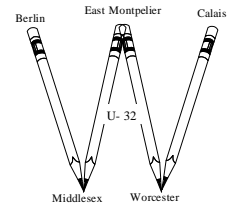


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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 Board Meeting Minutes Approved 10.7.20 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Present by Teleconference*:

Board Members: Flor Diaz Smith, Lindy Johnson, Scott Thompson, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Dorothy Naylor (by phone), Chris McVeigh, Kari Bradley, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Jaiel Pulskamp, George Gross, Jonathan Goddard, Karoline May, Jill Olson, Townes DeGroot, Anna Farber

Administrators: Superintendent Bryan Olkowski, Technology Consultant Jim Garrity, Business Administrator Lori Bibeau, Principal Alicia Lyford, Curriculum Director Jen Miller-Arsenault, Principal Gillian Fuqua, Student Services Director Kelly Bushey, Principal Cat Fair, Associate Principal Jody Emerson, Principal Aaron Boynton, Student Affairs Director Amy Molina

Others/Public: Danielle Lafleur Brooks, Jessica Heinz, Amy Young, Benjamin Weiss, Claire Gallagher, David Delcore, Ellen Dorsey, Holly Lane, Jamie Bohn, Jes Wills, Kate, Rob, Tyler Smith, worcesterhannas, Caitlyn Usticke, David Lawrence, ORCA Media

1. **Call to Order:** Scott Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m
2. **Welcome**
 - 2.1. **Reception of Guests:** Scott Thompson welcomed the guests.
 - 2.2. **Public Comments:** Danielle Lafleur Brooks shared her experience as a parent of a third grader who was removed from the 3rd grade online classroom with K. Rob. She described the experience with the online teaching program that her child was switched to. Her family is unsatisfied with this option. She asked WCUUSD to consider hiring a teacher for this, or to at least hire a paraeducator to help with administering this program.

Jessica Heinz read a written statement, as a parent of a third grader. She had sent an email in September, outlining her concerns. She explained that her daughter had been thriving in the classroom led by Kate Rob. She described her dissatisfaction with the current remote learning offering through VTVLC.

Scott Thompson indicated that the board will be addressing this later in the meeting during the Superintendent's Report.
 - 2.3. **Agenda Revisions:** Dorothy Naylor asked to move Item 4.2 to the end of the meeting so that if it needs to be shortened, it can be, to end by 9:00 for the scheduled VP debate. Scott Thompson asked to have a very brief Executive Session before personnel action occurs tonight. (before Item 6 on the agenda.) (Later in the meeting, this revision was withdrawn.)

Both of these revisions were accepted.
 - 2.4. **Accept U-32 recommendation for Student Representative:** Superintendent Olkowski thanked the U32 administration for their work on this effort, and he welcomed Anna Farber. Board members accepted this recommendation and welcomed Anna Farber.

2.5. Student Reports: Townes DeGroot shared that Monday is Indigenous People's Day, so students will not attend. Anna shared that PSATs are scheduled for October 14th. Townes reported on some of the fall sports. Anna shared that the foodservice offerings have expanded. Scott Thompson invited both Townes and Anna to share with the board in the future, from their work writing for The Chronicle.

3. Board Operations

3.1. Board Goals

3.1.1. Board Governance Goal: Flor Diaz Smith shared that the Agenda creation team had created the following draft goals:

1. The school board will develop a superintendent job description by _____ and complete

the superintendent evaluation by _____.

2. The school board will formalize board roles and operations by completing the following:

Create a board norms document by _____ (would include hot buttons) NOV 18

Create a board roles description by _____

3. Have board members complete board training (would include communication with

teachers and community members).

4. The school board will conduct a needs assessment to evaluate district's progress toward focusing on learning as a unified district.

Chris McVeigh had shared a document with board members related to evaluation of Superintendent. Board members agreed that one of the first steps is to define the job description of the Superintendent. Superintendent Olkowski had reached out to the Vermont Superintendents Association for guidance around drafting the job description. He spoke about the need to delineate board roles, board norms, board job description, board goals. He stated that there are a variety of ways to evaluate the superintendent and he suggested that the board go into Executive Session as needed to develop the evaluation process. He suggested that creating goals, board responsibilities and superintendent responsibilities be created by December 2020 in light of COVID19 affecting the timeline.

Flor Diaz Smith suggested that the board consider a draft by the first meeting in November, and that by November 18th, board description and board norms be agreed upon.

Kari Bradley suggested that the first goal should include what is the basis of the evaluation - to add criteria for the evaluation and name a specific goal.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked what the VSBA offers for resources regarding Superintendent Evaluation. Superintendent Olkowski shared that VSBA offers a training (at a cost). He will share with board members the information he has gathered related to Superintendent Evaluation.

Karoline May asked what is the process for providing input into this process (e.g. the needs assessment), while adhering to open meeting law. Scott Thompson clarified that board members can share documents via email, but are not to edit them or discuss them until the board meeting.

Kari Bradley stated that it is important to provide new board member orientation each year.

3.1.2. Student Achievement Goal: Kari Bradley shared that the Education Quality Committee had met before this meeting to consider two draft goals, and expect to provide a draft for the board's consideration at the next board meeting.

4. Reports

4.1. Superintendent

4.1.1. Remote Learning Update: Superintendent Olkowski had provided a remote learning class size update eight days ago. He shared that at this time the preferred mode is in-person learning and we are faced with choosing imperfect options regarding remote learning. He stated that it is an imperfect option, in an imperfect world, at an imperfect time. He noted the options that were faced: continue as is which was overwhelming to teachers due to class sizes, or move to VTVLC offerings for some students to reduce class sizes. He stated that this was not a unilateral decision; he had discussed with the leadership team. He expressed regret that the communication to students and families about this change was not satisfactory. Attempts had been made to reach families but not all were successful.

Scott Thompson noted that the administration had reached this solution as the board had provided feedback to solve the class size issue and personnel issues.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet shared that he has a child in the 4th grade remote class. He had asked his child whether there has been an announcement to the students to explain the change and his child was not aware of any announcement to explain.

Chris McVeigh followed up on the VTVLC teacher - had he understood that the teacher was from Florida? Superintendent Olkowski explained the staffing for VTVLC - they come from around Vermont. He explained some of the logistics as he understands them, regarding VTVLC teaching.

Jen Miller Arsenault shared that the curriculum for VTVLC had been developed in Florida; this may explain why the idea of a teacher from Florida came up. She explained that she has met with both of the teachers, third and fifth grade, and that contact with each family has been attempted. She stated that establishing community is important and efforts to that effect are being made. She shared some of the meetings she has had with the teachers. She is meeting tomorrow morning with the fourth grade teacher to continue to try to ease the transition.

Karoline May stated that both parents had advocated eloquently for their children and she thanked them for coming to the meeting and speaking to the board. She stated that this decision was at the superintendent level and she thinks it was appropriate to make it so. As a board member, she would like to leave it at the superintendent level. At the same time she noted that the board appreciates hearing about the experiences that were shared tonight.

Lindy Johnson stated that people had reached out to her and she had followed up with the administration and had heard that other options had been considered and that this was not a unilateral decision.

Superintendent Olkowski reiterated that he had consulted with the leadership team; there were a variety of opinions but that he bears sole responsibility for making the decision.

Superintendent Olkowski shared that East Montpelier is the only school building that is used on Election Day.

Alicia Lyford had reviewed a plan with her staff to have a planned remote school day on Election Day. She stated that she is following the guidance from the Agency of Education about remote learning; this will be a trial run, and she is happy to report back to the board after. Superintendent Olkowski thanked her for her leadership in this issue.

4.1.2. Director of Technology Search Update: Superintendent Olkowski shared that he had tasked himself with reviewing the roles of the various positions at Central Office. He had reviewed the Technology Director Job Description, with input from Keith MacMartin. He has drafted a new job description for the board to consider tonight. The current job description on Schoolspring is the previous iteration.

Jim Garrity introduced himself; he is a consultant based in Delaware. He facilitated a discussion with the board around the job description draft.

Flor Diaz Smith moved to approve the Director of Technology Job Description as presented. Seconded by Jill Olson. Discussion: Chris McVeigh asked how different this draft is from the previous. Jim Garrity had tracked changes in the draft for the board's consideration. Kari Bradley asked whether the board is required to approve this. Superintendent Olkowski stated that he likes to have the board approve changes in job descriptions as a matter of practice. Flor Diaz Smith stated that she would like to encourage diversity of personnel in these positions. **This motion carried unanimously.**

4.1.3. Personnel Updates: Superintendent informed the board that we still have a number of openings but do not have a great deal of applicants. He noted that due to the circumstances, the system is still fragile and there are challenges ahead. (e.g. flu season) He noted the shortage of subs; he stated that last week he had had to send some central office staff members to fill in for substitutes in order to keep the school open on a given day. Some discussion followed around staff wellness under these challenging circumstances.

Superintendent Olkowski shared that much of the staff has had no reprieve during the summer.

Chris McVeigh asked, have we alerted parents to the potential of having to move to remote learning or close school for the day due to staffing/ sub shortage? Superintendent Olkowski will do so, in a newsletter.

Flor Diaz Smith suggested making an announcement on Front Porch Forum to seek substitutes. She stated that she hopes the focus on staff wellness continues to stay in the forefront.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked Mr. Garrity whether he had to quarantine when he came into Vermont from Delaware. He shared the precautions he had taken, as well as that he is considered an essential worker.

4.1.4. Central Office Job Descriptions: This was discussed above in the context of Director of Technology.

4.1.5. Legislative Update: Superintendent Olkowski reviewed the most recent Legislative Update.

4.1.6. Calais Elementary Ventilation: Superintendent Olkowski had shared a memo to the board, dated September 30, 2020, about this project. Cat Fair explained that she has been discussing and planning how to conduct student learning during this time. She would like to plan for remote learning during some of this time, since it is scheduled to occur in December when outdoor learning will be a challenge and when cold and flu season will have arrived. Superintendent Olkowski thanked Cat Fair, Lori Bibeau and Bill Ford for their leadership on this project.

4.2. Policy Committee

4.2.1. First Reading for policies to be adopted on 10/21/20: C20 Student Conduct and Discipline; C46 Interrogation or Searches of Students by Law Enforcement or Other Non-School Personnel; C49 Kindergarten Entrance Age; D3 Responsible Computer, Internet & Network Use; D4 Title Comparability; D5 Animal Dissection; D6 Class Size; E1 Title 1 Parent Involvement Compacts, F1 Travel Reimbursement

Chris McVeigh moved to table this agenda item until the next board meeting. Seconded by Lindy Johnson, this motion carried unanimously.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1. Approve Minutes from 9.12.20 and 9.16.20: Flor Diaz Smith moved to approve the minutes of September 12 and September 16, 2020. Seconded by Jaiel Pulskamp. Discussion: Superintendent Olkowski pointed out an error in the September 16th minutes; Chris McVeigh noted that he had been present at the September 12th meeting. **This motion carried, with noted edits.**

5.2. Approve Board Orders: Lindy Johnson moved to approve board orders in the following amounts: \$318,987.08; \$15,229.95; \$77,209.80. Seconded by Diane Nichols-Fleming, this motion carried unanimously.

6. Personnel

6.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Retirements, Leave of Absence and Changes in FTE

Lindy Johnson moved to accept the nomination of Jason Kelley for Math Teacher at U32. Seconded by Jaiel Pulskamp. Some discussion followed about his related experience as noted on the nomination form. **This motion carried unanimously.**

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to accept the resignation of Mary Lynn Crosson-Stewart, School Nurse. Seconded by Lindy Johnson. Superintendent Olkowski explained that this does create a shortage but human resources are working to solve it. Additionally, the COVID19 Coordinator has been helping to fill in when possible. **This motion carried unanimously.**

7. Public Comments: Scott Thompson invited a second round of public comments.

Corinne Stridsberg indicated that she has a hard time accepting the decision that was made around remote learning. Her understanding is that this was forced upon families, and unexpected, and was not at all what families thought they were signing up for this year.

Jessica Heinz stated that she feels that the superintendent made this decision without considering the guiding principles for remote learning. She does not think it reflects the best interest of students; she feels that the board should be responding to the concerns that were expressed. She stated that she is discouraged and shocked.

Holly Lane, an East Montpelier parent, stated that she feels that Kate Rob has been heroic. She and her husband have written letters of concern around equity and around overcrowding of the classroom. She feels that the district made this decision based on the bottom line, not based on the best interest of children. She asked for the board to answer the question - what has happened? and why? She does not feel satisfied with the Superintendent's response to her concerns. She thanked the board for taking her comment but she noted that she is unbelievably disappointed.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet replied to the concerns, noting that the board stepping in to take decision making away from the Superintendent is an extraordinary act. He stated that this is Superintendent Olkowski's first year on the job and he can't imagine the challenge he has faced, coupled with COVID19. He noted that Superintendent Olkowski had indicated that he had consulted with leadership and had taken the best possible step under imperfect circumstances. He stated that the board at this time should not step in with some sort of "veto" power. He stated however that he would like to continue to discuss and be aware of this issue.

Danielle LaFleur Brooks shared that the learning model ("Mastery Learning") is problematic, on top of the other challenges. There is a mismatch and a gap. Again she asked that consideration be given to hiring staff to help; for example, could the CARES funding be used? She asked the board to keep in mind the needs of eight-year-old children.

Caitlyn Usticke spoke on behalf of her fourth grade student in the remote classroom. She recalled that the Superintendent had indicated that "in person learning" was a priority; she does not think this is appropriate, as there are 88 students learning remotely. She stated that fourth grade students had not been told. She asked the board to reconsider this decision.

Scott Thompson asked the board whether they would like to allow for a second round of public comments. They would.

Jessica Heinz asked board members to inquire of administrators and teachers, what had been discussed. She believes this was a top down decision; for example, she told Kate Rob, who did not know. She again expressed her dissatisfaction with this decision, and asked the board to do its due diligence.

8. Future Agenda Items

- Policies from tonight's agenda
- Central Office Job Descriptions
- Superintendent Evaluation (possible Executive Session)
- Negotiations (possible Executive Session)

9. Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Stoudt, Board Recording
Secretary

