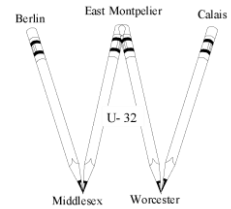


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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 8.5.2020 6:00 PM – 10:13 PM

Present by Teleconference*:

Board Members: Flor Diaz Smith, Lindy Johnson, Scott Thompson, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Dorothy Naylor, Stephen Looke, Chris McVeigh, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Townes DeGroot, Jonathan Goddard, Jaiel Pulskamp, Jill Olson

Administrators: Superintendent Bryan Olkowski, Technology Director Keith MacMartin, U-32 Associate Principal Jody Emerson, Principal Alicia Lyford, Principal Casey Provost, Principal Aaron Boynton, Principal Cat Fair, Director of Curriculum Jen Miller-Arsenault, Director of Student Services Kelly Bushey, HR Coordinator Carla Messier, Business Administrator Lori Bibeau, Amy Molina, Principal Gillian Fuqua

Others/Public: David Lawrence, Glenn Gannon, Caitlin Morgan, Lisa Stoudt, Ursula Stanley, Kathy Christie, Robin Gannon, Mary Monteith, Jill Drury, D Hann, Doc Gordon, Corinne Stridsberg, Alec Benedict, Anya, Barclay Johnson, Ben Larrow, Flora, Melanie Webster, Sarah Pollard, Megan McClane, Meg Allison, Lisa Hanna, Kim Sturgis, Kelly MacMartin, Larraby Fellows, Deborah Van Ness, Melanie Webster, Peter Hirschfeld, Will Baker, Aaron Moore, Alison Soccodato, Richard Maizell, Amy Scribner, Kim Sturgis, Ben Weiss, Beth L, ORCA Video

1.0 Call to Order: Scott Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2.0 Welcome:

- 2.1. Reception of Guests
- 2.2. Agenda Revisions: Scott Thompson noted that the board had received a revised agenda that includes some personnel actions.
- 2.3. Public Comments: Scott Thompson reminded those present that in two weeks, an hour long public forum is planned. Sometime during tonight's meeting has been designated for planning this forum.
- 2.4. Student Reports: Townes DeGroot shared that the students with which he has had contact have expressed concerns around: safety, equity. Students are concerned about what their school experiences will look like, but at the same time are concerned around safety and health. Some of the students that have been

struggling throughout the pandemic continue to worry that there does not seem to be an end to the struggles. He noted that there is disappointment from students about not being able to participate in activities, and some have expressed frustration with lack of communication about how, and if, extra -curricular activities might occur. He shared that there is some excitement from students about finally being able to participate in person at school.

3.0 Board Operations (Discussion/Action)

3.1. Community Forum Planning: Superintendent Olkowski shared that the hope is that we will be able to share more specifics in two weeks about what the school experience will look like. The plan is for an hour long session; he would like to have some sort of presentation, and then provide opportunities to questions and comments. Flor Diaz Smith indicated that it would be nice to have some teachers take part in the presentation - for example, an elementary and a high school teacher. The plan is a twenty-minute presentation and allowing the rest of the forum for questions/ comments. Lindy Johnson stated that she believes people want to be assured that distance learning in the fall will look different than distance learning in March - June. Diane Nichols-Fleming indicated that she would like to have a place to collect questions in advance, as she doesn't want people to be frustrated that their questions/ concerns were not addressed. Scott Thompson suggested that people at the meeting tonight who have questions/ comments, can email the school board. Superintendent Olkowski indicated that he is currently collecting questions, including from the union representation. He suggested that a "FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions" - and answers - might be shared, for example on the website which went live today.

Chris McVeigh suggested that the website share decisions that have been made, rather than sharing what will happen in the future. For example, share, from a physical standpoint, what is happening versus sharing for example, what seems like a policy statement. Superintendent Olkowski stated that a specific *Remote Learning Plan* is shared on the website; this is a five-page document. A mailing is planned, and he assured the board that as updated information becomes available, it will be shared and uploaded.

Diane Nichols-Fleming suggested, would a virtual tour be available for families? She shared a concern that the forum is on the 19th but families are being asked to make their decisions about their children's schooling options before then.

Superintendent Olkowski also stated that principals are sharing information with families via newsletters; these include specific plans and photos of classrooms and spaces as they are made ready.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet reiterated Diane Nichols-Fleming's suggestion that, because parents are not allowed into the school buildings, video or photo images that can be shared will be helpful.

Lindy Johnson shared that she has witnessed some of the improvements to the buildings, including Berlin and Doty.

- 3.2. Wellness Updates: Cat Fair and Elizabeth Wirth had prepared a presentation; Cat Fair facilitated. Flor Diaz Smith suggested that she might present a summarized version at the public forum. Superintendent Olkowski thanked Cat Fair, Elizabeth Wirth, and the Task Force, for the ongoing work. He noted that keeping *everyone safe* is the number one priority. Superintendent Olkowski shared some of the plans in place for the beginning of the school year, to focus on social/ emotional needs, and getting reacquainted with back-to-school routines.
- 3.3. Business Administrator Succession: Superintendent Olkowski shared that he and Lori Bibeau have spoken about the desire to hire a business administrator and to have some overlap between the two. Stephen Looke suggested that the board decide when we would like the person to be hired, and how long the “overlap” period should be - then to work backward, using that timeline. He suggested that he would like a minimum of three-month overlap period. Flor Diaz Smith asked for Lori Bibeau to help update the job description. Lindy Johnson indicated that she does not think more than three months is necessary; she spoke about the financial implications during the overlap period. Chris McVeigh stated that he supports a three-month overlap at a minimum. He would like to search broadly, and would suggest another person with financial expertise take part on the hiring committee (in addition to Lori Bibeau.) He does not think we should “under train” or “under sell” what we need in this position. Jonathan Goddard stated that he agrees at least a three-month training period is needed. He stated that Lori Bibeau’s knowledge is invaluable and the training that can occur during the overlap will be critical. Dorothy Naylor suggested that we ask Lori Bibeau what time frame she suggests. Ms. Bibeau suggested making a decision by February, keeping in mind the job searches that occur in the spring. Lindy Johnson noted that if the candidate is currently working for a school district then they might not be available for a cross over period during the school year, as they will likely be under contract through June. Scott Thompson suggested beginning the process around September - e.g. drafting a job description and creating a hiring committee and timeline. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the board should consider whether to hire a consultant. Lindy Johnson suggested putting this on a future agenda. Our focus currently needs to be on starting the school year in light of COVID19.
- 3.4. Board Retreat: Flor Diaz Smith shared that she and Superintendent Olkowski had met with the board retreat facilitator. The potential date is September 12th, breakfast and lunch. She shared that the planning is still underway, and the planning committee will share more information at the next meeting. Board members discussed whether this date is tenable. (It is.) Superintendent Olkowski will let the facilitator know that September 12th is the firm date.
- 3.5. CVCC Regional Advisory Board Representative: Flor Diaz Smith is still planning to represent the board; she asked for a board member who would be willing to serve as alternate.

Lindy Johnson moved to nominate Stephen Looke as alternate representative to CVCC Regional Advisory Board. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.

4.0 Reports (Discussion/Action)

4.1. Superintendent

4.1.1. School Opening Status Update: Superintendent Olkowski thanked the board for the opportunity to have questions shared, and hopefully answered. He noted that the biggest guiding principle is *flexibility*. We are trying to do something that we have never done before. Agency of Education, CDC and Department of Health have provided guidance for opening schools. He noted that the social distancing requirement is a challenge for many facilities; we are fortunate at WCUUSD that our school buildings can accommodate this.

4.1.2. Board Q&A: Scott Thompson suggested that if board members have questions that are not addressed tonight, that they email to Superintendent Olkowski.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that he has a list of at least 30 questions that he has provided in writing to the superintendent. He asked how many plans were considered before deciding on in-person in grades Pre-K through 8 and hybrid in grades 9-12. Superintendent Olkowski stated that the leadership team had decided on prioritizing in-person for grades Pre-K - 8. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet noted that other schools in the state have a wide variety of options, and he asked whether, and how many, other models had been considered. Steven Dellinger-Pate shared about the decision making at U-32 around the hybrid, one week on, one week off model.

Jonathan Goddard asked, what is identified as the highest priority? Superintendent Olkowski - the ability to be flexible and to pivot as needed. Whatever plan is created, is contingent upon staffing. He stated that August 12th has been named the deadline for staff to request leave. Dorothy Naylor asked for specifics about elementary school classrooms' setups. Some discussion followed around the setup of desks in a row, facing forward - this is not ideal and is not typically how we arrange elementary classrooms; however, it will be necessary for social distancing. Jill Olson asked whether the options for families for grades preK-8 is binary - in other words, do they have to choose between full time in person or full time remotely? Superintendent Olkowski - yes, at this time the option is binary.

Chris McVeigh - if a student or staff tests positive, what happens in terms of quarantining for the rest of the school population? What is the threshold at which the decision to go completely remote would be made? Superintendent Olkowski - if a staff member or student tests positive, superintendent will have to decide, in conjunction with Department of

Health, whether to close a school or a district, according to the data. Elizabeth Wirth shared that there is no cut and dried guideline from the Department of Health, each case will be decided according to its unique circumstances. Some discussion of contact tracing followed.

Superintendent Olkowski stated that that state has not provided information around criteria for going completely remote.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked whether testing will happen before school opens; will there be surveillance testing in an ongoing way; who pays for testing? When a test comes back positive, what next? Will we have access to the pop up testing facility? Superintendent Olkowski indicated that testing will not be available before the beginning of the school year, due to the contagious nature of the disease (in other words a person can test negative one day but be positive the next). Elizabeth Wirth stated that the number of cases in Vermont does not indicate a need for testing at this time.

Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether there will be planned mask breaks for children; will there be scheduled outdoor times that will allow for mask-free time? Superintendent Olkowski shared that the availability of outdoor learning opportunities will vary from facility to facility. There has been some discussion around building tolerance and stamina for mask wearing. Elizabeth Wirth stated that the most important times for children to wear masks will be in hallways, etc., times when physical distancing is not possible. She spoke about the recognition that children will need modeling, reminders, and breaks. She stated that the summer program did not have problems with children being able to tolerate masks.

Lindy Johnson stated that she is happy with how Vermont is handling COVID19, but she is wondering if there is anything in place for staff to have to indicate whether they have traveled or whether they may be more at risk for having been exposed. Superintendent Olkowski has shared with teacher's information around 14-day quarantine and around expectations.

Flor Diaz Smith asked how can the board support the administration so that the staff and teachers can support the students. She spoke about home schooling and about special education. She suggested that board members contact the legislature when they return in August around the issue of ADM and homeschooling in light of COVID19.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked, for families who opt for remote learning, what is the logic in prohibiting them from participating in, for example, outdoor recess? He spoke about the opportunity for children to interact socially and the benefit to their emotional well-being. He urged the administration to reconsider that. Superintendent Olkowski spoke about the creation of "pods" of students, and the need to minimize the exposure of students outside of their pods.

Jaiel Pulskamp asked whether the configuration of the pods will be flexible, for example, if there is a student dynamic that doesn't work. Steven Dellinger-Pate shared what pods will look like in the middle and high school - a group of 15 within a larger group of, e.g. 60. We don't expect students to be with the same group of peers in a pod, for an entire school year.

The board took a break at 8:30 and upon returning, discussed whether to continue the Q+A now or whether to move this to the end of the agenda.

4.2. Finance Committee

4.2.1. Central Office Renovations (Discussion/Action): Superintendent

Olkowski had shared a memo around Central Office Renovations. He explained that the project has come back over budget, based on the earlier plans and previous board action. He noted that the Finance Committee had recommended requesting these additional funds in order to prepare central office for fully functioning. In the meantime, central office staff is working in person in a staggered fashion to allow for social distancing.

Lindy Johnson moved to authorize the superintendent to spend a total of \$43.3K for the purpose of Central Office renovations. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet.

Discussion: Chris McVeigh stated that some of the expenses seem high, and that his understanding was that we were planning on temporary walls. Superintendent Olkowski indicated that permanent walls versus partitions are reimbursable through the CARES Act. He spoke about other safety aspects of walls versus partitions. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated her concern around increasing the cost of this project. Lindy Johnson also indicated that she is concerned that we are not being as fiscally responsible as we could be. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the Finance Committee had reviewed this request; the money is in the capital fund but there are hopes that the CARES Act will provide some reimbursement. She noted that building projects are expensive right now due to supply and demand. Jill Olson reiterated Diane Nichols-Fleming's concern. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether this is a final dollar amount, or whether there is likelihood of yet another increase.

Some discussion followed. Stephen Looke called the question. This carried.

A vote on the original motion resulted in: 8 in favor; 3 not in favor. The motion carried.

Q+A continued.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked who will be providing communication about illnesses and absences, and will school communities be notified of status of COVID19 tests when they occur. Elizabeth Wirth stated that information will be shared around COVID19 illnesses; however, she does not think that we will share information to the detail of children with

COVID19-like symptoms. Superintendent Olkowski shared that sharing some details may be in violation of HIPPA regulations. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that in these circumstances, from the perspective of a parent, more information is better than too little information, in order to make personal decisions about the welfare of your family.

Chris McVeigh revisited the idea of remote learning students joining recess. He stated that we have policy in place allowing home school students to join some activities; he thinks this would apply. He also asked why 7th and 8th students are not included in the high school students' scheduling plans. Steven Dellinger-Pate addressed the question of 7th/ 8th graders. He stated that having that group of students on a different schedule allows for distancing.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked if a student who has attended in person is sick, will they be allowed to participate in remote learning? Superintendent Olkowski stated that if a student is sick (e.g., strep throat), then they will not access remote learning; they will be sick for the day. If a group of students needs to quarantine, then remote learning will be offered to them. Lindy Johnson asked, if a group of children are doing remote learning, then they create their own cohort, right?

Scott Thompson spoke about a movement called "Refuse to Return" - with a criterion of not returning unless the community has no cases of COVID19 for two weeks; he stated that in Washington County, there have been two to three cases in two weeks. He asked whether there has been any thought to campaigning for shared responsibility around eliminating exposure to COVID19. Jill Olson stated that the Department of Health is taking on that campaign; she does not think this is the work of the school board.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that there has been a case per day in Washington County over the past week. We have had the benefit of seeing how other schools are doing, who have opened already. He stated that one of the positive aspects of Vermont is that we have not had any mass gatherings since March. We are preparing to have such mass gatherings, starting on September 8th. There is significant risk, and opening schools is going to increase the risk. He would be interested to see what the models and future casting are at the state level.

Jaiel Pulskamp asked, if a student has symptoms and receives a COVID19 test, what happens during the interim while waiting for the test results. Superintendent Olkowski stated that at this time the discussions have been that if a child is sick then they will take a sick day and not participate in remote learning. Elizabeth Wirth spoke briefly about this scenario - if a student were to stay home for an extended period but not extremely sick, then the child will likely participate with their (in-person) classmates, remotely, as much as possible. They will not join the remote cohort. Steven Dellinger-Pate shared about a Learning Management System that is being implemented, where students can access lessons. This is part of

the effort to work more effectively than we were able to in March when school buildings were closed without sufficient notice.

Chris McVeigh asked, is there the ability to require a COVID19 test before returning to school. Is there a protocol to require assurance from a health care provider before a person can return?

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked, how will we deal with mask and distancing non-compliance? Will we require COVID19 vaccinations if and when one becomes available? Superintendent Olkowski indicated that the Department of Health will likely address the vaccination issue. He stated, in the case of non-compliance to rules, as usual we will work with the child and if necessary, the family.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet asked will grading to comparable for in-person and remote cohorts? Jen Miller-Arsenault indicated that they will. The proficiencies and the standards will be the same, regardless. He asked, how are children going to maintain cohesion and relationships if some are in person and others are remote, assuming that eventually we will all be back in person, after the pandemic ends. Jen Miller-Arsenault shared some of the community building efforts that will be made, for in person as well as remote students, in efforts to build and preserve relationships.

Jonas Eno-Van Fleet reviewed some of the questions that he has, that time would not allow tonight.

5.0 Consent Agenda (Action)

- 5.1. Approve Minutes of 7.15.20 and 7.22.20: **Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to approve the minutes of July 15th and July 22nd. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. Discussion: Jill Olson’s name is misspelled in July 22 minutes. This motion carried unanimously, with noted correction.**
- 5.2. Approve Board Orders: **Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the board orders in the amounts of: \$180,213.21; \$223,813.09; \$8,812.18. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. Discussion: Lindy Johnson noted that some of the expenses related to COVID19 have seemed like we are opting for the “Cadillac” version. She had sent an email expressing this. This motion carried unanimously.**

6.0 Personnel (Action)

- 6.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Retirements, Leave of Absence and Change in FTE:
Jonas Eno-Van Fleet moved to approve the following hires:
 - **Heather Clark Warner**
 - **Kevin Richards**
 - **Jessica Abisla.****Seconded by Dorothy Naylor, this motion carried unanimously.**
Flor Diaz Smith moved to approve the change to 1.0 FTE for David Mathies. Seconded by Dorothy Naylor, this motion carried unanimously.

- 6.2. Approve Addition of One Behavior Interventionist Positions: **Jaiel Pulskamp moved to approve the addition of the position of Behavior Interventionist. Seconded by Dorothy Naylor. Discussion:** Superintendent Olkowski had prepared a memo explaining the impetus for this. **This motion carried unanimously.**

Cat Fair stated that Ms. Hudson has submitted a resignation (retirement) after 46 years. The board, while not needing to approve this, acknowledged her long history at Calais and thanked her.

7.0 Public Comments:

Chris Stanley asked: can parents delay their decision, given that the forum is planned for August 19th. Superintendent Olkowski stated that he is asking parents to answer by the deadline, with as much information as we can at the moment, but keeping in mind the need to be flexible.

Lisa Hanna expressed concerns around the lack of collective teacher voice. She had prepared a letter to the board; she also shared that there is a letter in the Worcester Front Porch Forum on behalf of many Doty teachers. She asked about training for teachers to implement teaching under these new circumstances. What does this look like operationally to teachers? Will the training be adequate? Jen Miller-Arsenault addressed some of the training that is planned for teachers.

Corinne Stridsberg asked what are the plans for vocational students, going from one building to another? What are the plans for substitute teachers, going from one school to another? She asked about the issue of outdoor shelters. She suggested that the FAQs be posted as soon as possible, even if answers are not available. That way people will know that their questions are out there. She suggested dating the answers, as information will continue to be dynamic.

Lisa Hanna asked what is the timeline for hiring teachers to fill classroom positions? Are there plans to move teachers around within the district to fill positions? Superintendent Olkowski stated that we are still trying to get a grasp of the needs, based on family preferences (in person versus remote), and based on teacher leave requests. It is much like a puzzle and we may need to shift some positions around.

Lisa Hanna reiterated the concern expressed earlier around absences and testing for students and staff with COVID19-like symptoms. There will need to be clear protocols and clear communication around these issues.

8.0 Future Agenda Items:

- Business Administrator Succession
- Board Retreat
- Board membership

9.0 Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 10:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

