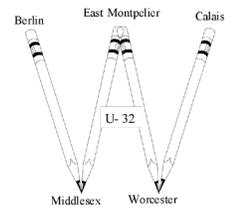


# Washington Central Unified Union School District

*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  
Interim Superintendent



## WCUUSD Finance Committee Meeting Minutes 10.18.23 5:00-6:00 PM Virtual

**Present:** Flor Diaz Smith, Ursula Stanley, Kari Bradley, Superintendent Roy, Alicia Lyford, David Delcore, Zach Sullivan, Jeannie Phillips, Daniel Keeney, Mckalyn Leclerc

- 1. Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.
- 2. Approve Minutes of 10.10.23:** Kari Bradley moved to approve the minutes of October 10, 2023. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.
- 3. Discussion/Action**
  - 3.1. Data Review – Configuration Study:** Superintendent Roy reviewed the potential timeline for a configuration study. Today had been indicated on the timeline to review data and engage with the data to plan for the next meeting's brainstorming session. Jeanie Phillips, Great Schools Partnership Facilitator, presented data. She had provided a "data mining protocol" for the group to guide conversation around data. The first data set: enrollment ; the second data set: is EQS; Third data set: is per pupil cost analysis

**Enrollment: What do you see?**  
Diane N-F: pg 7, FY 25 dropped for most schools except Doty (which went up)  
Mckalyn: first summary table, overall general decline in numbers, wide discrepancy between percent changes in various schools  
Daniel: pg 8, district-wide history percentage changes, the biggest change drops are behind us chronologically (from past years)  
Kari: pg 7, 12.5% decline in students over 5 year period  
Alicia: last 5 years decrease of 146 students. If you figure an average class of 16 = 9 classrooms lost since 2020  
Zach: changes seem to be "lumpy" - some years/ some towns big change/ small change. in such a small system, this can be unstable  
Steven D-P: pg 14, NESDQ numbers very closely mirror our numbers in actual enrollment  
Diane N-F: pg 8, numbers related to COVID-19 and beyond  
Mckalyn: pg 8, district projected changes are projected to even out by 2030  
Daniel: very wide discrepancy in school populations among K-6 schools  
Kari: different trends for different schools, specifically, pg 12, Middlesex, 20-year decline around 38%  
Zach: projections are going out a long way, stabilization is happening in years that are far out  
Flor: pg 7, overall population, we are losing 109 students between September and year 26

### **What wonderings do you have?**

Daniel: wonder to what extent can we impact these numbers

Kari: wonder what the experience and learning outcomes are for students and families in our smallest schools

Ursula: wonder if our declining numbers continue to lead to declining numbers - related to Kari's questions

Alicia: looking at the data set to next year, decrease, given the spread over all of the schools, what do we do about this, going into this budget season?

Zach: what is the next level down? are there specific grade levels that are impacted more than others? Do we need to be thinking about the distributions?

Flor: What opportunities can we provide to our pre-K students?

Steven: How are these numbers specific to grade levels?

Diane: How many family units does this represent? (thinking about our tax base) What is the potential of community development activities? Is there a potential impact?

Mckalyn: Looking at differences in sizes between schools, how that may or may not connect socio-economically - is this improving or exacerbating existing inequities?

Zach: How far out these projections go - how do they get developed? How can we change this trajectory? What factors go into it?

### **EQS: What do you see?**

Ursula: pg 16, general music for Rumney goes through grade 5 (versus 6) (Superintendent Roy: this is a typo)

Alicia: pg 15, both nursing and counseling, we exceed the EQS standards in all areas, all schools

Zach: pg 15, class size - averages - some that are below the minimum and some that are close to the minimum

Flor: pg 17, CC before and after care, the collaboration between elementary schools

Steven: pg 16, elementary schools are fairly closely aligned in terms of minutes for subject areas (e.g. art, PE)

Diane: pg 15, nursing and counseling we are exceeding, find this interesting in what we have found about needs in rural schools during and after COVID-19

Mckalyn: pg 17, Rumney has world language, none of the other schools do, Doty doesn't have band, differences with athletics (EMES run by rec dept)

Daniel: EQS for class size is an average and not a range

Kari: pg 15, zooming out, we are exceeding the standards in most areas, some are exceeding them significantly

Ursula: while we offer before and after care, it differs whether schools get before, after, or both

### **What wonders do you have?**

Zach: Regarding class size, what is the distribution, how many classes do we have that are below minimums?

Flor: pg 17, one school provides world language, can we have an opportunity to provide at other schools, wonders about equity with providing at just one school. Equity: look at the entire graph with an equity lens- how would we see this?

Steven: pg 15, how can we express what U-32 class sizes look like (when there are 100s of sections)

Diane: we see ballpark but we don't see how they "fold in" - wonders is there a difference in response and access for sports that are run by the rec program versus school-based

Mckalyn: curious about class sizes, wonders for the combined classes, what do the numbers look like in terms of grade level groups (because we are looking at combined classroom size)

Daniel: how do the specific parameters correspond to all of Vermont's EQS? Are there things about EQS that align with what we are actually trying to achieve (e.g. SEL)

Kari: How could other configurations of schools impact offerings on pg 16, 17

Ursula: wonders about equity of before and after care, wonders about equity of parents having access to pre-K, what are the barriers for families? How can we help?

Zach: pg 15, Things that exceed standards - what does this mean? With nursing, counseling, and library, this means "better" than the standard? How to clarify

Superintendent Roy: Exceed means exceed the level of staffing that is recommended

Zach: re: nursing, counseling, some of these we might need to think of as capacity services - you either have a nurse or you don't - getting the ratio right doesn't help the student who needs a nurse on the day that the nurse isn't there.

Ursula: What can we do reconfiguration wise to take advantage of EQS and not have such an excess when we exceed the staffing

### **Per Pupil Cost Analysis: (pg 18) What do you see?**

Mckalyn: cost going up, enrollment going down

Kari: big differences among our schools, some cost 50% more than other schools to educate students

Diane: connected to staff-student ratio

Zach: tightly correlated with the total size of the school; less correlated with average class size

Daniel: Are we accounting for special education needs or is this an equalized per pupil cost? Is this relevant data?

Superintendent Roy: This is a calculation based on FTE - it reflects all of the people in the building, with cost attached to them, divided by number of pupils.

### **What do you wonder:**

Flor: Are there opportunities to leverage the resources to better serve our kids? Other structuring options to make better use of our resources?

Diane: We know this grid of going up for cost, going down for enrollment, what is missing is community engagement and identification of need - it is not so black and white. how do we get to the info of what our students need to access learning as well as what our communities need?

Mckalyn: The smallest school does not have the highest cost per pupil. Wonders about socio-economic data for each town, how does that overlay and play a role?

Alicia: Is this status quo or assuming all positions are filled in all buildings?

Superintendent Roy: It reflects all people that are currently in buildings - based on current staffing

### **Where are the intersections across data sets? Where are some of the dissonances? Where does the data not seem aligned?**

Zach: Looking at potential dissonance between student-to-staff ratio and class sizes, in smaller schools it draws out the services that are "capacity services" - we need to either have them or not - highlights the importance in small schools of how large a proportion of staff = non-classroom teacher

Flor: wonders if we use EQS and look at data of per pupil cost and see... worry/ wonder about U-32 and our elementary schools getting to a point where we are competing for resources to the detriment of one school or another. In order to preserve some of our smaller schools, are we not going to be able to retain the services we need in our larger schools? Jeanie Phillips: e.g. "trade-off"

Flor: How can we collaborate across the system?

Steven: Wonders if there is a breakdown of looking at grade levels in addition to pg 18, is there a difference in per pupil cost per grade level?

Diane: Not sure she better understands what we as a board have identified? How does the board understand EQS, how does this align with our goals? Do board members understand EQS? What does it boil down to when it comes to WCUUSD?

Mckalyn: It paints a pretty clear picture that there are inequities between schools and from a cost standpoint, especially with declining enrollment, it is not a sustainable model. Hope to look broadly at what are the various options to increase equity and sustainability in the district.

Daniel: questions about EQS, this feels like an incomplete view of them, don't understand the scope of them, feels like a qualitative assessment by our school leaders would be more meaningful - they feel inaccurate in how they measure things, let alone the value judgment - they don't seem to measure the things that are articulated as priorities. Would like to see arts, humanities, co-curricular increased.

Kari: These sets of data provide a clear picture of trends that will resonate with people beyond this group (pg 18 alone is very stark). also clear that we have a lot of building capacity given the students we have - we are projecting in the future, 1200 students total, that is not too far off the capacity of the U-32 facility alone.

Ursula - we have a lot of capacity in our buildings, we seem to exceed staffing recommendations in buildings. everyone else's projected declines are similar except Middlesex which is significantly larger.

Zach: some of the equity considerations - do we have bubbles moving through the system? (e.g. "mice moving through a snake") - are there areas we should be concerned about? Is one cohort in better shape than another? or is that getting too deep into the weeds?

Flor: wonders, our draft of core beliefs, looking at this data with that in mind, creates opportunities to look through a specific lens

### **How did this process work, or not work, for you?**

### **What worked well about it? What could we have done better to make it a richer conversation?**

Daniel: challenging to read in a short period of time, wishes he had previewed the data

Kari: likes the format of starting with observations - it is hard to get your observation ready as well as listen to everyone else. What he is really after is "What are the implications"? Would like that clearly designated in the protocol for discussion.

Mckalyn: appreciates a clear order for people speaking and an option to pass. struggles doing it virtually and scrolling/ going between tabs etc.

Diane: appreciates providing space to "pass." When looking at the schedule of what comes next, are there pieces that we wondered about tonight that will inform our next conversation? How do we prepare for next time? What are the next steps?

Alicia: today was not the first time she had looked at this data. If we knew "read this; be prepared to do this.." (provide homework) to prepare for next time

Superintendent Roy: data and protocol were provided in advance. It would be helpful for the committee to at least weigh in on the second part of Alicia's comments - how to plan for the next meeting - are you ready to do some brainstorming? are you looking for more information first? if that is the case, it will change the timeline. Side comment: a lot of questions asked for more data that will be provided as part of the budget presentation.

Alicia: would it be helpful to see across district, numbers by grade?

**Next Steps:**

Flor: I don't think we want to change our timeline - could we have the data mentioned above (numbers by grade) for the next meeting to begin brainstorming?

Diane: as long as the info we are given in scenarios matches the data that we are seeing Superintendent Roy - we are brainstorming in November, we will not be bringing scenarios/ data re-configuration etc. If there is missing info that is needed to have the brainstorm, that is important to know in advance data that is wanted: across the district, the number of each grade level

Ursula: Will an hour be enough time?

Three bullet points to share:

- looked at data using protocol
- moving ahead to brainstorm at the next session,
- have asked for more data

**4. Future Agenda Items**

**4.1. Next Regular Meeting: November 14, 2023**

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Grace, Committee Recording Secretary