

To: Members, Norwalk Board of Education

Date: April 3, 2013

From: Steve Colarossi, Chairperson of Policy Committee

Re: Proposed Policy Changes

At the Policy Committee meeting of April 2, 2013, the Policy Committee unanimously recommended that the Board of Education adopt two new policies.

The first proposal would be numbered Policy 0700 and would make explicit a prohibition on “adult bullying”. More than one year ago, students from the Center for Youth Leadership asked us to consider how we could promote the modeling of appropriate non-bullying behavior. One suggestion that they brought to our attention was to focus on adult behaviors, and to work on developing guidelines to identify and prevent the bullying of students by staff members . Over the course of several meetings over more than one year, the Policy Committee heard significant anecdotal recitations of the lasting impact that staff bullying of students can have on the students; although the Policy Committee did not find that staff bullying of students is a pervasive problem in our schools, the Committee did agree that the harm is so significant that action was required to prevent such instances regardless of how limited they may (or may not) be

The second policy proposal addresses the issue of students sharing explicit photos. As the Policy Committee members discussed with students from the Center for Youth Leadership, the taking and sharing of explicit photos and videos is more commonplace than many of us would have imagined. It is often the result of an impetuous decision and is rarely intended to be widely distributed. Also, given the ease with which software is available to allow individuals to alter photos (such as “photoshopping” one person’s face onto an explicit image of another), the Policy Committee recognized that the creation and distribution of such altered images could also prove disruptive to schools and demeaning to the subjects of those images.

The Policy Committee concluded that we have an obligation to minimize the disturbances that the distribution of these images cause in our school and recognized that students need and deserve to be protected from the lasting consequences of their impulsivity.

Taken together, these two new policies will serve to promote the safety of our students and minimize disturbances to our learning communities. As such, the Policy Committee recommends that the Board of Education approve each proposal.