teacher at North Middle School**

Mr. Brad Galin, Director of Human Resources, shared background information on the teacher appointees.

The motion carried unanimously.

The teachers were welcomed to the District!

With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Atkinson,
Recording Secretary

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IX. Action Items

1. National School Lunch Week Proclamation

Recommended Motion

Motion offered by _____, seconded by _____, that the Board of Education approve the National School Lunch Week Proclamation, as presented.



PROCLAMATION
NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH WEEK
October 14-18, 2024

WHEREAS, it is with great respect for the accomplishments of Portage’s school food service leads, servers, cashiers and driver personnel and substitutes that we commemorate October 14-18, 2024 as National School Lunch Week. During this special observance, we encourage all citizens to recognize the dedication and skill of our school food service employees; and

WHEREAS, each day, food service employees prepare and serve thousands of lunches. This is in addition to ordering, storing, and expediting each menu item to each location, adhering to food safety, sanitation, and nutritional guidelines as well as giving each customer the time and consideration to listen, hear and deliver what they are looking for each day. Fortunately, we have exemplary professionals who have devoted their careers to providing high quality service to our children and staff; and

WHEREAS, on behalf of our students and staff, it is a pleasure to commend the women and men who accept and meet the challenges of school food service. The observance of School Lunch Week is a welcome opportunity to thank these patient, caring, skilled public servants. Those involved in this pursuit should be very proud of their contribution to education.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, that we proudly commemorate October 14-18, 2024 as National School Lunch Week, and we commend everyone who has contributed to the successful operation of our lunch program. By working together, we can make a difference in every student’s life.

Proclaimed this 23rd day of September, 2024
Portage Public Schools’ Board Of Education

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2. School Bus Safety Week Proclamation

Recommended Motion

Motion offered by _____, seconded by _____, that the Board of Education approve the School Bus Safety Week Proclamation, as presented.



**PROCLAMATION
SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK
October 21-25, 2024**

WHEREAS, It is with great respect for the accomplishments of Portage’s professional school bus drivers, mechanics, office staff, and manager that we commemorate October 21-25, 2024 as School Bus Safety Week. During this special observance, we encourage all citizens to recognize the dedication and skill of school transportation employees; and

WHEREAS, coordinating the countless routes, driving so many miles, and supervising the dozens of students on each vehicle requires an outstanding effort. Fortunately, we have exemplary professionals who have devoted their careers to transporting our children safely; and

WHEREAS, our fleet and staff have a proud tradition of excellence during annual safety inspections by the Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Inspectors; and

WHEREAS, on behalf of our young people, it is a pleasure to commend the women and men who accept and meet the challenge of school transportation. The observance of School Bus Safety Week is a welcome opportunity to thank these patient, skilled, and caring public servants. Those involved in this pursuit should be very proud of their contribution to education; and

WHEREAS, this special week serves as a fitting time to urge all drivers to become more aware of school bus safety regulations. Serious injuries and deaths occur when motorists fail to stop for school buses. Now that the school year has begun, we remind drivers to be cautious and attentive around school buses. It is also an appropriate time to ask students to listen to their bus drivers and pay close attention to bus safety rules.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, that we proudly commemorate October 21-25, 2024 as School Bus Safety Week, and we commend everyone who has contributed to the successful operation of our school buses. We also encourage all citizens to drive carefully and to be alert around school buses. By working together, we can make this the safest school year ever.

Proclaimed this 23rd day of September, 2024
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3. Red Ribbon Week Proclamation

Recommended Motion

Motion offered by _____, seconded by _____, that the Board of Education approve the Red Ribbon Week Proclamation, as presented.



**PROCLAMATION
RED RIBBON WEEK
October 23-31, 2024**

WHEREAS, tobacco, alcohol, prescription drug abuse and other drug usage among young people is a serious concern; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that a visible and unified effort of education and prevention be continued to reduce the demand for drugs; and

WHEREAS, children of parents who talk to their teens about drugs are less likely to use drugs than those who don't; and

WHEREAS, the National Red Ribbon Campaign will be celebrated in communities throughout America during "**Red Ribbon Week**", October 23-31, 2024; and

WHEREAS, business, government, law enforcement, schools, religious institutions, service organizations, youth, physicians, senior citizens, the military, sports teams, and individuals will demonstrate their commitment to drug-free, healthy lifestyles by wearing and displaying red ribbons during this week-long campaign; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Portage Public Schools does hereby proclaim October 23-31, 2024 as **RED RIBBON WEEK**, and encourage Portage citizens to participate in drug prevention education activities, showing our commitment to a drug-free community through education about the dangers of drug abuse, and by setting a good example.

Proclaimed this 23rd day of September, 2024
Portage Public Schools' Board of Education

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IX. Action Items

4. National Principals Month Proclamation

Recommended Motion

Motion offered by _____, seconded by _____, that the Board of Education approve the National Principals Month Proclamation, as presented.



PROCLAMATION PRINCIPALS MONTH October 2024

WHEREAS, energetic and inspiring school leadership is essential to Michigan's schools in order to prepare students for success, both during their PreK-12 years and beyond; and,

WHEREAS, principals are entrusted with the educational development of young people and serve as educational visionaries, instructional leaders, assessment experts, community builders, facility managers, special programs administrators, and guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives; and,

WHEREAS, principals set the academic tone for their schools and work collaboratively with teachers and parents to develop and implement a clear mission, high curriculum standards, and performance goals; and

WHEREAS, principals play a vital role in the success of students by creating school environments that facilitate great teaching and learning, as well as continuous school improvement; and,

WHEREAS, much of the success of PreK-12 students can be attributed to principals who act as the liaison between the school and the community it serves, ensuring that parents and the community are aware of student and school achievements; and,

WHEREAS, the celebration of Principals Month honors elementary, middle, and high school principals and recognizes the importance of school leadership in ensuring every child has access to a high-quality education; and,

WHEREAS, during this month, we join educators, parents, and students throughout Michigan to raise awareness of the importance of educational leadership and to recognize and thank the hard-working principals in Michigan schools who set exemplary standards of service;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Education of Portage Public Schools hereby proclaims October 2024 as Principals Month in the Portage Public School District.

Proclaimed this 23rd day of September, 2024
Portage Public Schools' Board Of Education

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X. Discussion Items

1. Revisions to Policy 5111.01 (BL 0131.1)



Mark T. Bielang
Superintendent
Phone: 269.323.5147
Fax: 269.323.5149
mbielang@portageps.org

To: Board of Education
From: Mark 
Date: September 4, 2024
Re: Policy Revisions
Cc: Executive Team; Principals and Assistant Principals

The proposed revisions are to Operational Policy 5111.01 - Homeless Students.. The agenda packet includes our current policy with the proposed revisions in color print.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines enrollment as “attending classes and participating fully in school activities.” Currently an unaccompanied homeless youth’s caregiver, in the absence of a parent/legal guardian, cannot authorize enrollment or participation for that homeless student. We see this as a barrier. The addition of the proposed language eliminates that barrier and allows the caregiver to authorize enrollment and participation in school activities.

The proposed changes were reviewed by the appropriate district-level administrators and legal counsel, modeled after language used in other districts, and is consistent with the intent of the laws governing homeless students.

Book	Policy Manual
Section	
Title	draft 9.23.24 HOMELESS STUDENTS
Code	po5111.01
Status	
Adopted	September 14, 2015
Last Revised	November 26, 2018

5111.01 - HOMELESS STUDENTS

Definitions

Students who are identified as meeting the federal definition of "homeless" will be provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the same manner as all other students of the District. To that end, homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. The District shall establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness. The District shall regularly review and revise its policies, including school discipline policies that may impact homeless students, including those who may be a member of any of the Protected Classes (Policy 2260).

Homeless children and youth are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and include children and youth who meet any of the following criteria:

- A. share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason
- B. live in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- C. live in emergency or transitional shelters
- D. are abandoned in hospitals
- E. have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; or
- F. live in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing¹, bus or train station or similar setting

Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, an unaccompanied youth includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Services to Homeless Children and Youth

The District will provide services to homeless students that are comparable to other students in the District, including:

- A. transportation services;
- B. public preschool programs and other educational programs and services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including:
 1. programs for children with disabilities;
 2. programs for English Learners (ELs) (i.e., students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP));
 3. programs in career and technical education;
 4. programs for gifted and talented students;

5. school nutrition programs; and
6. before - and after-school programs.

The Superintendent will appoint a Liaison for Homeless Children who will perform the duties as assigned by the Superintendent. Additionally, the Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth as well as with community and District personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.

School Stability

Maintaining a stable school environment is crucial to a homeless student's success in school. To ensure stability, the District must make school placement determinations based on the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth based on student-centered factors. The District must:

- A. continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and for the remainder of the academic year even if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or
- B. enroll the student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

When determining a child or youth's best interest, the District must assume that keeping the homeless student in the school of origin is in that student's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parent or guardian, or the student if s/he is an unaccompanied youth. The school of origin is the school the student attended or enrolled in when permanently housed, including a public preschool. The school of origin also includes the designated receiving school at the next level for feeder school patterns, when the student completes the final grade level at the school of origin.

When determining the student's best interest, the District must also consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless students and give priority to the request of the student's parent or guardian, or youth (if an unaccompanied youth). The District also considers the school placement of siblings when making this determination.

If the District finds that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth, the District must provide the individual with a written explanation and reason for the determination in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. This written explanation will include appeal rights and be provided in a timely manner.

Immediate Enrollment

The District has an obligation to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless students. A school chosen on the basis of the best interest determination must immediately enroll the homeless student, even if the student does not have the documentation typically necessary for enrollment, such as immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, proof of guardianship, birth certificate or previous academic records. The homeless student must also be enrolled immediately regardless of whether the student missed application or enrollment deadlines during the period of homelessness or has outstanding fines or fees.

The enrolling school must immediately contact the school last attended by the homeless student to obtain relevant academic or other records. If the student needs immunization or other health records, the enrolling school must immediately refer the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth to the local liaison, who will help obtain the immunizations, screenings or other required health records. Records usually maintained by the school must be kept so that they are available in a timely fashion if the child enters a new school or district. These records include immunization or other required health records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs. Procedures for inter-State records transfer between schools should be taken into account in order to facilitate immediate enrollment.

In addition, the District will also make sure that once identified for services, the homeless student is attending classes and not facing barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career, and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs (if available). **In the absence of a parent/legal guardian, an unaccompanied homeless youth's caregiver may authorize enrollment and participation in the**

previously mentioned activities. Should the unaccompanied homeless youth act as their own caregiver, living independently, they can authorize enrollment and participation in school activities themselves. Additionally, the District should consider giving homeless children and youths priority if there is a waitlist for these schools, programs, and activities.

Transportation

The District provides homeless students with transportation services that are comparable to those available to non-homeless students. The District also provides or arranges for transportation to and from the school of origin at the parent or guardian's request or the liaison's request in the case of unaccompanied youth. Transportation is arranged promptly to allow for immediate enrollment and will not create barriers to a homeless student's attendance, retention, and success.

- A. If the homeless student continues to live in the District where the school of origin is located, transportation will be provided or arranged for the student's transportation to or from the school of origin.
- B. If the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his/her education at the school of origin (which is in the District), the District and the district in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin. If the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs will be shared equally.
- C. When the student obtains permanent housing, transportation shall be provided to and from the school of origin until the end of the school year.

The District determines the mode of transportation in consultation with the parent or guardian and based on the best interest of the student.

In accordance with Federal law, the above transportation requirements still apply during the resolution of any dispute. The District will work with the State to resolve transportation disputes with other districts. If the disputing district is in another State, the District will turn to the State for assistance as Federal guidance says that both States should try to arrange an agreement for the districts.

Dispute Resolution

Homeless families and youths have the right to challenge placement and enrollment decisions. If a dispute arises between a school and a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth regarding eligibility, school selection, or enrollment of a homeless student, the District must follow its dispute resolution procedures, consistent with the State's procedures. If such a dispute occurs, the District will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought pending final resolution of the dispute, including all appeals. The student will receive all services for which they are eligible until all disputes and appeals are resolved.

Pursuant to State, District and Board of Education policies, the District will provide the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of all decisions regarding school selection and enrollment made by the school, District, or State, along with a written explanation of appeal rights.

The District's notice and written explanation about the reason for its decision will include, at a minimum, an explanation of how the school reached its decision regarding eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, including 1) a description of the proposed or refused action by the school, 2) an explanation of why the action is proposed or refused, 3) a description of other options the school considered and why those options were rejected, 4) a description of any other relevant factors to the school's decision and information related to the eligibility or best interest determination such as the facts, witnesses, and evidence relied upon and their sources and 5) an appropriate timeline to ensure deadlines are not missed. The District must also include contact information for the Liaison and the State Coordinator, and a brief description of their roles. The District will also refer the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth to the Liaison, who will carry out the dispute resolution process.

The District ensures that all decisions and notices are drafted in a language and format appropriate for low-literacy, limited vision readers, and individuals with disabilities. For children and youth and/or parents or guardians who are English learners or whose dominant language is not English, the District will provide translation and interpretation services in connection with all phases of the dispute resolution process pursuant to federal laws. The District will also provide electronic notices via email if the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth have access to email followed by a written notice provided in person or sent by mail.

Homeless Children in Preschool

Homeless preschool-aged children and their families shall be provided equal access to the educational services for which they are eligible, including preschool programs, including Head Start programs, administered by the District. Additionally, the homeless child must remain in the public preschool of origin unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest. When making such a decision on the student's best interest, the District takes into account the same factors as it does for any student, regardless of age. It also considers preschool age-specific factors, such as 1) the child's attachment to preschool teachers and staff; 2) the impact of school climate on the child, including school safety; the quality and availability of services to meet the child's needs, including health, developmental and social-emotional needs; and 3) travel time to and from school.

The District must also provide transportation services to the school of origin for a homeless child attending preschool. It is the District's responsibility to provide the child with transportation to the school of origin even if the homeless preschooler who is enrolled in a public preschool in the District moves to another district that does not provide widely available or universal preschool.

Public Notice

In addition to notifying the parent or guardian of the homeless student or the unaccompanied youth of the applicable rights described above, the District shall post public notice of educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness in each school. In addition, the District shall post public notice of the McKinney-Vento rights in places that homeless populations frequent, such as shelters, soup kitchens, and libraries in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians and unaccompanied youths.

Records

The local liaison will assist the homeless students and their parent(s) or guardian(s) or unaccompanied homeless students in their efforts to provide documentation to meet State and local requirements for entry into school.

All records for homeless students shall be maintained, subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Policy 8330, and in such a manner so that they are available in a timely fashion and can be transferred promptly to the appropriate parties, as required. Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, information regarding a homeless student's living situation is not considered directory information and must be provided the same protections as other non-directory personally identifiable information (PII) contained in student education records under FERPA. The District shall incorporate practices to protect student privacy and in accordance with the provisions of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA).

No Board policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children.

Note:

¹ According to nonregulatory guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), standards for adequate housing may vary by locality. Please see ED guidance for factors to consider when determining whether a child or youth is living in "substandard housing."

Education for Homeless Children and Youth Programs, Non-Regulatory Guidance, U.S. Department of Education (ED), Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, at A-3 (July 27, 2016).

Revised 6/26/17, 10/14/24

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Legal 42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq. (McKinney - Vento Homeless Assistance Act)