

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, October 9, 2023, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
208 Charles Avenue, Middlebury VT & Virtual Connection**

ACSD District Vision and Mission

OUR VISION

Our vision is for all ACSD students to reach their full learning potential, have a sense of belonging in our schools, and enrich our community and the communities where they live in the future.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide high-quality, equitable, and varied learning environments that inspire a passion for learning and growth among our students.

In Attendance

Barbara Wilson; Brian Bauer; Ellie Romp; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Jason Chance; Joanna Doria; Lindsey Hescocock; Mary Heather Noble; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Tricia Allen

Not In Attendance

Ellen Whelan-Wuest

- A. Call to Order Upon Reaching A Quorum Barb Wilson
Meeting called to order at 6:31 p.m.
- B. Introductions - Board Members, Administrators and Staff Barb Wilson 5 min
ACSD Staff and Admin present: Tim Williams, Interim Superintendent; Matt Corrente, Director of Finance & Operations; Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Equity and Student Services; Courtney Krahn, Director of Teaching & Learning; Emily Blistein, Director of Communications & Engagement; Caitlin Steele, MUHS Principal

Eddie Fallis, Student Representative to the ACSD Board also present.
- C. Public Comment on Agenda Items Barb Wilson 10 min
Mary Slosar of Weybridge provided a comment on the Strategic Planing process -- it seems to her that the Board is on a fast train to adopt the Strategic Plan as is. She offered for consideration: The Board is being presented with a false choice between two options -- one to stick with the existing plan with a few modifications to the third goal. This would require the implementation team to flesh it out instead of the Board, which she does not consider to be a transparent process, and does not allow the District to be accountable to the Board. The second choice, having the Board revisit the goals and return to the process would allow it to take place in a transparent way. She suggests going back. She believes the goals are fine, but what is proposed to achieve those goals is what it in question.

- D. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of September 25, 2023 Barb Wilson 5 min
Lindsey Hescoock and Joanna Doria noted a few typos to names that need correction.
Motion to approve the minutes of September 25, 2023 with edits as suggested.
Move: Joanna Doria Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed
- E. Approve ACSD Bills James Malcom 5 min
James Malcolm presented the ACSD Bills, which were read by Jason Chance and himself on October 2, 2023.
General Fund -- \$523,799.81 (~\$185,000 of this figure is payment to CSAC for contracted services)
Payroll -- \$950,980.70
James Malcolm also noted a significant amount of expenses related to opening schools.
Motion to approve payment of the ACSD Bills as presented.
Move: James Malcolm Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed
- F. Report of Student Representative Eddie Fallis 5 min
Eddie Fallis reported that MUHS just finished its Homecoming celebrations. This year Student Council made an intentional effort to expand celebrations beyond just sports and athletes -- clubs and other activities were honored during the pep rally.
Student Council is also meeting with MUHS administration this week to discuss ways to prevent and address incidents of racism in school -- this is being done in light of the community response to the Esther Charlestin Op-Ed.
The process of identifying the next student rep is almost complete -- hope to have someone identified soon.
Tricia Allen offered gratitude for the inclusivity of Homecoming activities. Steve Orzech thanked Eddie Fallis for his service and report.
- G. Executive Session: Superintendent Search - Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a) (3) Barb Wilson 20 min
Entered Executive Session at 7:00 p.m.
Exited Executive Session and re-entered Open Session at 7:20 p.m.
Motion to enter Executive Session to receive legal counsel regarding exemptions for a public records request, per VSA Section 313 (a) (1).
Move: Jason Chance Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed
- H. Report of the Superintendent Tim Williams
1. Action: Faculty/Staff Appointments/Resignations 5 min
Tim Williams presented the list of ACSD appointments for Board approval.
Brian Bauer asked if these were new positions or filling of existing vacancies. Tim Williams said that as he has indicated before, the Administration will seek Board approval prior to

creation of new positions, and that these two appointments are for existing positions that have been vacant. The District is glad to be filling them.

Motion to appoint Brooke Clark as a School Nutrition Assistant, 1.0 FTE, Step 3 on Food Service Schedule, and appoint Tracie Moore as Intensive Needs Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 12, per the ESP Master Agreement.

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed

- a. Appoint Brooke Clark as a School Nutrition Assistant, 1.0 FTE, Step 3 on Food Service Schedule
 - b. Appoint Tracie Moore as Intensive Needs Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 12, per the ESP Master Agreement.
2. Action: Motion to assign our proxy certificate to VEHI/VSBIT in support of their votes. 5 min

Barb Wilson notified the Board about the upcoming meetings for the Vermont Education Health Initiative and Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust on October 27, 2023. These will be held in Fairlee, Vermont in conjunction with the VSBA annual meeting at the Lake Morey Resort. The Board usually authorizes a proxy vote since ACSD has not usually sent someone. Barb indicated that she will be attending the conference and meetings, so will be able to represent ACSD if that is what the Board desires. The Board can also authorize a proxy vote as well.

Steve Orzech said he would be attending as well, but not as a rep for ACSD. The Board discussed whether to authorize Barb Wilson to vote on ACSD's behalf, or authorize a proxy vote.

Motion to approve the certificate of authority to designate Board Chair Barb Wilson to vote on behalf of the ACSD Board for the VEHI and VSBIT meetings on October 27, 2023.

Move: Tricia Allen Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed

3. Esser Grant Update Matthew Corrente 5 min

Matt Corrente provided a summary of the District's FY24 plans for spending the ESSER funding. He illustrated funding based on the 3 priority areas: 1) Mental Health SEL/Behavioral Supports; 2) Access and Success in Academic Learning; and 3) Healthy Schools – Indoor Air Quality. The powerpoint slides illustrated spending in these three categories, and included items such as learning materials, additional personnel, staff training, additional programming, engineering services, and construction/HVAC improvements.

Matt also provided illustrations to depict the distribution of spending by expense type categories, including capital improvements, salary & benefits, bonuses, professional development, contracted services, and materials/supplies. Of note: the FY24 ESSER spending includes 12.75 FTE employees.

Board questions:

Mary Heather Noble asked about a discrepancy between the amount of ESSER money being spent on salary/benefits – the slides in meeting materials say \$1.27M, but the in-person slides show \$1.67M. Which is it? Matt Corrente responded that the initial estimate was \$1.27M, but that employee selection of elective benefits actually made the cost a little higher. He did note that some of the figures actually included staff from the prior ESSER grant funding, so the actual figure may be closer to \$1.27M – he will check into this and finalize the figures.

Mary Heather also asked about the extra \$70K that was earmarked for summer programming, but was re-allocated because the District could not fill the coordinator position. Matt explained that the additional money was re-distributed to other qualifying ESSER expenses.

Lindsey Hescok asked about which of the presented figures were budgeted versus actual cost. Matt explained that the expenses that had already incurred were actual figures, and that expenses that have not yet been incurred are budgeted. Mary Heather stated that the Board should really be focusing on the portion of these expenses that are recurring cost (ie.g., salary & benefits), given the fact that this funding is sunseting. The Board will need to determine whether/how to keep some/all of these positions. Many of them seem essential, given the focus on literary recovery -- but the money will need to come from somewhere else. This is part of the hard issue coming up with FY25 budget planning.

Joanna Doria asked Matt Corrente for more district-wide data to put the ESSER personnel into context, and to confirm: 1) that the ESSER-funded subscriptions were minimal, and 2) that the PD costs, ie Responsive Classroom, are not continuing.

Steve Orzech said that the Finance Committee has begun examining this issue. The Board has expressed the need/desire to make data-driven decisions, and the Committee is compiling data to inform those choices. James Malcolm added that the issue is especially complicated by the State's new pupil weighting system. Some of this decision-making will need to lean on the expertise of the administration. Mary Heather noted that it is the Board's responsibility to ensure equitable distribution of collective resources -- and that we are obligated to examine this through an equity lens.

4. Strategic Plan Update

Nicole Carter 35 min

The ACSD Administrative team provided an update to the draft Strategic Plan. Emily Blistein started, providing an overview of the process completed to date -- reminding Board members of the intentionality behind having the goal-setting grounded in community voice, including those who have historically been unrepresented at the table. All phases have been deliberately rooted in equity.

Nicole Carter continued the presentation, noting that the administrative team has identified two options: 1) Revise Goal #3 of the existing draft to incorporate more specificity around the academic goals, and then move forward with roughly the same timeline, or 2) Start over by having the Board create new goals. Their recommendation is to preserve the work of the community-based advisory committee and action team, and simply fine-tune the third goal to provide more specific parameters.

Courtney Krahn provided specific information in support of revising Goal #3 to include an overall proficiency goal, coupled with a focused effort to reduce the achievement gap that exists between students from historically marginalized groups (e.g., FRL, IEP, BIPOC students) and those who do come from those circumstances. Some background: The educational achievement gap is best understood as the persistent gap in academic achievement between educationally marginalized students and educationally centered students. In ACSD, this gap most impacts students: Identified for an IEP, Living in poverty or near poverty, Minoritized because of race/ethnicity. The number of historically marginalized 3rd grade students below meeting proficiencies in ELA and Math are 73.6% and 67.57%, respectively -- significantly more than 'educationally centered' students. In 8th grade the percentage of historically marginalized students testing below proficiency in ELA and Math are even worse: 75.47% and 90.57%, respectively.

The administration recommends revising the Board's 3rd Goal to specifically target this achievement gap: [add] " ACSD will raise each grade-cohort's math and literacy proficiency levels to 80% proficient by 2029, as measured by the VTCAP. The achievement gap between the general population and historically marginalized- FRL, IEP, BIPOC- students will be decreased by 50% for each grade-cohort for math and literacy between 2024- 2029 (baseline year 2023)."

The presentation concluded with the Board's choice -- either moving forward with Option 1, approving the plan with the revised goal, and then handing it to the Superintendent, who would create and Implementation Team to flesh out and prioritize specific tasks and deliverables. Option 2 would send the Board back to the drawing board, which will extend the timeline to a Fall 2024 implementation.

Board Questions:

Steve Orzech asked if the suggestion revision to Goal #3 was even achievable, given the magnitude of the achievement gap.

Barb Wilson asked if the plan would look more like a fleshed out Strategic Plan after the Implementation Team completes its work. What role would the Board play in this process?

Mary Heather Noble agreed with the desire to have a more robust academic goal, but does not believe it is the Board's role to map out specifics on how to get there -- this should be the work of our education professionals. Tricia Allen asked about the next step. Tim Williams indicated that the Board would approve the plan -- which is the direction-- and then allow the implementation team to chart the course on how to get there. Steve Orzech agreed that the Board's role is NOT to tell the Administration how to implement.

Jamie McCallum expressed confusion at the conversation. This plan is basically the same as the one we looked at a month ago, and everyone seemed surprised and confused then. He favors Option 2, as he feels that there is still a lot missing. This would require more time. He wants a more robust document. He has provided edits that he does not see in here.

Emily Blistein clarified that any edits would need to have full Board approval, and did not change the draft based on one person's feedback.

Suzanne Buck stated that the process was communicated from the very beginning, when Peter Burrows was the Superintendent. She likes the suggested changes to Goal #3 -- it is ambitious and will take everyone to get there. But it is also not the Board's role to tell the Administration HOW to get there. We give the plan to the Superintendent, who is our one employee, and they implement it.

James Malcolm pushed back against Jamie's conclusion. Finalizing this strategic plan will take some compromise on the level of specificity. The Board does have control w/r/t/ budget, so there are lots of ways in which the Board influences the implementation of the strategic plan. He emphasized that if we change the 3rd goal, it will definitely have budgetary impacts. He also really liked the Venn diagram illustration of how the Board's 3 goals connect.

Ellie Romp said that Goals #1 and #2 need the same expansion that has been suggested for Goal #3. It is not fair to just kick it over to the administration. The Board should outline what it expects to see.

Brian Bauer stated that he would like to see the word 'equity' eliminated from the Strategic Plan altogether, and replaced with 'equality of opportunity.' He also does not support the idea of the whole strategic plan being based on the work of a minority of representatives. He supports Option #2.

Joanna Doria wondered if there was an option in between. She also pointed out design flaws in the process, where the action team has dissolved. The Board is essentially looking at the same draft as it was in August. Approving this would be the definition of rubber stamping. She does not think there was enough action from the action team, and that more work needs to be done to chart a course. So much of this work falls on the Superintendent. She wants to see metrics added to the strategies and actions of Goal #1 and #2. What does success look like?

Lindsey Hescocock agrees that it is not the Board's role to decide what happens next, but would like to see metrics associated with the action steps before approval.

Jason Chance asked why the Board is asking the Administration to complete the work -- it is the Board's responsibility.

Mary Heather Noble asked whether a poll should be taken w/r/t support for Option #1 or Option #2 -- it seems pretty split. Barb Wilson took a straw poll -- 5 members felt comfortable with moving forward on Option #1; 6 members would like to spend more time on refining the goals.

Joanna Doria made a motion to create an ad-hoc committee called the Strategic Plan Working Group to synthesize Board feedback and incorporate it into a revised Strategic Plan. Ellie Romp seconded. There was additional discussion about creating a deadline for the new Strategic Plan Committee to present its report/work to the full Board.

Vote: 8 Ayes, 3 Nos. Board Chair did not vote.

Barb Wilson instructed the Strategic Plan Committee to present its findings to the full Board at the November 6, 2023 Board meeting. Board action on the revised Strategic Plan is scheduled for November 27, 2023.

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| I. Report of the Chair | Barb Wilson |
| Postponed for next Board meeting. | |
| 1. Work Plan Update/Review | Barb Wilson 10 min |
| Tabled. | |
| 2. Superintendent Search Update | Barb Wilson 5 min |
| Tabled. | |
| J. Report of the Board | 10 min |
| Barb Wilson asked if any Committees had updates to share. | |

Steve Orzech reported that the PAHCC has an Open House coming up on November 9, 2023 from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. He also mentioned that the Negotiations Committee has received a letter of intent from the Association, so the negotiations process has officially begun. The Committee is proposing to feed dinner to both the Committee and Association reps during the meeting.

Tricia Allen reported on behalf of the Communications & Engagement Committee that she had attended the Bridport Central School Open House. Many parents expressed the need for after-school programming at the school. Another family specifically expressed gratitude for the Aspire program at MUHS. And several students expressed wishes for more comfortable chairs and more outside time.

Joanna Doria reported that the Addison Central SEPAC had its first meeting of the year on October 5, 2023. The group will be meeting monthly in the MUHS library. Right now they are working on finishing a website, and establishing a closed Facebook group for parent support. Future plans include establishing a presence at back-to-school events, outlining parent & family special education resources, hosting 3 community events, and providing an annual report to the ACSD Board in the spring.

James Malcolm reported that the Finance Committee had met and has begun the work of initial budget development with the administration.

1. Committee Updates

K. Public Comment - Any Topic

10 min

Tyrus Keith, paraprofessional at Mary Hogan provided testimony about unsafe conditions at Mary Hogan School. This is his second year as a paraprofessional there. He is consistently seeing unsafe behavior from young students there, particularly in 2 kindergarten classes and 1 first grade class. He has witnessed children who are usually regulated become dis-regulated by the poor/unsafe behavior of others around them. Staff are overstretched. The tipping point for him came when he was witnessing a child harming another child, and continuing to shout and kick at him while he intervened and waited 6-8 minutes for assistance. The other children were scared while witnessing this. It is traumatizing for kids, and he feels the staff are encouraged to turn a blind eye to unsafe behavior just to continue their work. Safety is the bare minimum required for a functioning learning environment. He believes that Mary Hogan needs more adults to address these issues, and provided a few ideas to encourage staff hiring and retention.

Julie Altemose, librarian at Mary Hogan came to offer testimony in support of Tyrus Keith. She has taught at Mary Hogan for 23 years. This year it has become a regular occurrence to have teachers come to her, breaking down from the stress. One of her professional goals was to help the school work toward a safe learning environment. She has been working with Jen Kravitz, who has also been working with Nicole Carter to solve the problems with student behavior at Mary Hogan School. She is working to find more volunteers, but also feels that the Board and Administration need to understand the duress that teachers are operating under. They need resources to ensure a safe learning environment, and encourage the Board to prioritize safety in the Strategic Plan.

Sarah Ingersoll, academic interventionist at Mary Hogan also came to support Tyrus, and had sent a letter to the Board and Administration about teaching conditions at Mary Hogan School. The letter was signed by several Mary Hogan teachers. They have seen so many absences that teachers have had to shift their roles to provide coverage, which means some students aren't receiving the intervention services they need. Sarah also wanted to bring attention to the VT

AOE's prioritization of mental health for education professionals, and believes that the ACSD needs to act to preserve the mental health of Mary Hogan teachers.

Mary Slosar of Weybridge commented again on the Strategic Plan. She believes there is a lot of consensus among board members, and that everyone values the process. However, consider that the current draft is the wrong meat on the bones. She believes the other goals should be operationalized, as suggested for Goal #3. Part of her concern is giving so much responsibility to a Superintendent that the District hasn't yet hired.

L. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Heather Noble
Board Clerk

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 2h 15m

*Public Comment Guidelines:

Public comments are encouraged and welcome at each regular board meeting during the period designated for public comment. Comments are limited to three minutes per person. Citizens will be called to make their statement by the board chair. Public comments regarding personnel, students or legal matters will not be heard by the Board.