

**Lamoille North Supervisory Union and
Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School District Board
Minutes of Meeting
September 13, 2021**

Board Members Present: Belvidere: Stephanie Sweet; Cambridge: Laura Miller, Jan Sander, Bill Sander, Sue Prescott (on Zoom), Mark Stebbins, Denise Webster; Eden: Jeff Hunsberger, David Whitcomb (on Zoom); Hyde Park: Lisa Barry, Tina Lowe, Patty Hayford; Johnson: Mark Nielsen, Katie Orost, Angela Lamell, Allen Audette, Jr., Bobbie Moulton; Waterville: Bart Bezio

Board Members Absent: Hyde Park: Chasity Fagnant, Johnson: Bobbie Moulton

Administrators Present: Catherine Gallagher, Deborah Clark, Michele Aumand, Charleen McFarlane, Wendy Savery, Betzi Goodman, David Manning, Denise Maurice, Mary Anderson, Diane Reilly, Jan Epstein, Melinda Mascolino, Bethann Pirie, Erik Remmers, Brian Pena, Jeremy Scannell, Flo Kelly, Jen Hulse,

Others Present: Terri-Lynn Ayers (on Zoom), Greg Stokes (on Zoom), Eric Hutchins (on Zoom), Maria Davies (on Zoom), Hannah Tibbitts (on Zoom), Susanne Seymour, Claudia Stauber, Dani McFarland, Savannah McKenzie

Minute Taker: Sue Trainor

Call to Order, Approval of the Agenda, Announcements: Orost, serving as Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Clark requested that New Policy E3, Community Use of School Facilities, be removed from the agenda. Clark explained that Dylan LaFlam had wanted to be present for that agenda item and was unable to attend this meeting. Stebbins made a motion to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Bezio. The motion passed unanimously. There were no announcements.

Public Comment: Four individuals spoke against the current COVID safety protocols being used to protect the schoolchildren. Two of the speakers had children in the District. Savannah McKenzie stated COVID was not a threat. Another speaker, Stauber, outlined the danger of CO2 levels from wearing masks.

McFarland discussed her experience of her child not being allowed to return to school until he had received a PCR test. This child had a rapid test but that wasn't acceptable to the school. There was no remote learning option for her child. McFarland thought the recent Executive Session was unconstitutional and against the law. She also spoke about the Board's use of ESSER funds and the Board's refusal to look at the science of mask wearing. McFarland provided paperwork that included a synopsis of the Vermont mask survey and educational posters for symptoms of oxygen deficiency. She asked that the COVID policy be revisited at each School Board meeting so that others could speak to the issue.

LNSU/LN MUUSD Routine Business: Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of the August 16, 2021, Special Meeting and Retreat: Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Webster, to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Orders: Miller made a motion to approve the Board Orders listed on the agenda. Stebbins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Policy C15, Homeless Students – First Reading: Hulse informed the Board that the policy stated that the District was committed to the success of every student. Homeless students in the District would have access to the education and other services needed to ensure that an opportunity was available to meet the same academic achievement standards to which all students were held. The District would designate a liaison for students in homeless situations to carry out duties as required by law. Hulse would be serving as the liaison. Action on this item would be taken at the next meeting.

Updated Policy B5, Employee Unlawful Harassment: Hulse informed the Board that the policy read that harassment was a form of unlawful discrimination that would not be tolerated in the LNSU.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written or physical conduct constituting harassment as defined in the policy and by state and federal law violate this policy. Retaliation against any person raising good faith allegations of unlawful harassment or against any witness cooperating in an investigation pursuant to the policy was prohibited. Hulse noted the District had had extensive training under Title IX. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Miller, to approve the policy. The motion passed unanimously.

Updated Policy C4, Limited English Proficiency Students: Hulse informed the Board that the policy stated that it was the policy of the LNSU to ensure that English Learners aged 3 to 21, including immigrant students, had equitable access to academic and extracurricular school programming as was required by law. J. Sander made a motion, seconded by Bart Bezio, to approve the updated policy. The motion passed unanimously.

Updated Policy C5, Firearms: Gallagher stated this policy change did not impact the content of the policy. It changed designations based on new roles and name changes. J. Sander made a motion, seconded by Stebbins, to approve the updated policy. Bezio clarified that when the policy mentioned the school it was referring to the school premises. The motion passed unanimously.

Updated Policy F1, Travel Reimbursement: Clark informed the Board that the change in the policy was in the last sentence of the second paragraph of the policy. It would change from 'prior approval from the superintendent or his or her designee would be required' to 'may be required for travel that is not considered incidental. See the LNSU Travel Procedure'. Additionally the last sentence of the policy would change from 'mileage at applicable IRS rate' to simply "mileage'. Bezio made a motion, seconded by J. Sander to approve the updated policy. The motion passed unanimously.

Food/Beverage Service for School Board Meetings: Clark reported that the costs associated with food and beverages at the School Board meetings ranged from \$3,000 to \$6,000 a year, depending on what was being served and who was doing the meal preparation. The question before the Board was whether to continue this practice. Prescott stated the Board had done this for quite a while, but she felt they had moved past the need to provide meals for members. With the current practice of masking, she believed food shouldn't be served. Additionally, there was often food left over after the meeting. Nielsen stated he would rather see money spent elsewhere. B. Sander stated the time of the meetings made it difficult to make other food arrangements. Board members and administrators often came directly from work. If there were food left over, that was a management problem. He stated he would like to maintain the practice. J. Sander stated it was a good idea to have meals and it made it more user friendly for people to attend the School Board meeting. Webster agreed it was a nice touch but money could be used elsewhere. Stebbins stated he hesitated to get rid of it completely. It would be nice to have at least some snacks, as people came directly from work to attend a night meeting. Orost appreciated the meals and assumed the administrators did too. Bezio agreed that there were many administrators who had already had a long day and it wasn't unreasonable to provide meals for them. However, he noted there was a health concern to the practice and it might be appropriate to have a designated eating area with appropriate distancing. There was no motion made to change the practice.

Approve Form 267 – Perkins Funds to Fiscal Agents: Remmers requested approval of the Vermont Association of Career and Tech Education Directors (VACTED) Consortium Agreement. Every year they were asked to pool the Perkins funds through a fiscal agent in order to pay for career tech and teacher training. These funds provided a base education through Vermont Technical College. This money was also used to support career and technology student organizations, such as the statewide Skills USA organization. The fiscal agent was typically one of the supervisory unions that one of the career centers resided in. This year the fiscal agent would be the North Country Supervisory Union. Stebbins made a motion, seconded by Bezio, to approve the VACTED Consortium Agreement. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Meetings – Small Group Discussions with Goal Setting: Gallagher asked that the committees meet to develop three actionable goals. Gallagher noted that this was the only supervisory union that had subcommittees of working groups. She noted these groups were a great way for members from many towns to work together on issues. The four groups were the social justice group, curriculum, IT, and finance. Committees then met from 7:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.

Central Office Update: Gallagher informed the Board that the District had initiated a COVID-19 Dashboard on the LNSU website which provided weekly updates of COVID cases. What the evidence showed was there was not a lot of illness in grades 7-12. Gallagher believed this was due to vaccination rates. Flo Kelly sent out a communication today to those students in grades 7-12 to voluntarily provide their vaccine status. The reason for that was if a person were vaccinated they wouldn't need to quarantine unless they had symptoms. If students weren't quarantined they were in school learning, which is where the District wanted them to be.

Unfortunately, 99% of all the cases that the District had so far were in the elementary schools: Hyde Park and Johnson. On Labor Day weekend, Diane Reilly worked solo for four days making 83 phone calls. Decisions were made with the Department of Health, however, they were not as available as they had been last year. David Manning and his staff made 101 phone calls to close contacts. Gallagher commended Reilly and Manning for their contact tracing, noting it took hours to do this. Last year communities were masking. Now community transmission was occurring and it was coming into the schools. 22.9% of Vermont cases were children. The District learned today that if a decision was made to close the school for a day or two, it was not the District's decision. The decision would come from the Department of Health. There were no remote learning options this year because that was not what was best for children. Those who stated their children learned beautifully last year were in the minority. If a student was out for two or three days they could get homework from their teachers. If a class was called out, the teachers were still in school and they would teach from the classroom. If more than 50% of the student body was in the building, it was counted as a school day.

Gallagher then stated that at a recent Board meeting a Waterville resident wanted the District to do more to encourage families to be involved in school matters. Therefore, Gallagher put out a request for members to participate in a Community Advisory Group. Six responses were received and all were from Johnson. The deadline for responses was Friday and she asked Board members to encourage people to participate. Orost would be co-chairing the community group with Gallagher.

Public forums would be continuing. Gallagher had a request to have some small business entrepreneurs speak about how they created their opportunity in Lamoille County. She had reached out to Elmore Mountain, Butternut Farm and several other local companies and they would be coming to speak with students and parents.

Gallagher thought that vaccines might soon be required for all school employees, along with the option to test. This was not a District decision, but a decision from the federal level.

Gallagher then spoke about masking, stating that people could have their own opinions, but what they were seeing at the schools was that masks were protecting students. Otherwise every student in Hyde Park and Johnson would likely be positive for COVID-19. However, masking was not occurring outside of school and the variant was ripping through families.

Nielsen stated he had the privilege of working with this school board, which was probably one of the most unified school boards he'd heard of during his time on the VSBA Board. Hearing stories about other school boards across the state, this was the most unified board and the board members were the most talented group of people he had worked with. Prior to this meeting he had met with Hyde Park members and expressed to them that beating up on the superintendent or the school principal wasn't helpful. As a Board member, the responsibility was to the school system, the teachers and administrators. Board members may have a different opinion about how things are handled; however, this Board had a liability

that needed to be dealt with. The Board was also working with a thousand students, not just a few individuals. Nielsen stated that the Board needed to stay together and if there were community issues the members needed to support other Board members and the administration. Without that there would be meetings like the one that took place in Franklin County. This group was a great team and he enjoyed working with everyone. At this time in society things were falling apart at the seams and yet this group was doing really well at staying together. He encouraged the group to stay the course. While it wouldn't be easy, the District would get through this.

Nielsen also reminded the Board that Reilly and Manning didn't have to spend their free time making all those calls, but they did it because they cared about the school and the students. He expressed his appreciation to both of them on behalf of the Board.

Clark reported she would be meeting next week with finance and coming to the Board with a tentative budget development schedule.

Principal/Director Updates: Gallagher explained that each principal would be sharing their goals for the year in this update.

Belvidere/Waterville: Epstein stated they had had a great start to the school year, despite all the conditions. There was laughter in the hallway and staff morale was high. Staff were supporting each other. Epstein's academic goal was to sit with teachers weekly to review data to see where students were academically. Her second goal was engagement. Epstein noted that Waterville had very strong traditions that had fallen away because of COVID. The community was missing those. Events in the past such as concerts and grandparent lunches had always been highly attended and they weren't able to do those now. A subcommittee was going to meet monthly to talk about alternate ways to engage the community. As part of her social emotional learning goal the staff would be attending a book study on a book called Everyday Social Emotional Learning in the Elementary Classroom. The book was filled with great strategies and things to do with students. The school now had a full time school counselor this year, which was going to be a great bonus for the school.

Cambridge: Anderson noted this year the school started the year COVID-free. She appreciated and sympathized with the amount of stress the other principals were dealing with in handling so many cases. Children were happy to be at school. It wasn't necessary to have masks off to see that students were smiling, happy, and glad to be together with their friends. The community was supporting the school as well. Anderson stated she only heard praise and cooperation regarding masks and safety protocols. Recovery was the focus to her goals for the year. Anderson wanted students and staff to be able to manage their stress. Last year it was important for staff to keep themselves healthy so they could also take care of their students. Therefore, she was using ESSER funds to hire a school-wide behaviorist who would also be a lead facilitator in restorative practices for students and faculty. This would provide ongoing support to students who might be struggling and would also help teachers. They would also be expanding their school counseling program. She hoped to provide a half-time school counselor to preschool children. Additionally, more curriculum would be taught in social emotional learning. There would also be support for staff in resilience and trauma informed practices. Anderson stated she had hired an additional interventionist with ESSER funds to help students who may need extra support in math and literacy.

Eden: Goodman thanked all Central Office, all building principals and administrative assistants for their help and support as she embarked on her new position. It was wonderful to work in such a supportive community. One of her goals was to work on engagement and to establish an engagement team at Eden. There was a new home school coordinator in the school, which would bring together the nurse, home school coordinator and early childhood educators to welcome students. Another goal was to have consistent routines both in the classroom and throughout the school so that students felt more comfortable knowing what was going to happen. The final goal was to strengthen the MTSS system. The MTSS coordinator would be working with them so that they review data strategically.

Hyde Park: Reilly stated that the school's first COVID case occurred on the first day of school. They were now on their second round in the third week of school. Adversity and challenges provided opportunities and the staff was fully supporting each other. This was tough to go through but it was building relationships. The majority of parents were outstanding and supportive. Reilly made close to 150 phone calls over the past two weeks and only two parents were upset. Reilly's goals around social emotional learning were getting a curriculum and program in the school. Her second goal was academic recovery. She was getting into classrooms, watching the teachers, having a walkthrough system and spending time with the new teachers at least once a week. Her third goal was student engagement. Getting students to come to school was one thing, but she wanted them to be excited about learning. The school staff was also working with the Restorative Center to address absenteeism and tardiness.

Johnson: Manning provided a COVID update. As of today, there were seven positive cases. 108 students, 48% of the school, were quarantined and not able to attend school. Manning noted that the challenge was that when COVID cases occurred, he and the nurse became full time COVID workers. This was hard for the system. They had a long meeting today with the Department of Health and essentially begged them for more support. A team was now assigned to them. Restrictions were in place and the school looked very much like it did last year with students being confined to the classroom. Unlike last year where every case at Johnson had no symptoms, this year students are experiencing symptoms and their recovery taking longer. The staff was unified, were incredibly helpful, and working together. Classroom teachers were delivering materials to the homes of their students.

Manning reported that when he was first hired at Johnson, the school was identified as one of the failing schools in the state, with low test scores on standardized tests. A lot of time and money had been spent on changing that and two years ago the State's annual snapshot of schools in the state showed that Johnson Elementary had met the standard. It was something the staff took a lot of pride in. As a result of the pandemic, the school was now in worse shape than two years ago in terms of student academic success. Manning's goals, therefore, were based on academic achievement. His goals were to support the quality of instruction, classroom adjustments to instruction (interventions), and ensure the educational support team improves its performance.

Middle School: Maurice stated her goals focused around students and teachers. The 100% Respect Campaign would build towards a student respect council in which the students would discuss what they needed to show respect and to feel respected across the community. That way they could both speak for themselves and be proactive in making sure that people treat them with respect. The teachers formed part of the guidance. Teachers would learn about restorative practices so they could mediate between students and work with the students themselves through restorative conversations to teach students the skills they may not already have. That work was being done in cooperation with Lamoille Restorative Center. Another goal of hers dealt with the DataWize process. This year they built a skills block into the curriculum to look at the data and use that as a basis for what skills students were missing so they could focus on that in six-week units. It allowed for the re-teaching of skills that students might not have had and the deepening of skills that everyone needed.

High School: Pirie stated that things were going fairly well at the high school and it was very busy. A lot of her day was spent being in the school, attending to students and making sure they were getting what they needed. Her goals focused on the social emotional wellness of the students. She was working alongside the Restorative Center on this goal. Student engagement and attendance was another important goal of hers and Jeremy Scannell was part of the intervention team working on that. Pirie noted they did have some students who were struggling with being back at school full time. Her final goal was related to academic achievement and success at school. Part of that effort involved trying to get a student support center off the ground at the high school.

GMTCC: Remmers noted that GMTCC was one of ten schools that had been accepted in the BPA equity practitioners network. Over the next two years GMTCC would go deep into the practices within the

school to ensure they were having equitable outcomes for the students. Remmers' goals were to review and revise employability skills using an equity lens, to review and revise GMTCC's admission procedures using that lens, and to expand mechanisms and structures for consistency.

Other Business: Stephanie Sweet stated she wanted to echo what Chair Nielsen had said earlier in the meeting. She noted they had been in survival mode for 18 months. She had worked with and had friends who worked in different schools districts and she was so grateful to be part of the LNSU. She noted there were silos between each building in other districts, and between Central Office and the Board. She believed the right person was at the helm of this District and she was very grateful to be part of this group.

Gallagher then talked about the importance of relationships. She noted the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent in Rutland had just walked out because they didn't have board support. Gallagher said it could take just one person to change the game and she thought it was important that the Board stick together. This administration had enjoyed good Board support. She recognized that the Board was in a position it hadn't been in before. Typically, Boards were often protected in difficult situations. The Board had been asked to make a difficult decision, which they did. Boards around the state and country were being harassed for their decision-making and you could see who rose to the challenge and who didn't. Gallagher encouraged the Board to keep rising and keep modeling good relationships. She stated she may be considered a "flatlander" but she paid taxes and this was her community and her children. She noted that some Boards were abusive to the administration. Fortunately this Board was not in that position, but Gallagher reminded members that everyone needed a kind word. It was always important to ask questions but it was important to do it respectfully. Staff and administrators were committed to this work. Gallagher asked that everyone continue to nurture the relationship.

Student Discussion: Gallagher asked that they go into Executive Session to discuss a student matter. B. Sander made a motion, seconded by Orost, to go into Executive Session. The Board went into Executive Session at 8:10 p.m.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:15 p.m.

Adjourn: A Board member made a motion to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.