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NEW HAMPSHIRE
SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION
Incorporated 1946

June 2005

*“Only together can
we really make a
difference.”*

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*f*OCUS on New Hampshire School Boards

Volume 2, Number 6

Policy Pointers:

NHSBA to provide new sample policies to implement New Hampshire's updated Minimum Standards For Public School Approval

The most pressing issue for school boards this summer is the need to address new policy requirements set forth in the new Minimum Standards for School Approval adopted by the State Board of Education on May 18, which become effective July 1, 2005.

Adoption of these rules means significant changes, and likely increased costs, to local school boards. We have been advised by the New Hampshire Department of Education that new policies need to be in place by the start of the next school year to address the new standards. In addition, school boards need to be sure that their superintendents are creating and/or revamping the appropriate administrative procedures to implement the policy changes that are required.

The new set of Minimum Standards run many pages, and encompass many issues. NHSBA is working pro-actively so that all of our member boards will have the new sample policies that are needed to meet the new requirements.

The key areas that need to be addressed in either new or revised school board policies (and where NHSBA will be providing new or revised sample policies) are as follows:

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Extended Learning Opportunities

Prevalent throughout the rules is the theme of extended learning opportunities. These opportunities have commonly been referenced as “real world learning.” The thrust of these rules is to allow students to

earn credit in settings and coursework outside of the regular curriculum.

The stated intent of extended learning opportunities is to allow increased flexibility in curriculum, and to meet the needs of non-traditional students. (However, the rules are largely devoid of guidance on how this flexibility would be appropriately exercised by local school districts.)

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Culture & Climate

A new requirement in the rules is that that all school board policies must now reflect the following

- Acknowledgement of diversity and respect for differences among individuals
- Shared ownership and responsibility for the success of the school among students, their families, and the community
- Student leadership through involvement in decision-making
- Respectful use of language and behavior by all school members that is void of ethnic, racial, and sexual stereotypes and biases.

Kindergarten

The rules urge every school district to strive to offer a kindergarten program to every eligible student.

Class Size


The rules reduce class size requirements as follows:

- kindergarten – grade two: 20 students

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or fewer per teacher (previous rules stated 25 students or less)

- grades 3-5, 25 students or fewer per teacher (previously 30 students or less in grades 3-12)
- middle school and senior high school: 30 students or fewer (no change)

The stated intent of these new rules is to track much of the educational research which shows increased student achievement at the lower grade levels with reductions in class size. The rules, however, do not address any associated issues with increased personnel or building costs.

School Year

The new rules contain an alternative to the current requirement of 180 days for a standard school year. Under

the new rules, each elementary school may optionally define a school year of at least 945 hours of instructional time, and each middle and senior high school may optionally define a school year of at least 990 hours of instructional time.

The stated intent of these alternative rules is to provide local school districts increased flexibility in structuring the school year.

Other important policy implications

The new Minimum Standards also have potential new policy requirements in the areas of professional development, health, nutrition, physical fitness, school facilities, community involvement, assessment, and accountability. NHSBA is in the process of examining these areas and developing appropriate policy language.

NHSBA presents...

Practitioner's Guide to the New Minimum Standards and Policy Compliance

Thursday, August 4, 2005 - 9:00 am – 11:30 am (light breakfast) - Local Government Center, Concord

This workshop is for school board members, superintendents, and SAU office administrators who assist with board policy development.

Practitioner's Guide to New Minimum Standards—Overview of standards and presentation of major changes

NHSBA Sample Policies—New sample policies address the key areas of the new minimum standards

NHSBA Online Policy Resource—Introduction and tour of NHSBA's new online policy database