

Executive Summary: Student Participation in School Board Governance

Proposal:

Mrs. Angove, Chairperson of CIT, would like to propose a discussion by the CIT Committee of ways that students can have voice in the actions and decisions made by Board members on their behalf. Administration has considered the possibilities and has several options to put forth for discussion.

Option One: The BOD could adopt policy appointing one or two student members. The policy would be drafted to describe the specific responsibilities and expectations of the student representative(s).

Advantages to this process would be a formal experience in preparing for and speaking at a public meeting which would help to educate students about local governance. In addition, the student(s) would have the opportunity to speak formally on any issue in front of the BOD at the time of the discussion. Disadvantages are that not every school would have the opportunity to be represented and many times a student representative might hesitate to speak since it would be difficult to represent the interests of students that are not from their own school. In addition, the formal process could tend to be intimidating which might inhibit the Board receiving the desired input from the student representatives.

The practice of appointing student representatives is followed by several PA districts. Sample policies from some of those districts are attached for review.

Option Two: The BOD could adopt policy that would allow them to appoint one student from each attendance area who would serve on one of the four committees. Students would prepare for the committee meetings and have the opportunity to speak and interact with fewer Board members in a less formal setting than the actual Board meeting.

Advantages to this process would again include a formal experience in preparing for and speaking at a public meeting which would help to educate students about local governance. These smaller settings would perhaps be less intimidating and would give the opportunity for students to ask questions about issues. It would also be possible to represent all four attendance areas. Disadvantages include limiting the students to one particular area of discussion thus allowing only one attendance area to express opinions about issues for that committee. Again, the student might hesitate to speak up, especially if the discussion veers from the expected and they feel unprepared to interact because of a lack of experience with extemporaneous speaking or a lack of familiarity with the discussion topic.

Option Three: The BOD could make use of the existing School Improvement Team student representatives in each high school building, including the Warren County Career Center, if desired. The central office administration would propose to host a series of six meetings in October, November, January, February, March/April and May where a student representative from each building would report to the WCCC for

a morning workshop. Various members of the CO staff would lead portions of the workshops so that students would develop a sense of the work that is done to prepare for the BOD meetings and have someone who could go over the agenda with them and explain some of the issues that are in front of the BOD. Students would then have the opportunity to interact with each other in discussion and debate and work together to prepare a monthly statement to be shared with the BOD. The BOD could simply add an item on the agenda for the student report for the students to share their report which would include comments upon issues that they have identified as important to themselves and their peers. Policy could be used to support this mechanism for student involvement, but would not be required which would mean that the Option Three would provide more flexibility for the BOD to adapt the model quickly if the desired results were not being achieved.

Advantages to this approach include the opportunity to involve students from all four attendance areas, the chance to educate students about the information placed before them and the time to formulate positions and prepare clear and articulate statements for the BOD. In addition, students could attend the meetings, but not be obligated to stay for the entire meeting if things ran late or there were conflicting school activities that they are involved in during the evenings. Finally, the students, by virtue of being involved in the School Improvement Teams have a place to share their information from the BOD meetings and gather information to support the ideas that they offer to the BOD. Disadvantages include that the student would not be part of the group at the Board table and would lack the means to participate in discussions outside of their presentation unless invited to do so by the BOD President.

Financial Implications: There would be no additional costs to the district for any of these options.

Considerations: The administration would suggest that the BOD consider two questions in examining these options.

- 1) Which approach is going to provide the BOD with the best input from the student body?
- 2) Which approach will provide the best learning opportunity for students?