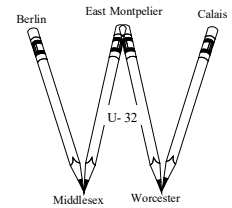


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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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Meagan Roy Ed.D.
Superintendent



**Washington Central Unified Union School District
Community Forum
(IN-PERSON w/ VIRTUAL OPTION)
Berlin Elementary
Gymnasium
372 Paine Turnpike N.
Berlin, VT
Wednesday, November 2, 2022 6:15-7:15 PM**

Board Members Present: Diane Nichols-Fleming, Ursula Stanley, Lindy Johnson, Jonas Eno-Van Fleet, Chris McVeigh, Daniel Keeney, Mckalyn Leclerc, Jonathan Goddard, Kari Bradley, Flor Diaz Smith, Natasha Eckart Baning, Joshua Sevits, Eric Andersen

Administrators Present: Superintendent Meagan Roy, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Kerra Holden, Aaron Boynton, Karoline May, Susanne Gann, Cat Fair, Gillian Fuqua, Michelle Ksepka, Mark Kline

Others Present: ORCA Media, Bekah Mandell, Chani Waterhouse, Ruben Bennett

1. Community Forum

1.1. **Building a Vision Before Building a Budget:** Superintendent Roy and WCUUSD

Principals presented a slide deck: *Building a Vision Before Building a Budget*. The board and administration invited feedback from the public in response to the presentation. Becca of Middlesex stated that what she values the most are the people: the teachers, the special educators, the interventionists, etc. - much of her focus is around how to ensure that our staff and faculty are getting what they need and that they want to stay in the community. Ruben Bennett, East Montpelier spoke about the importance of the sense of community that springs from the school: this is rooted in the teachers, faculty and the educational experience that happens in the schools. He stated that the values that the school board has prioritized are very clearly telegraphed through all of the schools in WCUUSD. It's easy as a school board

to forget that the community is engaging with the school and with one another. The work of the school is to grow life- long engaged citizens. Chani Waterhouse stated that she appreciates the community connectedness, especially at the elementary level - the kids and the faculty and staff are so connected - at the elementary level, the scale allows for more connectedness from parents; it really strengthens the kids' experience when the parents are in connectedness with each other. The other thing she values is JOY. Educational quality for her own children has been consistently high. Mckalyn Leclerc stated that she also values the sense of community, as well as the focus on social and emotional learning; she appreciates how this continues into the high school; she spoke about the theater and arts programs. Chris McVeigh followed up and asked Chani - as she had mentioned that some parents do not feel the same as she does about the value of their students' experience. She spoke about some of the community members who are not here tonight; she spoke about the challenge of making arrangements to be here tonight, that we are connected and going to the same schools but having totally different experiences in the same schools. Flor Diaz Smith asked for feedback: what do you think the board should consider when developing the budget? Ruben Bennett: wonders how, regarding student enrollment, does the board have a trend, are we projecting student enrollment to continue to decrease and to what degree? Meagan Roy indicated that projections indicate that student enrollment will continue to decrease. Last year was 4.5% decrease; this year is 9%. Classes that are coming in are smaller than the ones that are moving into the high school. Becca stated that, when student enrollment is decreasing, how do we plan long range, as we can't ask our community to pay higher and higher taxes. What are we doing to address staffing shortages? Flor Diaz Smith stated that the board recognizes that we need to continue to ask - are we structured the way we need to be structured in order to offer the best opportunities to all of the kids? Can we be more creative; can we consider topics such as school choice? She would like to engage the community in these discussions. Meagan Roy shared that the board has two goals, one being long term planning and one being community engagement - what do we want for our kids? What is important to us? Then let the conversations about structure follow. To face the realities which are changes in funding and decreasing enrollment. These are long term conversations. Today is about thinking about this coming budget season while at the same time thinking about the longer term trajectory. Flor Diaz Smith spoke about considering budget development through the lens of equity. Meagan Roy indicated appreciation for those who attended - she stated that we get a reasonable response rate from surveys - this presentation and follow up questions will be shared via other media outlets so that the community can engage. She noted that the November budget will be "what will it cost to deliver exactly what we are providing this year?" That will be the first data point and the beginning of the budget development. Flor Diaz Smith thanked the community for attending and she invited them to provide feedback using other means such as online sharing as well. Becca asked for clarification: the November presentation will, is it fair to assume, result in talking about cuts in the budget versus adding new programs or initiatives. She

asked if a community member has a specific idea in mind - e.g. having a communications position - where is the chance to provide input? Meagan Roy suggested that the surveys are not the only way to provide input but the survey responses are carefully considered; she noted that we take notes from our forum discussions but we also closely inspect survey input. Kari Bradley asked her to explain more specifically what she had in mind in a communications position. She suggested that the person posts on social media, on FB, on FPF, on a regular basis to liaise with the community - to take this off the plates of board members and administrative assistants Ruben Bennett asked whether the achievement gap has been improving or not improving over the last few years. Meagan Roy stated that, overall, the pandemic has if anything exacerbated this trend (not just at WCUUSD.) Chani Waterhouse thanked the board and especially Flor Diaz Smith, Meagan Roy and Jen Miller-Arsenault. She noted that our students are the future adults. She loves the idea of a communication strategy. She reiterated that the children are our future and we are all in it.

2. Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

3. Board Operations:

3.1. Board Learning – Phil Gore: Phil Gore facilitated discussion around Chapter 4 of the book study text *Improving School Board Effectiveness*:

- School boards really DO matter
- What the superintendent does really does matter.
- What does the board do versus what does the superintendent do?

He stated a guiding question for school boards: is this in the best interest of students? He asked the board to consider: why is it difficult for a lay elected board to make sure we are making decisions that are in the best interest of students? Ursula Stanley stated that we come to the school board with our varied expertise from our lives and jobs but most of it does not include expertise in education. Phil Gore asked the board to consider: what is the expertise that board members DO bring? Diane Nichols-Fleming - we are a system together, a variety of expertise. Ursula Stanley - connections - we all have connections in our own communities; we spoke about this when we discussed “networking.” Kari Bradley - willingness to represent what we believe are the values of our community. Eric Andersen - passion, willingness to work and see a path forward. Phil Gore spoke about the concept of “expert citizenship.” He asked: What are we asking boards to do if we are asking them to act in the best interest of all students? Diane Nichols-Fleming: with committee work, we are working to understand whatever experience is not our own - we need to be open and in dialog. He asked: what does governance look like that truly supports achievement by all students and also addresses closing gaps? Ursula Stanley spoke about the “fire tower” level - e.g., not telling cafeterias what to serve for lunch - also being able to communicate with the community: the balance between being disengaged and micro-managing Phil Gore spoke about “informed oversight” - what does it mean to be informed and asking thoughtful

questions at the board level - where does the board overlap with the superintendent? Where is the shared space? So that it's not the extreme of micromanaging but it's also not the extreme of "rubber stamping" He noted the need for ongoing conversation about what is the work of the board and what belongs to the superintendent and her staff? The board spoke about its role of evaluating superintendent/ holding superintendent accountable. Chris McVeigh stated, responding to the text of the book: it would be useful to have case studies – he would like more specifics versus larger picture concepts. Phil Gore asked: Is the board evaluating the superintendent based on goals around student achievement? Chris McVeigh asked, how do you hold the superintendent accountable when the school board members do not have educational expertise? How to pursue accountability and growth? Flor Diaz Smith shared her perspective that everything doesn't fall on just one person - the superintendent is one piece of a larger picture. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that he does not necessarily think this board is a good audience for this book - he believes that this board functions much better than some of the boards that are described. Phil Gore asked the board to consider: what mechanisms do you put into place to keep the board at its functional level, and rise to the next level? Meagan Roy spoke about the Education Quality Committee meeting that took place prior to this meeting. She believes that this board is building structures to improve functionality in its work, for example, the work of the Ed Quality Committee. Joshua Sevits expressed the importance of the board itself holding knowledge and having functional systems in place as administrative staff may come and go. Mckalyn Leclerc stated that community engagement continues to be an area of growth that she feels this board should work on. Phil Gore asked, regarding creating conditions for success: exactly what does this mean? How does the board engage with each other and then together with the superintendent? What action can the board take to create conditions for success? Kari Bradley spoke about the concept from the book of the board being active in curricular decisions - he has never known our board to do that. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that our board does a good job of "staying out of the weeds" - the idea of getting involved in curricula, that to him is getting in the weeds. Diane Nichols-Fleming - we all feel collectively that we are the buffer, should outside forces come to us and say "this is how we believe our children should be educated" - she thinks that wave is coming. Phil Gore indicated that he too believes that wave is coming. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that in the past he had asked Steven Dellinger-Pate to tell the board "the bad news" sometimes too - and he does! He asked other administrators to do the same. Aaron Boynton stated that it is appreciated when the board listens to building administrators; things are very challenging right now with shortages in staffing; the reality of the day to day in the trenches is hard; it is important that the board does not lose touch with what happens "in the trenches." Gillian Fuqua stated that we have students coming off 30 months of disrupted education and yet we continue to measure them by the same standards. We need to maintain high standards but still be realistic - we are not going to meet benchmarks from before the pandemic. Cat Fair asked what action can the board take? What are the barriers to accessing education? What are the things getting in the way? COVID-19 did not create these problems; it exacerbated them or put a spotlight on them - kids are not understanding civic engagement – with the focus on engagement, would love the lens to be "how to engage with others?" Phil Gore asked, how does the board model behavior that you want to see in the classrooms? The

idea of the board as steward of public trust but also a steward of public discourse, of inclusivity and reaching out and bringing people in, as opposed to partisan. He spoke about the importance of modeling civic engagement, modeling civil discourse, not violating open meeting law; about having these conversations when things are going well, as opposed to when in crisis or when things are escalated. Phil Gore noted that the next three chapters will focus on board self-assessment. Tie together how the board can model reflective practice.

4. Reports

- 4.1. **Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Lindy Johnson moved to accept the following: Karen Dyer – LTS East Montpelier Classroom Teacher, Lydia Faesy – U-32 School Nurse LTS (3 days per week), Kathryn “Kate” Biggam – U-32 School Nurse LTS (2 days per week) for the remainder of the 2022-23 school year. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.**
- 4.2. **Substitute Memo & Approval of Building Daily Sub: Chris McVeigh moved to approve the job description and the rate of pay within the memo from Superintendent Roy: *Substitute Teacher Rates & Addition of a Permanent Daily Sub*. Seconded by Jonas Eno-Van Fleet.** Lindy Johnson stated that she appreciates the information included in the memo. Superintendent Roy shared that based on her conversations with others in the state, many are increasing their substitute rates, and many of them continue to face staffing shortages. She stated that she does not believe this will be a magic solution but she feels that it is a part of the solution. Chris McVeigh asked whether this has been discussed through the lens of the association. Jonas Eno-Van Fleet stated that the language around duties in the teacher’s agreement indicates that if teachers perform duties above a certain threshold they will be reimbursed according to sub rate; also the ESP agreement refers to sub rate. The contract references the current sub rate. (as opposed to dollar amount.) Superintendent Roy indicated that this is intended to be a temporary solution for now. **This motion carried unanimously.**

5. Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary