

Date: June 7, 2023

To: Linus Guillory

From: Liza O'Connell

Re: DRAFT "Equal Educational Opportunities" Policy (has been called "Life of the School Policy")

Thank you to members of the Policy subcommittee for the opportunity to share some thinking regarding a **draft** "Equal Educational Opportunities" Policy. As yet, I have only taken a cursory view of existing PSB Policies regarding this topic, and some targeted work to cross reference our Policies with district procedures (and existing state and federal laws and regulations) would be required. With all that in mind, please find a general narrative that may reinforce our commitment to ensure equitable student participation in the life of a Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) student.

In the Public Schools of Brookline, the School Committee is dedicated to creating and sustaining inclusive classrooms, schools, and systems that foster a sense of belonging for each and every student. Each child's unique path to achievement is supported in academically and programmatically rich environments, including clubs, activities and other holistic experiences that address individual student needs. **It is illegal to discriminate against a person with a disability.**

At the core of our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work is our commitment to disrupt systemic, institutional biases within our school system that currently limit or impede opportunity or access for underrepresented and/or minoritized students. This work requires continuous learning so that we can identify, examine, and confront language, practices, procedures, and policies that directly or indirectly promote or sustain inequitable outcomes. To this end, the district adheres to all state and federal mandates allowing system-wide access to all school activities, with the provision of reasonable accommodations based on individual student need.

In addition, with recognition for the diversified characteristics and needs of our students, and with the desire to be responsive to them, the School Committee will make every effort to protect the dignity of students as individuals. It will offer careful consideration and sympathetic understanding of their personal feelings, particularly with reference to their race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or physical and intellectual differences. To accomplish this, the Committee and its staff will make every effort to comply with the letter and the spirit of the Massachusetts equal educational opportunities law which prohibits discrimination in public school admissions and programs. This law reads as follows:

“No student shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and course of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. This will mean that every student will be given equal opportunity in school admission, admissions to courses, course content, guidance, and extracurricular and athletic activities. All implementing provisions issued by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in compliance with this law will be followed.”

Finally, the Public Schools of Brookline does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, active military/veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, employment policies, and other administered programs and activities. The Public Schools of Brookline requires all employees and students to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner with respect to their fellow employees, students, and all members of the school community.

Legal References:

Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964

DESE Regulations 603 CMR 26:00 and DESE Regulations 603 CMR 28.00

Cross Reference:

PSB Discrimination and Harassment Policy

Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act