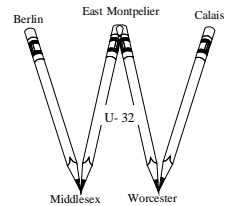


Washington Central Unified Union School District

WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.

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Bryan Olkowski
Superintendent



Washington Central Unified Union School District Special Board Meeting 6.2.21 5:00-7:30 PM

Board Members: Flor Diaz Smith, Lindy Johnson, Scott Thompson, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Kari Bradley, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Christopher McVeigh, Jill Olson, Jonathan Goddard, Vera Frazier

Administrators: Superintendent Bryan Olkowski, Human Resources Coordinator Carla Messier, Principal Steven Dellinger Pate, Interim Technology Director James Garrity, Principal Aaron Boynton, Principal Alicia Lyford, Principal Cat Fair, Principal Gillian Fuqua, Principal Casey Provost, Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction Jennifer Miller-Arsenault, Associate Principal Jody Emerson, Special Education Coordinator Julia Pritchard, Director of Special Services Kelly Bushey, Director of Student Services Lisa LaPlante, Business Administrator Lori Bibeau, Amy Molina

Others/Public: Amy Young, ORCA Media, Ben Weiss, David Powelson, Elizabeth Wirth, Ellen Dorsey, Madeleine Dougherty, Tyler Smith, David Delcore, Lisa Hannah, Chris Winters, Adrian Wade-Keeney, Caitlin Morgan, Caroline Grace, Cathy G, Christine Babcock, Deanna Murray, Drew Junkins, Erin Mooney, Honi Bean Barrett, Jill Abair, Jill Drury, Kara Rosenberg, Kate McCann, Brian Fischer, Steven Ushakov, Mary Bove, Michael Sherwin, Michelle Ksepka, Nicole Schaeffer, Kristine Chartrand, Jenn Ingersoll, Bekah Mandell, Patrick Whelley, Kathleen Bookchin, Kyle Landis-Marinello, Adam French, Alden Bird, Alison Cornwall, Aly, Anne Carter, April Davis, Barrett Jones, Ben Larrow, Brennan Lynch, Brittany Perry, Caitlyn Usticke, Chauntelle, Cindy and Mack Gardner-Morse, Colleen Purcell, Dan Schall, Danielle LaFleur Brooks, David Lawrence, Deborah Bloom, DL, Ellen Knoedler, Emily Levin, Erin Galligan-Baldwin, Hannah Brown, Heather Bower, Heather McLane, Holly Lane, Jeffrey Tuneberg, Jennifer Campbell, Jennifer Donovan, Jess Wills, John Boyd, Kathleen Bookchin, Kathryn Biggam, Katy Chabot, Kelly MacMartin, Kevin Nadzam, Kyle and Talitha Landis-Marinello, LP, Laura L, Lisa Wilson, Liz Guilfoyle, Maggie McGlynn, Mark Brown, Marylynne Strachan, Mckalyn Garrity Leclerc, Meg Allison, Mish Boreanaz, Myles Chater, Owen, Rachel Hernandez, Randy Brown, Richard Maizell, Rosemary Leach, Talitha L-M, Tammy Joslyn, Ted Nathanson, Tracy Martin, Ursula & Chris Stanley, Virginia Breer, Emily Smith, Kaili Kuiper, Lara Slesar, Will Baker, Laura Lafaille, Shelley Vermilya, Linda Emmons, Bekah Mandell, Lauren Melkonian, Melissa Haupt, Sarah Volinsky, Zach Gonzalez, Micha, Alyson Mahony, Andrew Davis, Christiana Martin, Amy Urling, Ela Chapin, Elizabeth Mark, Shana Kotelchuck, Mary Monteith, Allison Fayle, Max's iphone, Chris Blackburn, Justin, Daniel Diddlemeyer, Megan McLane, Karen Lieberman, Barrett Jones

1. **Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.**
2. **Executive Session – Student Matter, Negotiations, & Personnel:**
Chris McVeigh moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing a student matter, negotiations, and personnel. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, this motion carried unanimously and the board went into Executive Session at 5:05 p.m.
During Executive Session the Board discussed negotiations, a personnel matter, and two student matters. The board came out of Executive Session at 6:14.
3. **Welcome**
 - 3.1. **Reception of Guests:** Flor Diaz Smith welcomed those present and thanked everyone for being patient during a longer Executive Session than had been anticipated.
 - 3.2. **Public Comments**

Zach Gonzalez: read a statement related to the Curriculum Management Audit. He urged the board to reject the findings.

Hannah Brown: supported what Zach had reported - it is important to share this information in terms that the public can understand, not in education jargon. She stated that she has deep concerns with making broad decisions based on data from the past year, given the pandemic.

Lisa Hanna: asked the board to consider what the core beliefs of WCUUSD are - what do we value? What are the implications of the language in the report? She stated that we value open communication, teacher voice, student agency/ engagement, teacher expertise, students as whole people. She asked, who needs to be invited to the table to shape our next steps?

Anne Carter: -stated that she saw a position on School Spring for a math curriculum position. She expressed concern with seeking this position, given the work that WCUUSD has done over the past years under the guidance of the current Director of Curriculum. Do we need to reinvent the wheel? She stated that as an instructional coach, she wonders why the superintendent did not seek her input or share his intentions.

Steven Ushakov: read a letter on behalf of some staff at U-32. He spoke about the shared trauma that teachers have experienced, and continue to experience this year. He spoke about the inappropriateness of having a curriculum audit during this time. He stated that curriculum review should be done thoughtfully, carefully, and seriously. He spoke about the impact this has had on staff morale. He offered suggested alternatives: classroom observations during summer services, using curriculum camp, observe via zoom or other online means. He noted that there is such a thing as “bad data,” and “bad data” will drive bad decisions.

Patrick Whelley: stated that a curriculum review is inappropriate this year. He took issue with some of the specific findings from the report.

Madeleine Dougherty: spoke about concerns with the focus on preparing students for assessments. She noted that private interests do not always align with the interests and values of public education.

Bekah Mandell: asked for the complete document, not just the summary document. She asked how suggested interventions are going to address the gap related to students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. She expressed concern about staff being in the school during the audit, and asked why parents were not notified (related to student safety re: COVID-19). She stated that this process has not felt transparent. She expressed that it has been hard to stay connected to the work of the board, since board consolidation has happened.

Mckalyn McClerc: indicated that she has been shocked at the lack of transparency in the process. She asked for evidence about what makes U-32 unique. She hopes that the audit takes into consideration the uniqueness of U-32.

3.3. Agenda Revisions: Flor Diaz Smith indicated that the board will move personnel action to the first action item on the agenda.

4. Reports

Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Retirements, Leave of Absence and Changes in FTE: Jonas Eno Van Fleet moved to approve the following new teacher hires:

Elizabeth Guido, Amanda Morse, Jennifer Ingersoll, Michael Abadi, and Mckensie Kurnow. Seconded by Scott Thompson. Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether the two positions should be noted: Amanda Morse and Jenn Ingersoll, contingent upon hiring Special Education and English teachers. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet amended his motion to reflect this contingency. **This motion carried unanimously. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to accept the following resignation: Kate Liptak – Berlin Elementary music teacher. Seconded by Scott Thompson.**

Discussion: Diane Nichols-Fleming noted, with thanks and appreciation. Vera Frazier indicated that she is really sad that this position we are in, has led her to this resignation. **This motion carried unanimously.**

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the proposed change in FTE for Tyler Smith. Seconded by Scott Thompson, this motion carried unanimously. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the following new hires: Christopher O'Brien, Karoline May, Jessica Wills. Seconded by Scott Thompson.

Discussion: Chris McVeigh asked Superintendent Olkowski to describe the principal search process for the Rumney position. Superintendent Olkowski described the process. He had required performance tasks that involved other principals from WCUUSD. Chris McVeigh expressed concern around potential conflict of interest. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked for clarification around the search process for the principal and the assistant principal position. Stephen Looke stated that it would be prudent for the board to examine potential conflicts of interest for employees in the district and to develop some process around decision making in these cases. He noted that this is not a unique circumstance, where a staff member at a school has a child or children attend the same school. **This motion carried unanimously. Jonas moved that the board accept the Superintendent's recommendation for the three student matters that were discussed during executive session. Seconded by Diane Nichols-Fleming, this motion carried unanimously.** Superintendent Olkowski had shared a memo to the board about the process to date in the hiring of a Business Administrator in light of Lori Bibeau's retirement. He asked the board to authorize him to offer contracts for interim positions during the vacancy and search process. Chris McVeigh asked for clarification. Some discussion followed around the possibility of a temporary contract to Lori Bibeau for some cross-over time period. Lindy Johnson expressed concern over approving a contract when the board does not know the details of the position. Kari Bradley asked whether this can wait for two weeks. He stated that there is not enough detail on the proposal for him to feel comfortable taking action. He asked, what are we risking by having the contingency plan in place, as proposed? Flor Diaz Smith asked for a firmer contingency plan for the board to consider. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked whether there is anything that precludes a retiree from working with the district as a consultant. Stephen Looke stated that he does not wish to hinder the ability of the district to continue to function; however, he would like a more fleshed out proposal.

Lindy Johnson asked why we would need contracts when we are talking about employees who are already in place. The board will revisit this at the next board meeting.

4.1. Education Quality

4.1.1. Discussion of Student Achievement Data and Curriculum Management:

Superintendent Olkowsi indicated that he sees this as a tool to improve our practice. He previewed the presentation and introduced Jeff Tuneberg. Mr. Tuneberg presented a slideshow overview of the Curriculum Review. He stated that the report and the executive summary should be available to the district sometime next week. He invited questions from board members. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked - can you describe the educational philosophy that is at the foundation of the rubrics from the evaluation? What types of recommendations are you NOT making to us? Do you have data about how others have used these reports? Can you speak to the importance of leadership and stakeholder buy-in? Mr. Tuneberg noted that “culture trumps strategy” - so culture, and leadership, make a difference. Some discussion followed. Jill Olson stated that she is looking forward to seeing the full report. She noted that the presentation felt very “jargony” and she is hoping that the report will help her better understand. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she would have appreciated having the report in advance of the presentation. She stated that the questions are not being resistant; they are an attempt to better understand. She stated that she looks forward to the meat of the report. She asked, as a board, what are our next steps? When do we dig into this? She stated that the board had been very clear to teachers about their expectations during COVID-19, and she does not feel that some of the evaluative comments in the presentation were appropriate and fair, given the pandemic. Kari Bradley asked about the response planning. Which of the recommendations would provide the most benefit? The most optimal place to start? The high impact areas that might provide optimal benefit for more modest cost? Mr. Tuneberg replied that a policy decision around curriculum management would be the first step to give direction to administration. He noted that response planning is a 3 to 5 year process. Vera Frazier asked whether interventionists were included in the math and literacy audit. He noted that they were included in survey information and in providing student artifacts. Chris McVeigh asked, in terms of a response, shouldn't we have teaching staff input? Mr. Tuneberg indicated that the superintendent's response should be sought first, and teaching staff input can be sought as a reflection to the superintendent's response. Flor Diaz Smith invited input from the community.

Ben Weiss: Was this a curriculum review or governance review? He noted that he would have appreciated having the report in advance. He shares the concern about the achievement gap. He stated that teachers do not appreciate speaking out at board meetings and taking a risk in job security. He noted that the board has been asking for teachers to be more present and involved in board meetings; yet when 200 teachers provide input to the board (vote of no confidence) they have received no response from the board. He asked where teachers are supposed to go with concerns and input. He asked the board to think about ways the lines of communication can be open, and not remain closed.

Holly Lane: Followed up on the idea of stakeholder buy-in. She wonders how the board and superintendent, who seems to be prioritizing a low-trust culture, see this succeeding. She stated that she is hugely concerned. If there is no confidence, there is no buy-in. She stated that we are looking at numbers and not the whole picture and the actual people.

Kathleen Bookchin: Spoke about the need for public discourse. She expressed concern - why was this review completed during a pandemic year? She responded to the finding that the district is lacking in a district-wide approach. Our district has not had a chance yet to be one district. She stated that, as a parent and taxpayer, she feels that we just paid for something that was done at an inappropriate time. She noted that her child's photo is in the handout and that she has not provided consent. She suggested that those present tune into the national debate around standardized testing. She does not feel that this curriculum review addresses the things that she cares about as a parent: e.g. disparity re: poverty, disparity re: schools within the district. She spoke about concerns such as nutrition, outdoor learning, and science - these are things that matter to her.

Kyle Landis-Marinello: indicated that the timing for the report could not have been worse. He stated that this does not help with the efforts to come together on the heels of Act 46.

Kara Rosenberg: This is a deficit review, looking for what is wrong. When you ask "what is not good enough?" you will find what is not good enough. This is not an asset review, thinking about how to use the resources that we have - this is a huge change from the way we have operated. "The worst thing we can do to children is to not prepare them to take a test." She took umbrage with that statement from the presentation. She noted that Act 77 is a state law. She stated that as a teacher she has a desire to improve, always. She asked "Do we have the climate in this district to achieve such change?" She does not think so.

Emily Levin: She thanked teachers for their herculean effort. She stated that this presentation feels very out of touch. She expressed that she values the unique needs and interests of each child, not a cookie cutter approach. She expressed concerns around the disparities that are reflected in the data, however, she feels that the teachers need to be at the center of the process to improve equity.

Drew Junkins: Regarding "buy in" - he does not think it is present at this time as there is not trust for the superintendent.

Katy Chabot: The board is not the expert in education, the educators are the experts and they should be brought into the process. This report removes teachers from this, and brings outside people who do not have current experience in education. She stated that anything that keeps teachers out of the process is going to be ineffective. The board should celebrate and keep empowered the excellent and highly qualified teachers.

David Lawrence: Everything that we had feared about Act 46 seems to be coming true. Community participation in the oversight of our school district has been decreased. He stated that he is impressed with the amount of people who have attended this meeting. He stated that he often attends board meetings, but this presentation tonight took him by surprise. He asked the board to encourage public participation. How are we going to foster it? He noted that the principal selection process at Rumney has been extremely disappointing. There has been recent experience in how to involve the community in the process and this was disregarded in this case.

Marylynn Strachan: Stated that the curriculum review has been in discussion for several years. She noted that there is an equity gap and that not many of those present have lived it. She stated that it is time to move forward and engage in a curriculum review, professional development, and how to move forward to close the equity gap. She thanked everyone for their engagement and invited them to consider the data. She stated that she has sent multiple emails to the board, the superintendent and administrators, about how her children are flourishing and how they were held back by practices that were in place.

5. Board Operations:

5.1. Negotiations

5.2. VSBA Resolutions: **Scott Thompson moved that the board join the resolution regarding S.13, as prepared, around pupil weighting, asking for the entire VSBA membership to support the study's findings and advocate for an expedient and thoughtful implementation. Seconded by Chris McVeigh. This motion carried unanimously.** The resolution will be submitted to VSBA before June 15th so it can be included in the annual VSBA meeting in the fall.

6. Personnel (this took place earlier in the meeting)

6.1.

6.2. Business Administrator Update

7. Future Agenda Items

7.1. WCUUSD Name

7.2. Assessment Needs for Building Bright Futures

7.3. Diversifying Educator Workforce

7.4. Net Metering Proposal

7.5. Strategic Planning

8. Board Reflection:

Flor Diaz Smith stated that at this late hour we are going to wrap up the meeting. She noted that board meetings are not the best way to engage the community and that the board is working on creating better ways to engage the community.

9. Adjourn: **Lindy Johnson moved to adjourn at 9:28 p.m. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, this motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Stoudt, Board Recording Secretary