

# Washington Central Unified Union School District

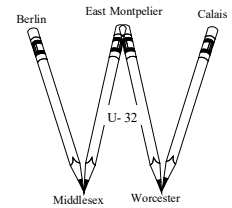
---

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

---

1130 Gallison Hill Road  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
Phone (802) 229-0553  
Fax (802) 229-2761

Meagan Roy, Ed.D.  
Superintendent



**WCUUSD Policy Committee  
Meeting Minutes Approved  
10.12.22 4:45-6:45 PM  
Central Office, 1130 Gallison Hill Rd. Montpelier  
Via Video Conference**

**Present:** Superintendent Meagan Roy, Amy Molina, Chris McVeigh, Michelle Ksepka, Natasha Eckart Baning, Cat Fair, Jonathan Goddard

- 1. Call to Order: Chris McVeigh called the meeting to order at 4:52.**
- 2. Approve Minutes of 9.19.22: Natasha Eckart Baning moved to approve the minutes of September 19, 2022. This motion carried unanimously.**
- 3. Review Policies**
  - 3.1. Policy Work Plan:** Meagan Roy shared an updated policy work plan. Chris McVeigh asked, what mechanism do we have so that other people (e.g. community, staff, students, etc.) can engage in the process, e.g. suggest looking at a policy, suggest creating a policy, reviewing, updating, etc. Meagan Roy stated that she would be interested in what the past practice has been; however, in her mind such a request would go through the Policy Committee. Natasha Eckart Baning stated that the Coalition had worked closely with policy, e.g. had brought issues or suggestions or input to the Policy Committee. She shared that a Families of Color Affinity group will be meeting for the first time in the near future; she expects that this group will, similarly, bring policy-related input to the Policy Committee. She also noted that there are a couple of student groups that she would imagine will want to engage with the Policy Committee as well. Meagan Roy stated that the challenge right now is that we are in the middle of the process of reviewing and drafting policy - she would imagine that next year, once the process is underway, and a work plan is in place, there can be advance notice to all, which would allow them to engage with the Policy Committee. Amy Molina recalled that in the past it has seemed that when people or groups have wanted to create or review a policy, they came to the board who then considered the issue and gave their direction or their “permission” to the Policy Committee to work on this and bring it to the board. Chris McVeigh stated that he thinks it could be either - it could come from the board level or the request or communication could come directly to the Policy Committee. Cat Fair stated that she likes the idea of multiple pathways, and that ultimately the policy comes to the board. She would like to be sure that we are addressing barriers that may be in place,

for all people to engage with this process. Michelle Ksepka reiterated that ultimately this is for the full board to consider. Chris McVeigh asked how we can be sure that this is communicated widely. Michelle Ksepka suggested having “public comment” on the Policy Committee agenda as well. Meagan Roy stated that when this committee brings the work plan to the board, we should be explicit that we are looking for the board to provide feedback and that overall the board has given the charge to the Policy Committee. Natasha Eckart Baning wondered whether, for example, VSBA has provided some guidelines as to whether topics should be considered under “policy” or under “procedure.” She stated that having a framework for people to outline their concerns or their suggestions for policy might be helpful for people to understand the process. Chris McVeigh suggested creating a template for the website, for people to create such a framework and submit to the Policy Committee. Meagan Roy reminded the committee that the full board will be considering the work plan next week, too - she suggested that one of the public forums could be devoted to the topic of policy. Amy Molina suggested that the VSBA has some resources around this. Chris McVeigh stated that he doesn’t want to make it so complicated and unwieldy that it is a barrier to some to engage. Meagan Roy will work on a draft input form; she would still like some understanding about what to put onto the website/ what to communicate, along with the form. Chris McVeigh will draft an introductory paragraph, to address Superintendent Roy’s concern around that. Michelle Ksepka will add “public comment” to the Policy Committee agenda.

**3.2. F2 Non -Discriminatory Mascots & Branding:** The committee considered the Agency of Education’s model policy which is also referenced on the VSBA website. Amy Molina stated that this has been debated and discussed across the state over the past couple of years; she doesn’t see the need to edit this template. Chris McVeigh suggested a more specific time frame (rather than the current verbiage “periodically”) - the language “periodically review per our policy review cycle” was agreed upon. Cat Fair asked whether we have ever had at any of our schools, complaints about branding or mascots - there was no recollection of any controversy around these; however, Doty does not currently have a mascot. Chris McVeigh would like to get some legal counsel about whether we need to have more specificity/ more clearly defined in the complaints hearing process. Natasha Eckart Baning suggested that the complaints process be open to anyone, not just community members - for example, from a visiting athlete. This policy will go to the board in November for the first reading, after legal counsel has been sought. Meagan Roy reminded the board that this policy must be in place by the end of this school year.

**3.3. C5 Weapons and Firearms:** Chris McVeigh had provided a suggested edit to our current C5 policy - he renamed “Weapons and Student Conduct” as a separate policy from the Weapons policy. He had inserted some language referring to a “knife exception” into the Weapons and Student Conduct policy. Meagan Roy stated that we currently have a student conduct and discipline policy. If we split weapons into (1) fire arms and (2) weapons and student conduct, then we will have an overlap with the existing policy around student conduct and discipline. VSBA’s model policy for C5 remained in its previous draft - they opened the policy to consider, but kept it in its previous form. Michelle Ksepka stated that C5 is titled “Firearms.” She noted that the

VSBA's "Student Conduct" policy has been under consideration for some time and has not been updated from the VSBA at this time. Chris McVeigh asked, do we want to separate firearms from dangerous weapons in a policy? Natasha Eckart Baning clarified: in VSBA, firearms are on its own but other weapons will fall under "student conduct"? Michelle Ksepka stated that we are not sure yet, as they have not shared their updated model "student conduct" policy yet. Natasha Eckart Baning stated that zero tolerance policies are dangerous; ultimately they do not protect the people they are meant to protect. Also, we live in Vermont - we are a hunting state - she also spoke about how often students might have a pocket knife in their pocket (e.g. after a weekend of hunting...) The idea of a 3rd grade student having to go to the board to defend having a pocket knife in their pocket doesn't make sense to her. She spoke about the language in the policy that is so harsh it might cause a student, upon discovering they had forgotten to leave their, e.g. pocket knife at home, to not want to come forward with it. She noted that the process of coming before the board can be a very intimidating process for students and families alike. She stated that to date the board has handled these cases sensibly and reasonably. Amy Molina stated that Vermont law indicates that it is illegal to have weapons on school grounds. The language that is used is "deadly or dangerous weapon." Meagan Roy suggested that, if the concern is to allow for discretion, could the language in the policy be "may be" rather than "shall be" (brought before the board for a hearing), but to keep the language around firearm as "shall be." Jonathan Goddard stated that he certainly sees firearms as a separate weapon that leaves no room for discretion around requiring an expulsion hearing. Natasha Eckart Baning stated that the process is backward, because by the time a student has come to the board for a hearing, most times the discipline has been administered. Meagan Roy stated that suspension is under the purview of the administrators; however, expulsion is what the board considers at a hearing. She suggested, logistically, is there a way to have one policy and make the distinction using the verbiage of "may" versus "shall" (e.g. for firearms). Natasha Eckart Baning stated that it seems in her experience that administrators have managed the consequences of these types of violations and the board has not been in the position to mete out the consequence of expulsion. She asked why the language "may" can't be used as a whole, and to leave it to the administration to decide whether a particular case comes to the board for a hearing. Amy Molina suggested trying to make one policy, as Superintendent Roy had indicated, and she offered to work on drafting such. Chris McVeigh stated that in the case that the administration decides not to bring something to the board for a hearing, he would like to have an informational component so that the board is kept apprised. Cat Fair will work with Amy Molina on a draft and this will come to the committee for the next meeting, for review.

**3.4. Building Access Policy:** (not ready for consideration yet)

**3.5. School Choice:** Chris McVeigh asked, how to solicit community input into the work around this policy? Meagan Roy indicated that the board has just begun its work around resources across the schools; she is wondering whether we want to hold off on this policy until we have done some of the ground work. Meagan Roy suggested that over the second half of the school year she would hope to move toward strategic planning, but expects strategic planning to be done in earnest next school year (2023-24.) Michelle Ksepka stated that in 2021 we surveyed the community and had a response of 220. Jonathan Goddard stated that although school choice does not impact a great number of people, to the ones that it does, it *is* a big deal. He stated that it is

important to seek input from stakeholders. Chris McVeigh spoke about the impact of school choice to the smaller schools. He stated that it would be important to be aware of a “tipping point” for the smaller schools, the consequence of losing just a few students could be huge. This is something to consider in the policy creation. Cat Fair spoke about the far reaching unintended consequences of the policy, and yet on the other hand, there are instances when it is appropriate for students and families to benefit from school choice. She would like the conversation to be student centered, and she suggests having a very clear process/ rationale. The committee will discuss this again at the next meeting.

**3.6. Equity Policy & Practices:** Meagan Roy stated that we do not currently have an Equity Policy. Chris McVeigh stated that the board has not considered a specific policy in the past. Natasha Eckart Baning shared the work that the Coalition has done around creating a framework for an equity lens re: the handbook. Meagan Roy shared that administrators had used the same tool to consider the elementary school handbook as well. She shared that the process is ongoing, though. Natasha Eckart Baning spoke about the topic of “accessibility” within the equity lens - for example, the unwieldy length of the handbook. She stated that what is accessible to a two parent professional household is going to be different than what is accessible to a single-parent, poverty-level household. She stated that many parents, regardless, likely do not have the time to read and then review with their children the 50+ page document. Some discussion followed about ways to make the document less cumbersome (e.g. providing links within the document for a “deeper dive.”) Natasha Eckart Baning suggested providing small doses through other messages to families, to help make their ways through the document. Natasha Eckart Baning offered to take back to the coalition the idea to make a first attempt at an equity policy, to come back to the policy committee to work with. Chris McVeigh stated that this would be a good place to start. She asked, for example, would the equity policy include language around students’ chosen names and chosen pronouns, or would its own policy be created? Meagan Roy indicated that in a student-led manner we had asked students what pronouns they choose, and that this has brought up issues related to the topic - e.g., who gets the right to indicate this - parents or student? She believes this is a very rich conversation yet to be had. Natasha Eckart Baning has some resources from recent cases in other states around the topic of pronouns, chosen names, etc. - she will share with the committee members. Cat Fair thanked the group for addressing concerns she had expressed around the weapons policy.

3.6.1. [Vermont Department of Inclusion Equity Lens Tool](#)

3.6.2. Agency of Education : [Educational Equity](#)

3.6.3. Montpelier Policy: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Harassment

3.6.4. Champlain Valley Policy

3.6.5. Essex Westford Policy Sample

#### **4. Future Agenda Items**

4.1. Anti-Racism

4.2. Humanity and Justice Statement

#### **5. Adjourn: The committee adjourned at 6:41 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Grace, Committee Recording Secretary