

**WSESU Board
Draft Minutes
August 13, 2020**

Present: Elizabeth Burrows, Colleen Spence, Amy McMullen, Scott Richardson, Christine, Beth Carter, Nancy Pedrick, Nicki Buck, Kris Garnjost, AnneMarie Redmond, Mark Yeungling, Angie Ladeau, Dave Baker, Katie Ahern, Colleen DeSchamp, Kate Ryan, Christine Bourne, Jenifer Aldrich, JeanMarie Oakman, Larry Dougher

Meeting called to order at 6:32 PM.

Changes/Additions: None

Amy McMullen mentioned to the public if wish to speak, put a message in the comment box and will allow for some input, but primarily board making decisions, and will be given two minutes to speak.

Discussion Items:

School Reopening Survey Results:

Angie Ladeau mentioned the survey went out last week and is not shut down at this time. We received 1,058 responses but some duplicates - 75% say yes return to in-person, 25% remote option or homeschooling through AOE home study plan. If there is a spike in cases in the SU parents less likely to send kids to school. Transportation question received 785 responses; 65.4% family will provide transportation;. Most parents who said remote, plan to enroll their child in school approved remote; with 13.6% choosing the AOE homeschool option.

Windsor K-8 - 140 responses, yes 104 (74%); No 36; (26%); School remote 34; 9-12 - 190 responded - yes 146 (77%); 44 No (23%); 41 of the 44 total school remote.

Albert Bridge: 38 - 82% yes, 7 nos (18%), 2 remote only

Hartland - 259- 71% yes; 29% remote only; 60 choosing school remote option

Weathersfield: 202 - 140 yes (69%); no 62 (31%); Total remote 55

Staff Survey: Responses 107 - on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being nothing will make me comfortable and responses was 2.14 on the lower end of nothing will make me comfortable.

Top concerns for support and teachers: physical distancing, air quality, air temperature, comments on protocol (safety - how keep the room clean); worried about family members; wearing masks, face shields; managing student/parent anxiety.

Dave Baker mentioned the Administrative Team looked at both surveys several times. Buildings are about 75% ready to open and desks in rows 6 feet apart. Heard at last SU meeting comments, fears, anxieties are from the heart and to credit, they will return or a medically compromising situation will apply for ADA accommodation. Staff have been part of creating this plan.

Angie Ladeau mentioned on the survey parents asked about returning to in person and if said no, asked if doing AOE plan or school only remote option.

Clarify students learning VTVLC and in person students different. Changing curriculum because of the situation but need to as with students and teachers being out due to quarantine or illness. We needed an option to help teachers teach. We wanted continuity for those remote only and when all back together in the classroom that learning gaps mitigated. Teachers will be trained on the Vermont Learning Cooperative Curriculum as are customisable. Teachers will determine if fit for Foundations, Wheatley, Eureka Math and other programs used in other content areas. Hoping that allowing teachers access to materials will spend less time on materials and more time on instructional practices engaging for our students. Dave Baker mentioned the platform is called Canvas and the curriculum embedded is VTVLC curriculum K-12. Teachers will be trained in Canvas platform and curriculum with understanding that all in person and all remote have a parallel curriculum. Elizabeth Burrows asked to explain to everyone, as last met talking about the Calvert curriculum and made a shift somewhere and explain what happened between that meeting and this. Angie Ladeau mentioned Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative offered two scenarios; one was giving them a teacher for a year and some of our students. VTVLC is supported by AOE as it provides curriculum and management system free to all schools. We explored Calvert Learning and liked as was project based approach and direction wanted to go, but was expensive. Looked like the same modules as VTVLC modules. After the last meeting we got the sense that supporting that option was something we could not go with and having a free option could go with. Explored Calvert more and was best for younger children and would still use Seesaw as it has curriculum embedded.

Question asked remote students through VTVLC for middle school students and doubt one middle school teacher could teach all courses. Dave Baker mentioned need to understand Canvas and VTVLC and the teacher assigned is a coach/facilitator and teaching comes within the platform. It is very independent with regular check ins. Actual instruction is loaded into module. Grades 6-12 modules used before, by other districts, and have been vetted very well. For younger students learning to read requires more hands on and a lot of variables and have support kids may need.

Do we have technology support for Canvas? Larry Dougher mentioned main work would be upfront work and once trained (hopefully teachers in building) would make a big difference. More priority to Canvas teachers than those wanting to use Google Classroom. VTVLC has a contract with Canvas and has 24/7 support. If something we cannot solve teachers can call

Canvas to get tech support. JeanMare Oakman mentioned teachers using VTVLC can import Foundations and Eureka if all would have to go remote.

Scott Richardson asked what will the student experience be using Canvas in regards to facilitators and teachers of embedded instruction Can a student expect their teacher they know to be leading embedded instruction or will that expectation not be true. Dave Baker mentioned from a student standpoint would have contact with the SU teacher. Student day will be contact and assignments with the teacher/facilitator.. Angie Ladeau mentioned seeing to see what it is like go to VTVLC and bring up curriculum and sample lessons. There are universal supports that will read text aloud to students, if needed. Families that take this option will have training to make all students successful.

Question asked: in person with a regular teacher but using VTVLC? Dave Baker mentioned yes using the VTVLC embedded curriculum. Remote only teachers are not teachers from the classroom. If all would have to go to remote have a consistent curriculum.

Nicki Buck mentioned a lot have not been involved before and are switching curriculums in the middle of a pandemic but if make curriculum switch that is project based, we as a board, is the way we want to move. Unique opportunity to change things up, excited about opportunity and hopeful it will be easier on teachers if have to go full remote.

Elizabeth Burrows asked amount of screen time. Angie Ladeau mentioned the elementary curriculum is considered a course 3-4 hours a week and interaction with program and other assignments. Mindful of screen time especially for younger students and needed to be carefully thought out.

Teachers spoke regarding going back in person and are concerned if safety measures in place, will students keep masks on, social distancing, feel at risk with students eating in the classroom, and teachers moving around the school exposes them to the virus. Concerned with classroom behavior management, and all systems in place, not sure how to apply when sitting at a desk and not sending out or anyone can come in. We want to see the kids but not sure how to do it safely.

Elizabeth Martens: part of the task force and hear how others feel and all need to be vigilant. From my perspective have a great plan with face shields for teachers. If a teacher wears a face shield and mask supervising when students do not have masks on, are extremely low risk. Need to be vigilant about local threats but with careful planning and watching have the safest plan for students, families, and faculty. Apprehension but hopeful providing the safest environment.

Question: Is there a possibility, if way off if have to go remote, that would reduce staff. Dave Baker mentioned what found in spring and with VTVLC curriculum would not reduce

professional teaching or support staff as check in with students. At this time, no plan to lay anyone off.

Dave Baker mentioned we will not be able to answer all the questions, will be cautious with presumptive or probable cases, and if and when we would have to close, we will. We have a commitment to keeping students and staff safe and if it does not look doable on day 1, will not open day 2. Elizabeth Burrows asked as is her understanding is if all schools open or all close. Dave Baker mentioned this is his understanding of the way as working well together and cannot have one go remote. Elizabeth Burrows stated asking in terms of not on the first day. Dave Baker mentioned could be building by building if felt had to contain one and could temporarily close one building. If in the building and someone would start having symptoms we have isolation spots and nurses take over from there. If one building feels they have a concern and need to close, that decision can be made. We would be in contact with the Department of Health and contact tracers. There is science and there is anxiety. We will listen to our employees, parents and families, and staff and families will trump the Department of Health. Cannot have teachers over anxious that could not contact trace. Closing could be by wing or pod also.

Mark Yeungling asked about direct linking students and staff with testing and is it possible.. Dave Baker mentioned will have a unique bond with the Department of Health and we will have direct access and hotline directly to medical professionals. Emily Stevens mentioned we have direct access to the Department of Health and working with Mt Ascutney for testing and revised health and safety guidance for symptoms. What is not finished is the algorithm of: Level 1, stay home until free of symptoms for 24 hours; level 2, call PPE; and Level 3, not allowed in building.

Question: Can asymptomatic teachers and staff get tested before head back into the building. Dave Baker mentioned it was explored and not opposed to that. Emily Stevens mentioned what discussed with pediatricians and the Department of Health is you can test negative or positive and go to the grocery store or BBQ and then be positive. This is not recommended. Dave Baker mentioned at this time the transmission rate is .5%.

Larry Dougher feels least equitable for kids is to go remote and realize a lot of families are not as lucky as other families. I feel it is not the best thing for kids to go remote but do not want to see anyone get sick. JeanMarie Oakman mentioned science is there and the key is social distancing and wearing our masks. Dave Baker mentioned if on day 1 not keep masks on, not social distancing, we will not take any chances and will continually evaluate can we keep the environment safe. If we cannot, we will not go to school. The Board has the final decision how we open.

Beth Ziegler mentioned we, as teachers, willingly doing this profession and connected to many who are not teachers. How do we ask this of our families; how quickly can we get the information in our school or SU the number of cases. Emily Stevens mentioned safety

guidelines help (social distancing, wear masks, wash hands) and keep reinforcing. Numbers updated daily and begin contact tracing. Nurses will get numbers daily.

Amy McMullen mentioned there are concerns on both sides - administration, teachers, families. This is the hardest decision we, as a board, have ever made.

Colleen Spence thanked all teachers for commenting and to hear concerns. These are concerns we have in this decision and things stood out for me in this process has been will kids keep masks on. Reports from those involved with pre-school and summer camps that kids were great wearing masks. If a child would come to school symptomatic, that we can call the Department of Health to tell us what to do next, gives me comfort, and state doing a good job of contact tracing. Anxiety around kids going into school, parental decisions, board decisions, and some gone away.

Beth Carter feels as Colleen said is hear about little kids and mask wearing, 6 ft apart, sit in a room, and ask that consider high school students be treated differently than K-8. Another piece struggle with, and not hearing parent voice, having a hard time reconciling 80% want kids back and 75% of teachers do not want to go back. We talked about a forum at some point. Other countries have opened schools and how can we get students outside more. We agreed to be outside. Dave Baker mentioned the collective bargaining agreement and working conditions in that document cannot separate out. Two sets of working conditions and do not see it working. Amy McMullen mentioned fascinating to see the number of parents desiring to send kids back to school and teachers not wanting it to happen and how to reconcile that and provide an equitable experience for all of our kids.

AnneMarie Redmond: Hear all teachers and having a hard time with this and have some in the household do not want to expose to virus and feel terrible any teachers have to go to school because opening. I would have a hard time voting to go back to school knowing that some teachers do not feel comfortable going back but have to. Prefer if have something so those teachers do not have to go back.

Nicki Buck mentioned had anxiety around this and initially, before the plan was in place, was thinking of keeping kids home as kids have a lot of anxiety to going back. Parents know things will not look normal and parents have anxiety to send them back. A lot of parents would choose to keep kids home but realize kids cannot learn at home. Looking at this, fully expect will be remote learning by October. Feel important Vermont is in a bubble and low positivity rate and if kept until September we have this window that can be outside and create a social environment where connecting with teachers, create classrooms, social environment, and then remote. Dave Baker feels it is a good suggestion and discussing it as an administrative team and first week, if done well, would be a lot of outside; get to know you, activities, and more social/emotional based. If not working we will not do it.

Kris Garnjost mentioned thought about the process and appreciated what everyone said and concept of equity, but the first reaction is people worried should just go all remote and deal with consequences. Part says children will not learn as well for six months to a year and are important in their life. Children are resilient and adapt much better than adults. If doing a really good job of planning and preparing there is a reason why numbers in Vermont are low is that reacted quickly, planned, and put safeguards in place, continue to try to enforce, and people working together. Feel could pull it off, but is a gamble, and conflicted how to answer this. Difficult as could have the same conversation many times in the next 20 days ,and unless high spike, nothing will have changed. People will have the same anxieties and appreciate those anxieties.

Nancy Pedrick: multi generational house and two granddaughters in Windsor camp, do not wear masks, not socially distant and not a case of anything and not one child sent home sick with COVID. Temperature taken everyday and part of protocol for school and hearing teachers. I am not worried and hope schools could open in person.

Lori Small asked about the survey question to parents about would you send your child to in person school. Angie Ladeau mentioned if said yes asked about their risk tolerance. Lori Small does not feel parents have the same concerns as teachers.

Scott Richardson mentioned Larry's statement and pointed out equity and importance. Nicki Buck made a good point of school district operations getting going so what happens later can happen in the best way possible. On equity, not heard from the Director of Student Support Services as a significant piece of school operations and population of students need a school setting. Katie Ahern mentioned what concerned about remote is students accessing the classroom and special education learning remotely. Over time much of that was solved through creative teaching and flexibility. Had more success than anticipated and for many students that remote learning did not work and could not be modified and progress in the general curriculum for many students has not happened. It is a small group but worries me. Statistics show that children with developmental delays at higher risk of being ill. Whether remote or in person, we still have to provide services but doing a dual system for many and what decide here has ramifications as nothing is a perfect fit for all students but do the best we can. Regional special education directors meeting more than ever have and all are dealing with the same struggles.

Dave Baker mentioned forums will be done by towns. We hope to get the frequently asked questions printed but the answers will raise more questions.

Jenifer Aldrich shared her thoughts on equity. We struggle with equity even in person and remote requires another adult at home, daycare, grandparent, to be an expert in executive functioning working memory, attention, social skills, cognitive flexibility, frustration tolerance not to mention academics; ELA, Math, PE, Health. Science, Music, Art, etc. Significant inequities inherent and compounded by even being present while paying the bills.

Nicki Buck feels we can continue to have conversation next month and wondering how to proceed from here. Board was sent a policy statement. Is this policy statement or policy. Dave Baker mentioned the board needs to vote on the mode of operation. Feel all go on record that authorizing me and hint of safety precautions up to day one, we would not open.. Nicki Buck mentioned vote to support plan as is; person/hybrid, and remote. Separate vote or combine in one. Amy McMullen stated looking at policy this is a first reading so not adopting that today.

Amy McMullen asked for a motion on having school with a hybrid model and offering remote learning for those families requesting remote learning.. Nicki Buck moved; seconded by Colleen Spence. Elizabeth Burrows had a question on homeschooling for Katie Ahern. Students who homeschooled are they entitled to special education services. Katie Ahern mentioned not entitled but maybe offered. Clear in law that not an entitlement. We try hard to provide services to those families. This year one of those questions are trying to figure out in a different environment. Dave Baker mentioned talking to three homeschooling parents and thinking of enrolling in our 100% remote option. We try to serve our homeschool students as much as possible. Elizabeth Burrows had a legislative question - does anyone know using the VTVC or distance learning will affect the ADM. Dave Baker stated those students will stay enrolled and our ADM will continue. Legislative standpoint, there is some talk of considering legislation to hold ADM harmless until this pandemic is over.

Mark Yeungling mentioned that equity aside, have we expressed to parents that we can effectively accommodate distance learning and would benefit the most vulnerable population by limiting exposure. Are parents aware that we would be offering remote learning to those as opposed to homeschool AOE plan. Dave Baker mentioned parents have been informed that there are those two options. Our next step for remote option is have to make a commitment by early next week as need to staff that option and work with our teachers who are going to teach remote.

AnneMarie Redmond wanted to clarify Mark's question, have we expressed to parents that it would be helpful to them if can do the remote option to do it as less kids in the building. Dave Baker mentioned we would not present this to parents as our plan can accommodate all students. I would not want to encourage parents. AnneMarie asked will be forcing teachers to come back that may wish not to or could they do the remote learning. Dave Baker stated discussed as administrative team and have some ADA applications. We would go to that list first for those that applied. The accommodations have to be for you, but not because they are fearful or anxious. Amy McMullen asked if the numbers of remote students required more than the four ADA teachers could some of our teachers possibly move into that area. Dave Baker mentioned if have more requests for remote than ADA teachers, there will be a protocol in place and could extend that. If everything were equal, would go with seniority. We feel we will need more teachers than the four who initially applied. Over 60 respondents had high anxiety and do not have enough remote students for all those teachers.

Amy McMullen asked the board, All those in favor of beginning school September 8 with an in person/hybrid as well as offering remote learning. Motion passed 9 to 2 with school starting September 8;. Request that our administration keep a close eye and have those conversations the afternoon of the first day of school and feel we should have a meeting on September 9. Dave Baker mentioned your comments did not go unnoticed and with the backing of the board we will not go any longer than we have to if cannot do it safely. Appreciate the time and energy everyone spent moving this forward.

This board will meet on September 9. We have our regularly scheduled meeting on August 24 at which time if any concerns, changes, locally or statewide, we will have a better idea. The decision today could change between now and September 8 but our administration, teachers, and families need to prepare and only do that if make that decision now with understanding that things could change.

Kris Garnjost wanted to acknowledge all the people working on this whole process in a no win possibility to come up with the best, safest plan feasible.

Amy McMullen thanked all the board members who have gone to many meetings as it has not been easy. Next meeting on August 24 we will revisit this to see how the plan is working, social media policy, second reading on Policy on Teaching in times of COVID. Scott Richardson asked if the board could material passed out on social media policy on what the school board association put out or consider the one from Weathersfield. Appreciate the school leaders and teachers here tonight. We have a complicated system and should not forget that we have a lot to do with that but what expect from these leaders, once a month, is easy but not at the moment we are in. We are doing a very good job working together.

Adjournment:

Amy McMullen asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kris Garnjost moved; seconded by Nicole Buck; motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Tessier, Board Secretary

