

**WSESU Board  
Draft Minutes  
August 3, 2020**

**Present:** Sean Whalen, Angie, Amy McMullen, Colleen Spence,,Mark Yeungling, Nancy, Pedrick, Nicki Buck, Scott Richardson, AnneMarie Redmond, Elizabeth Burrows, Kris Garnjost, Beth Carter, Bill Yates, Sarah Stewart Taylor, Beth Roy, Dave Baker, Angie Ladeau, Katie Ahern

Meeting called to order at 6:34 PM.

**Changes/Additions:** None

**Discussion Items:**

School Reopening Plan:

The board got into lengthy conversations including the plan for parents who, for whatever reason, do not feel comfortable sending kids back to school. A lot of planning will be based on how many in the building and how many remote. The Administrative Team left with what they felt was the charge to present options for remote learning. The Board was clear, and has been, they want that option for families who so choose.

Bill Yates asked what board are you referring to. Last meeting was when heard all boards were pushing for a remote option. Dave Baker mentioned talking about the SU Board. Amy McMullen mentioned part of the discussion was that some parents were looking for a remote option and we need a plan in place, or if need to take a step backward, and close schools.

Bill Yates stated that Dave made a statement at the last meeting that boards have not been on board for remote options and I have not been in a meeting where boards wanted a remote option. Beth Carter feels the high school should be in school and have never been on board for just remote option. Amy McMullen mentioned this meeting is because every person on this board was all over the place and no consensus on what plan would be. Angie Ladeau will be providing options as there are parents that do not want students back in school. Dave Baker mentioned some are high school parents and a remote option needs to be open to all parents who request it. Dave Baker mentioned if the board wants to vote no remote option for parents this would save a lot of work for the administrative team and, if this board does not want a remote option, we can end the meeting now. Beth Carter feels there should be a remote option if would have to shut down again. Dave Baker stated this is for parents who choose not to send children back to school.

Colleen Spence mentioned the Hartland School Board wants something as will lose parents to homeschooling programs. Would you prefer to lose enrollment as not sending kids to school, homeschooling, or can we provide at home option? Beth Carter feels at home is a solution but not the only solution. Amy McMullen mentioned this meeting is about what we can do unless

we want families, who do not want children in school this fall to do homeschooling, we have to offer a remote option. Dave Baker mentioned it is not definite, but serious talk when house and senate reconvene, to hold ADM harmless. The Administrative Team thought you wanted to keep these families part of your school and community and is why the team is looking at other remote options. An e-mail was sent to parents as thought there was consensus. Bill Yates mentioned last week was the first time was brought up. Personally, I feel a remote option is not something that is a good idea, however, if good for some should be good for all. If have to go that way, data driven or outbreak, but to offer remote option you're teaching two separate options. Beth Roy feels it is an equity issue as every family in a different situation so we need a remote option. Losing families because refuse to serve them is not equitable. Dave Baker mentioned the health and safety was the largest reason some are not comfortable sending child back. Last week was the first time the SU board discussed it but other boards have spent time discussing other options. Bill Yates mentioned when making a statement that heard from all boards, the Mount Ascutney Board has not discussed this yet. Dave Baker meant what brought to the SU Board. Amy McMullen mentioned the SU is developing and coordinating curriculum for all schools. This decision needs to be made at the SU level.

Angie Ladeau:

In terms of remote learning most struggled. We need to have a better plan. The survey we did in June was 63%, and over 600 responses, prefer in-person/hybrid model; 11% prefer remote; and 25% are undecided as struggling with what to do as has to do with the health and safety of family members.

Those that are doing homeschooling, 14 said have filed or will file AOE home study plan; 51 hoping for school remote option, and eight filed and hoping for school remote option.

Three plans will be discussed: In person/hybrid; school approved remote; Vermont AOE home study plan.

In-person/hybrid. Do not have a solid remote plan and working on it. Difference between emergency remote learning, continuity of learning, and planned remote. The quality of instruction improved as time went on. Beth Carter mentioned this is parents/students but what do teachers think of minimal data. Angie Ladeau mentioned teachers did not have a chance to respond to the data.

When thought about why return to in person and, what learned, is a social process and students learn better; students need support to be best self; provide learning experience missing; engaged in learning; and connection to teacher. Concerned if remote start not sure how K-2 would learn who the teacher is if not in person. Vermont Chapter of Academy of Pediatrics support in person for youngest children based on conversation with two doctors. Students are part of the equation and other part are teachers. If adding only remote need to think of the well being of the teacher and support them. Classroom teachers doing in person and supplementing with remote have developed schedules with a level of care and attention going into teaching

students being in school four hours a day. Remote learning may be with teachers not doing in person or buying a program.

Support for teachers: clear expectations, curriculum materials for bot,; inservice schedules allow teachers to continue to collaborate, consistent schedule for staff and students, and those scheduled in place last spring said it was a much better experience.

Math, Language Arts and how to support interdisciplinary and look at content. Opportunity for socialization and play; provide lunch and breakfast.

Option 3 is all about in person. Need to make sure for those in school providing support and keeping communication channels open.

School remote learning: talked about a program through Vermont Virtual Learning and is a gift to get. Option was answer to staff who cannot do in person learning and not accommodate through ADA. Those staff members could do remote learning. Require that loan a teacher to the program and teach full time, take 9 credit course to earn teaching endorsement, and ratio is 20 students to one teacher and be in the program for a semester. Our middle schools have one teacher for each content area and have about 300 kids and, if 10% said no to in person and another 10% decide remote only, would mean sending three middle school teachers to Vermont VLC and not sure how to do that without creating the need to hire three middle school teachers. Second thing when looking at curriculum for elementary, seemed content focused and not what we wanted with interdisciplinary. Found another option - Calvert Learning as is project based and says for K-8 ,but for grades 6-8 feel is on the young side and would want a more course based option. Calvert provides lesson plans and parents in charge. Designed for homeschooling and those not necessarily licensed educators. Includes project based, interdisciplinary units, and complete curriculum. For elementary, if say have 100 who want homeschooling option and five teachers the cost would be \$318,000. With Calvert learning, if we use our teachers, as feel is more desirable and student to teacher ratio is 50 students. Cost is \$165,000 for 100 students. Another reason interested in Calvert is could purchase teaching support for them. Calvert learning is family commitment and guidelines; look different for middle and high school; keep connected to our school; figure out how to collect evidence of progress and report that; and may be possible to use our own teachers.

Sean Whalen asked why this has not been shared before? Amy McMullen mentioned the planning team looking at options and why talking about it this week as worked on it last week. Angie Ladeau mentioned the administrative team is working as hard as can to meet the needs of parents and students. Sarah Stewart Taylor asked about in person plan -- will have pods with kids. Angie Ladeau mentioned in person the plan is pods but size is not set size but will be number of students that can fit into space. Teachers can move among groups of students but minimize student movement. The Administrative Team believes in-person is the best instruction to offer and where to put energy. Equity is a concern and will accommodate any student who cannot be in person and know will be inconsistencies. We want to provide quality education. A

question is what program teachers use in the classroom and how remote option connected to the classroom. In the afternoon it is all remote. Trying to accommodate the teacher's schedule and promised time to work on an interdisciplinary unit and time to plan together. Nancy Pedrick asked if remote using Calvert, and if the whole school has to do remote, do we join that, or what do in-school students do if revert to remote. Angie Ladeau mentioned this is part of the administrative team discussion. We cannot ask teachers who are doing in-person to do a remote option with different students.

Nicki Buck mentioned her biggest concern putting all effort into in-person, and feel should, but Vermont will not be island much longer nationally, doubt get much further than October in building, and very concerned as not enough time to establish remote learning and what will happen if all go remote. Dave Baker mentioned looking at LMS systems as Google Classroom and Seesaw but trying to take what doing in person and making it 100% remote. This is not a platform for in-home study and integrating into the system but finding whether Calvert remote programs have exchange back and forth, for parents to have more dialogue, and looking at other models, when and if, go remote. We are looking at another vendor tomorrow. Angie Ladeau mentioned we need to supply teachers with content so teachers are not creating content. We need to get ready for a strong reality that might be all remote. Some teachers feel should start remote, get good at LMS, and then if go back, we do. Feel remote piece will be there for a while and balancing in person, remote, and totally remote.

Colleen Spence asked what is LMS program vs. homeschool program.

Larry Dougher mentioned LMS is a learning system and PowerSchool Unified Classroom is LMS. Administrative Team will make sure it is good and the curriculum director vetted it. Dave Baker mentioned we want it affordable, but if did Calvert across the whole district, it would be expensive. Trying to look at other systems that allow us to do project based and interdisciplinary without creating on the fly as last spring.

Lora Powers spoke about how some teachers feeling in terms of starting school. What being asked of educators is crazy and jeopardizing the safety of everyone, we are policing students behavior, no cooperative play, no singing, no hugging. We would not feel good if something happened to a student or family member. As a teacher, asking on behalf of faculty and staff, give it more time until can secure safety of the school family. If all here tonight via google meet discussing opening school, rather than face-to-face, is this the choice should be making.

Amanda French feels erroneous press that teachers do not want to do the work and we do, but need to consider risk involved. Remote options out there are viable, workable, and doable. Online learning is not new. Safety is number one and when all safe and beaten this, we can go back in person, but do not want it put on my hands and it is militant and unnatural for students and teachers.. This is an unnatural way of teaching and no one wants to be at fault for a mistake made. Let us think of platforms that work, doable, how incorporate families into the process when go in-person but let's start remote. Sean Whalen mentioned board was told there

was strong teacher representation on the task force, and if so, how did this plan emerge from the process. Dave Baker mentioned anxieties rise as get closer and teachers are open to reopening plan but feel statements are about when implement plan. If the governor had not authorized school boards how to open schools, we would not be here. As a board, you have a right to make a plan and is level of anxiety with all of this. As get closer to September 8 will be more anxiety. Teachers wanted to be in-person but they are the ones who have to implement plans, keep kids in straight line, washing hands, not touching surfaces.. Sean Whalen mentioned is hearing fundamental concerns of opening in-person. Dave Baker mentioned, whatever do, want to start slow and reopening plan was to start slow but what hearing is that anxiety building that should do at all. Beth Carter asked if any teachers on tonight want to go back on September 8 given the current plan.

Patty Gray mentioned those on the team would love to go back on September 8, but do I believe are ready, do not, and colleagues fearful to send their own children back to school should be telling us something. Agree with what teachers have said, and back to Nicki's comments about virus spiraling around the country and not island in Vermont, it is in our own best interest to figure out how to do remote learning and do it well. We want kids to do well, learn, be smart, and need to keep them safe. Nicki Buck posed a question back to all teachers, if students not starting school and meeting teachers, as Vermont outdoors the first two weeks of September is reasonable, could something be created for teachers to get to know students. Would teachers feel safe with this if start remote. Dave Baker mentioned if could develop something totally outside to get to meet kids and build relationships. Some are open to that and some say they can do through Google Meet.

Dave Baker mentioned need a creative way to stagger kids the first couple weeks to meet teachers and not clustered inside. Nicki Buck feels in order to create a relationship with a teacher, outdoors would be good . Dave Baker mentioned what hearing some teachers say tonight is all start remotely which takes away equity on some parents if all start remote.

Rachel Bogart, para at Windsor, mentioned she has a background in outdoor education as Windsor School has a lot of outdoor space and back to school forum would be possible.

Angie Ladeau mentioned 450 surveys agreed to in-person and feeling conflicted and navigating the uncertainty is the hardest thing asking staff to do. We do have a plan and doing our best to plan for uncertainty and can make it better. Dave Baker mentioned another survey, as voice tonight is critical and invested in children when they come back and over 300 adults have to come back and feel safe. What hearing tonight is do another parents survey and adult voice tonight expressing their concerns.

Colleen Spence asked do we still have a decision on the table allowing students to stay home. Dave Baker mentioned did not necessarily have a consensus. Colleen feels concern is around cost, how many students could take advantage of that, and could we afford it if we went with the Calvert option.

Elizabeth Burrows addressed Rachel's comment about outdoor programming. Are we not planning outdoor programming in all the schools. Dave Baker mentioned if go back on September 8 all schools have designated places outside. Elizabeth mentioned from Albert Bridge presentation planning outdoor as primary place. Dave, you were going to consult with other SU's adjacent to ours, what are those SU's and districts doing and can you get buy in from them if want to see SU going all distant learning from neighboring SU's. You suggested that would hear from NEA representatives of that plan. Dave Baker mentioned southeast superintendents meet once a week, and as anxiety level risen, have had that conversation on how ready are we to open. No decision made and will continue to address. Some have not announced plan yet. Westminster, Bellows Fall, starting completely remote. Staff getting more and more concerned as it gets closer. When go back, a lot of outdoor education is planned in designated spaces. NEA letter mentioned two weeks of intensive training before open and safety of staff and students. Amanda French mentioned language consistent through spring and summer that not open until everyone is safe.

Bill Yates mentioned affects all schools. If school board voting, personally, I do not feel can vote on remote option as do not know what will be. Some students and families have to be remote and equity is a powerful argument. Not convinced of offering to everybody, and if risk there, should be full remote if risk can be verified. Tonight we will not have a solution as we do not have an option. Dave Baker feels real issue is around having not tried putting this many kids in one space for all day. If all remote, option of offering remote to parents goes away. This board has to decide and, if offering remote option, need to make decision real soon. Bill Yates feels until see what like, if failure or success, go with what can as need remote option as some kids cannot come, and difficult to vote on an option as we do not know what it looks like. Nicki Buck mentioned where she is and thinks Hartland Board and Weatherfield Board feel strongly need a remote option and a way to move forward with meeting is to say committed to remote option and serious consideration if want to start school in person. Previous survey did not hit risk tolerance and need to ask parents if their response changed and how do you feel about sending your kids. We might get different responses and not sure can make decision on remote today. Can say will be a remote option, but not vetted, and when open doors how many students will we get. Bill Yates agrees that for health reasons need remote option. We need to gather more data. Dave Baker mentioned talked about another survey based on new questions and doing a quick survey of the entire staff. This is the board that has to do this and not become a local decision. Nicki Buck feels should solidify a remote option tonight and let the administrative team pick it out. Next week can figure out if includes entire community or those that want to go remote. Beth Carter mentioned from neighboring towns, Woodstock, Hartford, Springfield, going back in some format and fully support that Do not feel this board is the right board to make a decision for high school as not reasonable percentage from Hartland and Weathersfield send to Windsor. Need to be careful on remote option. that if offer too wide or price tag too high, would have to make other adjustments to the budget. Dave Baker mentioned where struggling is that high school cannot be separated out as is part of collective bargaining agreement and cannot have a separate plan unless negotiate that. Whatever is done in the district has to be reasonably the same for everyone.

Kris Garnjost feels that one thing in survey is asking the question how parents feel if go back and then in a month go remote. Do parents see value in going back for a month, if predictions come true, as some are just looking to get kids back in school. Heard people say schools around us going back but Bellows Falls is not going back and starting remote and, not an oddity, so let's be realistic. Dave Baker mentioned superintendents are meeting weekly and some are getting push back from parents. As get closer the anxiety heightens. Kaite Ahern mentioned in response to Bellows Falls going back remote, with special education they are trying to figure out, if go the remote option, how instruct special education students in person. This creates an equity issue with students that, if parents want students in, we will have too. Next week can tell you what came up with different options. Christine Bourne mentioned administrators have spent a lot of time looking at remote options and is a price tag. Are there guidelines around budget constraints? Time is running out and we have a lot to figure out, such as, busses. Everything contingent on figuring out who is coming back. Feeling pressure that need to figure this out soon. Dave Baker feels it will give us time as meeting with other vendor tomorrow and have Calvert numbers already. We need to decide soon on a remote option and how that will work so everyone is comfortable.

Jenifer Aldrich mentioned trying to figure out our real goal if looking for a remote option for some families or asking all staff to do remote. We are not using resources in the best way possible. Encourage us to be, if offered remote, it should not be two remote options. Nicki Buck mentioned no one saying that but if go remote in a month would have that. Colleen Spence mentioned those keeping kids home all year is a homeschool option and committing to be part of the kids learning process. Do not feel very many will opt for this. Beth Carter feels there will be two remote options and outsourcing is expensive and not saying go that route. If go in and go out would be virtual learning.

Amy McMullen mentioned we know some families asking for remote learning and ask for a motion that our administrative staff continue to look at remote options for those families who would be homeschooling or not sending children back. AnneMarie Redmond moved that authorize the administrative team to develop a remote option for those that choose that option for their children; seconded by Colleen Spence. Beth Carter feels should be remote option but need to be cautious on what option is, cost, and how many take advantage of it. If a large percentage from one school than another take advantage, feels the cost should be assumed by that school district. Amy McMullen mentioned at this time just voting on letting administrative team bring remote options to us and we look at them. Scott Richardson feels he could not vote on an option if a district is responsible for costs, depending on numbers in the district, but sticking to equalized pupil. Dave Baker mentioned the motion is to offer a remote option for those parents that choose this and not tie a funding mechanism to this. The motion passed with all ayes.

**Adjournment:**

Amy McMullen asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sean Whalen moved; seconded by Nancy Pedrick; motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Tessier, Board Secretary