

Zimbra

Policy Meeting -- Written Testimony -- Policy 203

From : Michael Gorman [REDACTED]
Subject : Policy Meeting -- Written Testimony -- Policy 203
To : schoolboard@philasd.org

Wed, Nov 03, 2021 02:02 PM

WARNING: This message originated from outside the School District of Philadelphia.
DO NOT CLICK links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and are expecting the email.

Dear Board Members-

I am writing to you regarding Policy 203 -- Immunizations & Communicable Diseases.

I think that the discussion and implementation of this policy is of increased importance due to the extreme circumstances and procedures that have followed from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also important as we are increasingly differentiating childrens' experiences in and access to school based on whether or not they have received a non-required vaccine. Indeed, it already feels like a mandate for students even if it is not.

"All kids in Pennsylvania have the right to high quality public education. This isn't a matter of opinion. It's the law."-- Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
(<https://twitter.com/PFTLocal3/status/1455904933669220355>)

Clearly, vaccination programs are an important part of keeping school communities safe for everyone. However, we have also learned on a broad scale the damage caused by denying access to in-person education. As a result, the Board should not allow mandated vaccine programs to move beyond fully approved (e.g. not EUA) sterilizing vaccines that prevent almost all infections and prevent onward transmissions. There must also remain room for exemptions based on a number of factors, including natural immunity (as there is in PA with Chickenpox).

We are already starting to see this program slip. PDPH and SDP have implemented protocols that segregate children based on their vaccine status for COVID-19, and it needs to stop. Certainly well before there is a new vaccine mandate. Our current experience to date (as well as many other districts around the world), where the 5-11 age group was unvaccinated and there has been no mandate for 12 and older students, already demonstrates that schools are safe from the COVID perspective. In addition, unvaccinated adults remain fully employed by the district. What would be the public health rationale for mandating vaccines in kids, where a mandate would preclude them from attending school, in the context of unvaccinated teachers and coaches maintaining their roles within the district?

There are policies in place to encourage vaccination. We make unvaccinated students jump through numerous testing protocols (which anecdotally have not proven effective at slowing the spread of disease) and require extensive quarantine protocols that further limit access to education (also without a clear public health benefit).

In listening to the FDA Advisory Panel debate, a number of experts convened by FDA raised concerns that the pediatric vaccine would be mandated which could have longer term, unintended negative consequences.

Moreover, based on the adult vaccination experience that we saw in Philly, the unfortunate possibility of pediatric COVID vaccination will be that access will NOT be equal (already some pediatrician groups are offering appointments, others are not, and appointments are already filling up rapidly), disadvantaged communities will lag, some student communities will have a lower vaccination rate than their counterparts.

Are we as a community ready to implement a practice that will most likely disproportionately affect these communities when schools are already operating safely?

As I mentioned earlier, we saw on a broad scale the negative impact that holding kids out of schools can have on them and their communities. We should encourage vaccinations, and we MUST remove hurdles by setting up vaccine clinics at schools -- if it is mandated to attend school, then the District MUST play a significant role in ensuring every child has access.

We can also maintain testing policies for unvaccinated students to both encourage vaccination and reassure the rest of the community regarding COVID safety but at baseline the SDP vaccination policy in all facets should seek to maximize access to a public school education in Philadelphia and only remove it as an absolute last resort.

Thank You,
Michael Gorman

Zimbra



Written testimony for Policy Meeting--Policy 115 CTE

From : Georgia Kioukis [REDACTED]

Wed, Nov 03, 2021 01:59 PM

Subject : Written testimony for Policy Meeting--Policy 115 CTE

To : schoolboard@philasd.org

WARNING: This message originated from outside the School District of Philadelphia.
DO NOT CLICK links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and are expecting the email.

Name: Georgia Kioukis (*pronounced "key-oh-kiss"*)

District Parent and Parent & Community Advisory Council member

I'd like to offer support for policy **115** Career and Technical Education and urge the District to continue to provide high-quality opportunities for students to explore CTE while in high school as well as supports to transition to post-secondary next steps. The District should also continue to focus on deepening and expanding its partnerships with business sectors, non-profit organizations, and post-secondary institutions to provide students in CTE with rigorous academic preparation, curriculum, and instruction; and strategies for post-secondary success, including strong social supports and dual enrollment programs that allow students to receive high school and college credits simultaneously.

Thank you.

Zimbra

Written testimony for Policy Meeting--Policy 226 Searches

From : Georgia Kioukis [REDACTED]

Wed, Nov 03, 2021 04:03 PM

Subject : Written testimony for Policy Meeting--Policy 226 Searches**To :** schoolboard@philasd.org

WARNING: This message originated from outside the School District of Philadelphia.
DO NOT CLICK links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and are expecting the email.

Name: Georgia Kioukis (*pronounced "key-oh-kiss"*)
District Parent and Parent & Community Advisory Council member

The search policy could be viewed as a violation of the 4th amendment. How will the District ensure that any searches are NOT "retaliatory, discriminatory, or capricious"? How do students get informed of their rights during searches? Where is the accountability for those conducting the searches?

Thank you.

November 4, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting

Good Evening Board Members,

I'm a civics teacher at an underfunded Philly school and co-founder of PA Youth Vote. Thank you for discussing a voter education policy today.

I want to briefly answer the good questions that Dr. McColgan and Ms. Danzy asked at last week's action meeting, namely what expectations we have for civic education at all grades and why we need to add a policy.

We have very few practical civics skills in the curriculum, especially before senior year. There is some content about the importance of voting in the 4th and 5th grade. That's not to say that many individual teachers don't teach the importance of civic engagement at multiple grade levels, but they do so without the official sanction of the district. This is too important to be left to the discretion of enlightened teachers willing to take a risk.

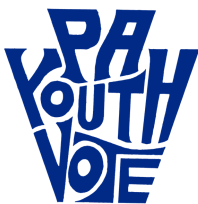
There has always been a civics class in 12th grade, but until recently, it was a Prentice Hall textbook version of government devoid of any discussion about the issues that impact our students. I'm working with our Office of Curriculum to develop a new "Action Civics" curriculum that incorporates real life research and advocacy skills to address local issues. Shout out to the great work by the Social Studies Office! They have implemented a "Voter Champion" program with paid staff members to bottom-line practical student voter registration and ballot education before each election.

I am thankful for these fantastic steps forward. They will make a real difference, but only if they are made permanent by official policy that both holds schools and educators responsible for teaching civic skills, and has their back if they are attacked for teaching the truth and empowering our students. I know that adding 8,000 informed Philly public school students to the voting roles each year will make some people nervous, as it should--but I believe this is the job of every school district, in every county.

Philadelphia has the opportunity to lead the state by instituting a strong Voter Education and Registration Policy. Other districts will follow our lead, and alongside the grassroots work of students, educators, and organizations, we'll grow powerful life-long voters that policy-makers can no longer ignore when making decisions about such issues as equitable school funding.

I'd like to submit our [Model Voter Education and Registration Policy](#) and would be glad to discuss it further.

Thank you,
Thomas Quinn



Why Support Voter Registration Engagement and Education in Pennsylvania Public Schools?

Background: The State of Youth Voting in Pennsylvania

Low youth voter turnout is a problem across the United States. In the 2020 election, 52-53% of eligible youth (ages 18-29) voted.¹ Though an increase from previous elections, youth still vote in numbers well below the national average of 66%.² In Pennsylvania, there are approximately 179,000 18-year-olds across the state.³ Although the Pennsylvania Department of Education declares that Pennsylvania learners will be prepared to be responsible, involved citizens, voter registration across the state only increased by 5% for youth ages 18-19 between 2016 and 2020.⁴ Pennsylvania has a responsibility to its students and our democracy to invest in nonpartisan voter registration and education programs in high school.

Proposed Voter Registration Policy

To address the state of youth voting in Pennsylvania, the proposed school district policy aims to: 1) require year-round nonpartisan voter registration and engagement programming in all high schools and continuing education programs; 2) direct schools to work with nonpartisan community organizations and the County Commissioners Office to get necessary voter registration materials in schools; 3) incorporate voting history and voter education in civics curriculum and provide professional development in voter education for civics and government teachers; 4) make voter registration information accessible to students and families; and 5) encourage schools to offer opportunities for students to engage in civic engagement opportunities outside the classroom.

Voter Registration Programming Strengthens Existing Civics Legislation in Pennsylvania

Current Pennsylvania law provides an important first step in supporting civics education in Pennsylvania but fails to go far enough to ensure student voter registration and civic participation. Act 35 (2018) requires all schools to develop and administer a civics assessment to students between seventh and twelve grades,⁵ and 25 Penn. Stat. § 1327 (c)(2) requires voter registration materials be distributed in every public school.⁶ Though both are important first steps, it takes a permanent, organized, and concerted year-round commitment in every school to identify, register, and educate eligible students to become informed voters. Ultimately, youth are 40% more likely to vote if

¹ CIRCLE:

<https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/election-week-2020#youth-voter-turnout-increased-in-2020>

² The Washington Post: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/elections/voter-turnout/>

³ Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/PA> and Penn State Data Center:

<https://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/Data/Research-Briefs/PA-Population-Estimates>

⁴ CIRCLE: <https://circle.tufts.edu/2020-election-center>

⁵ PA General Assembly:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2018&sessInd=0&act=35>

⁶ PA General Assembly:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=25&div=0&chpt=13&sctn=27&subscn=0>

they are taught about voting.⁷ The proposed legislation aims to fill this gap, helping schools develop year-long voter registration programming that prepares them not only to meet the requirements of Act 35, but to become lifelong voters.

High School Voter Registration Establishes Life-Long Citizenship Habits

Research shows that voting is a habit. Those who start voting younger are more likely to keep up the habit for the rest of their lives. Conversely, if young people fail to register or vote in their first election, they are more likely to become habitual nonvoters.⁸ Evidence suggests that young people feel overwhelmed by the perceived burdens of voting, and establishing the habit early on helps combat these feelings in the long run.⁹ The proposed legislation invests in students when they are young, teaching them the significance and impact of their vote to prepare students for a lifetime of civic action.

Voter Education Creates Informed Voters and Strengthens Democracy

The spread of disinformation and conspiracy theories has become a serious threat to our democracy, leading to voter suppression, racist acts of domestic terrorism, and attacks on the US government. As a result, few Americans have faith in their government, with only 17% of Americans trusting the government in 2019.¹⁰ In 2016, only about 30% of Americans born in the 1980s believed that it is “essential” for them to live in a democracy.¹¹ The Brookings Institute has found that meaningful civics education can combat these trends.¹² The proposed legislation, by providing year-long voter education, aims to reinvest students in our political system, prepare them to detect and combat disinformation, and empower them as informed voters.

⁷ CIRCLE: <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/teens-and-elections>

⁸ John Holbein and D. Sunshine Hillygus, *Making Young Voters: Converting Civic Attitudes into Civic Action*, 2020.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/04/11/public-trust-in-government-1958-2019/>

¹¹ *The New York Times*:

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/29/world/americas/western-liberal-democracy.html?_r=0

¹² Brookings Institute:

<https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/the-need-for-civic-education-in-21st-century-schools/>



Model Voter Registration Policy Resolution for the School District of Philadelphia

Presented to the Philadelphia Board of Education
by PA Youth Vote

WHEREAS, The [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#) declares that “Pennsylvania learners will be prepared... to be responsible, involved citizens;” and

WHEREAS, Civic participation and problem solving is a foundational goal of our education system, and The School District of Philadelphia has committed that [100% of students will graduate ready for college and career](#), and that it is critical to the transition to adulthood to foster a culture of voting and to encourage and support the civic participation of students; and

WHEREAS, Increasing civic participation and voter turnout by the people of Philadelphia are critical in bringing resources and funding into our city, the poorest big city in the United States, and [securing 100% of funding for great schools with zero deficit](#); and

WHEREAS, In 2019 the Philadelphia Board of Education acknowledged that voter registration is a critical component of the civic education of our students, and designated September 24, 2019 as “[Voter Registration Day in the School District of Philadelphia](#),” and encouraged all schools to use that day to educate students about the importance of voting and to support eligible students in the process of voter registration; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 8,000 students in Philadelphia public high schools become eligible to vote each year out of approximately 20,000 voters turning 18 in Philadelphia, and 175,000 in Pennsylvania each year, youth voters will have a significant impact on the future of the city and state; and

WHEREAS, It is not possible to register 8,000 students in a single day, and Pennsylvania law restricts registration of 17-year-olds until after the last election before the first election that they are 18 years of age; and

WHEREAS, it takes a permanent, organized, and concerted year-round commitment in every school to identify, register, and educate eligible students to become informed voters; and

WHEREAS, According to a 2017 Pew Research study, [only 6% of people nationally were asked to register to vote in school](#); and

WHEREAS, Research shows that if young voters cast a ballot in two consecutive elections they are far more likely to become habitual lifetime voters; and

WHEREAS, If young people fail to register or vote in their first election, they are more likely to disengage for another decade and will only possibly return to voting in their 30's; and

WHEREAS, [25 Penn. Stat. § 1327](#) (c)(2) requires voter registration materials be distributed in every public school; and

WHEREAS, [25 Pa. C.S.A. §1101 et seq.](#) requires that to comply with the National Voter Registration Act, Pennsylvania schools must provide [voter registration as part of transition to adult life](#) to students with IEPs that are 17 years of age or older. Schools may also comply with this requirement by providing general school-wide registration programs affording voter registration opportunities, registration forms and assistance in completing the form to all students approaching voting age, whether or not identified as exceptional pursuant to the IDEA, as well as timely transmission and coding of completed forms to the Philadelphia Board of Elections; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Department of State will present the [Governor's Civic Engagement Award](#) to any school and student in the Commonwealth that participates in registering at least 65% of eligible voters for the Silver Award, and 85% for the Gold Award; and

WHEREAS, because of COVID-19, voter registrations efforts aimed at young people have been especially challenging due to closures of schools and government offices and the cancellation of public events; and

WHEREAS, the spread of disinformation and conspiracy theories have led to racist acts of domestic terrorism, attacks on the US government and on the institution of democracy itself; and

WHEREAS, the forty-one organizations and almost 400 individuals that signed a [Letter to the Philadelphia Board of Education for a Student Voter Education and Engagement Policy](#) in 2019 still await a policy to be enacted; now be it

RESOLVED, That the Philadelphia Board of Education enacts a policy requiring a year-round nonpartisan voter registration and engagement program, each school year, in every high school and continuing education program; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Superintendent directs the appropriate departments to work with nonpartisan community organizations and the Philadelphia City Commissioners Office to ensure voter registration guides and materials, in multiple languages, are available at every parent center, high school, and adult school; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Superintendent directs District leadership to distribute voter registration forms or access to electronic voter registration tablets to all eligible high school seniors and include in graduation ceremonial activities encouragement for students to submit forms to the Board of Elections; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Superintendent directs the Social Studies Curriculum Office to incorporate the history of voter suppression and struggle for voting rights, voter registration, and vote-by-mail procedures in the twelfth grade Social Science curriculum, and to provide professional development for every Social Science and AP US Government teacher; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Superintendent directs District communication officers and school principals to make voter registration information available, in multiple languages, to students and families on the District website, through school newsletters, school emails, and in the school offices, libraries, guidance offices, and other similarly accessible locations throughout the school year; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board encourages schools to offer opportunities for students to engage in service learning projects, community service hours, and senior projects geared towards nonpartisan voter registration, poll worker, and poll observer programs; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That the school district designates and compensates a staff person at each high school and alternative school serving students 17 and older to serve as a school voting deputy responsible for directing, promoting, and reporting their school's voter registration activities.

Model Policy Sources:

PA Youth Vote - [Why Support Voter Engagement and Education in Pennsylvania Public Schools](#)

Tufts University Tisch College - [Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement](#)

Center for Popular Democracy - [Expanding Voter Registration in High Schools](#) (2019)

Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education - [A New Generation of Leaders for Los Angeles, California, and the Nation](#) (2018)

Project Vote - [Engaging America's Youth Through High School Voter Education Programs](#) (2010)

The Civics Center - [Sample Policy for School Districts In Support of High School Voter Registration](#) (2021)

University of Pennsylvania Graduate Study - [Voter Advocacy Efforts of Public Social Studies Teachers in Pennsylvania](#) (2020)

***PA Youth Vote** is a nonpartisan collaboration of students, educators, and organizations working to elevate student voices and empower Pennsylvania youth as civic actors: registered, informed, and ready to vote in all elections.*

info@PAyouthvote.org

Scott Gordon, CEO Mastery Charter Schools Network
TESTIMONY TO SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA POLICY COMMITTEE
November 4, 2021

Thank you committee members. My name is Scott Gordon and I am the CEO, of the Mastery Charter Schools network. Since 2005, Mastery has partnered with the school district of Philadelphia to turnaround 12 of the District's very lowest performing neighborhood schools. Those schools are now thriving -- over 3,000 parents have returned back to their neighborhood school after the Mastery turnaround. We serve all students -- some 22% of our students have IEPs. And finally, academics have improved at all 12 schools and 9 of the 12 now score above the city average on standardized tests.

I am here today to bring to the board's attention an inconsistency in the district's enrollment policy as related to Renaissance Charters. For a decade, our Renaissance schools have followed the same enrollment policy as School District neighborhood schools. That was: elementary schools only enrolled students from their catchment zone. High schools enrolled from their catchment zone first and then conducted a lottery for any open seats that remained. Renaissance and district schools abided by the same rules.

This year, the school district made 2 policy changes. First the district proposed limiting Renaissance high schools to enrolling only students from the catchment zone -- meaning we would not be able to conduct a lottery for any open seats after all catchment zone students are enrolled. This is not how the school district's high schools operate. At Gratz, whose charter is currently pending, this would mean some 500 of the 1100 students would not have been able to enroll.

Second, this fall the district changed the enrollment policy for its elementary schools but not Renaissance elementary schools. District neighborhood elementary schools can now enroll students from outside their catchment zone by lottery if there are open seats after all catchment zone students are enrolled. Renaissance elementary schools however are excluded from this policy change and are still limited to only catchment zone enrollment.

The district highlighted greater equity as a driver for the enrollment policy changes. It seems inconsistent and unfair not to extend those same rules to Renaissance charters. This issue is a road-block for our board to sign charter agreements and we hope it can be resolved quickly.

Thank you.