

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, November 27, 2023, 6:30 pm - 9:00 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-Person Attendance

Barbara Wilson; Courtney Krahn; Ellen Whelan-Wuest; Heather Crowley; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Jason Chance; Joanna Doria; Lindsey Hescocock; Mary Heather Noble; Matthew Corrente; Nicole Carter; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Tim Williams; Tricia Allen

Remote Attendance

Ellie Romp

Not In Attendance

Brian Bauer

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching A Quorum

Meeting called to order at 6:35 p.m.

1. Introductions - Board Members, Administrators and Staff

ACSD Staff present: Time Williams, Interim Superintendent; Matt Corrente, Director of Finance & Operations; Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Equity & Student Services; Courtney Krahn, Director of Teaching and Learning; Heather Crowley, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent; Will Hatch, Director of Technology; Caitlin Steele, MUHS Principal; Emily Blistein, Director of Communications & Engagement; Bjarki Sears, Principal of Salisbury Community School.

Eddie Fallis and Sophia Lawton, MUHS student representatives also present.

2. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Mary Slosar of Weybridge provided a comment on the Ad Hoc Strategic Plan Committee's update to the draft strategic plan. She acknowledged the work of the committee, and looks forward to watching the Board dig deep into the issues. Her comment pertains to Goal 3 -- Success: she still feels like the strategies are not enough to get to the goal. There is no way to get to 80% proficiency unless the district doubles down on interventionists.

B. Approve MUHS Student Representative Sophia Lawton

Caitlin Steele introduced Sophia Lawton as the new student representative to the ACSD Board. Sophia is a Junior at MUHS and is currently enrolled in her first year of a 2-year Health & Human Services program at PAHCC, in addition to her work at MUHS. She is the social media lead for Hope Happens Here at MUHS -- a student-led mental health group that works to reduce the stigma of mental health struggles and provides supports to students struggling with mental health.

Tricia Allen specifically thanked Sophia for her willingness to serve, and emphasized the importance of the student perspective.

Motion to approve Sophia Lawton as a new Student representative to the ACSD Board.

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

C. Approve Minutes of 11/6, 11/13, 11/14, 11/15, 11/16

Joanna Doria made a motion to approve the minutes of November 6, 2023. Jamie McCallum seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the minutes were approved. No abstentions.

Steve Orzech suggested grouping the rest of the minutes into one motion. He then made a motion to approve the minutes of November 13, 14, 15, and 16, 2023. Suzanne Buck seconded. Lindsey Hescocock noted that her name had been mistakenly left off the minutes for the November 14th meeting. Mary Heather Noble apologized for the oversight and said she would correct them. Barb Wilson called the vote and all the minutes (with the correction to the November 14th minutes) passed unanimously. No abstentions.

Barb Wilson then noted that the minutes from the Board's October 23, 2023 meeting were never voted on (since the November 6th meeting was a special board meeting focused on Strategic Planning), so those will be added to the agenda for the December 11, 2023 Board meeting.

D. Approve ACSD Bills

James Malcolm presented two groups of bills to the Board. He and Jason Chance read the bills on November 13, 2023.

General Fund: \$804,693.59 (~ \$506,000 of this was for employee health & dental)
Amazon Capital Service: \$616.79

General Fund: \$347,873.32
Payroll: \$1,007,658.97

Motion to approve payment of the ACSD Bills as presented.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

E. Report of the Student Representative

Eddie Fallis did not have anything to report other than selection of Sophia Lawton as the new MUHS student rep.

F. Report of the Superintendent

1. Action: Approve Faculty/Staff Appointments/Resignations

Tim Williams presented the list of staff appointments to fill current vacancies, and reminded the Board that some of the appointments are retroactive because the District needed to fill the positions and get new employees started as soon as possible.

The detailed list is included in the agenda.

Jamie McCallum asked where the new employees would be located. Tim Williams responded that they are District employees, so their appointments are not tied to a single location. The placement of the paraprofessionals and teacher to Mary Hogan were shared at the last meeting as part of the District's response to significant need, but this is subject to change as conditions change.

Joanna Doria asked about resumes and credentials -- is this information available? Heather Crowley and Tim Williams responded that this was provided in the update email that notified the Board about the new hires.

Lindsey Hescocock asked a question about placement of new employees on different steps of the union contract pay scale. Tim Williams explained that the placement on a particular pay step is commiserate with their experience.

Motion to approve the staff appointments as listed in the agenda.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

- a. Appoint Jamie Gero as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 17 of Master Agreement
- b. Appoint Jessica Hurley as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1 of Master Agreement
- c. Appoint Andy Maille as a Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 6 of Master Agreement
- d. Appoint Ralph Tucker as a Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 2 of Master Agreement
- e. Appoint Andre Turcotte as a Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 2 of Master Agreement

2. Enrollment Projections

Tim Williams reminded the Board that both he and Barb Wilson have calculated enrollment projections for the next several years. The findings are available in his latest Board update. He noted slight differences between his and Barb's projections, and invited Board members to examine both. The figures will be important for future planning decisions.

3. Presentation: Budget Development #2: Student Services and General Fund Projection

Nicole Carter provided a presentation to illustrate the re-organization of tier 2 student services and tier 3 special education services into a new centralized cost center within ACSD. She provided a historical context for the way student services and special education is currently organized and funded within ACSD, and the recent state initiatives that are driving the transition to a centralized system for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 services.

Context: Prior to unification of ACSD in 2016, Special Education services were organized and managed by the ACSU supervisory union, but Tier 2 intervention services were funded and located within each individual school. The current funding/configuration is a result of this history, and it has been challenging to provide equitable access to student services across the district. Act 173's new block grant funding structure allows for more prevention and fluidity between Tier 2 and Tier 3 services -- which makes grouping these costs into a centralized cost center more efficient.

Upcoming changes: The new Special Education & Student Services cost center will include the following funds:

TIER 3

- ~\$3.18 M from Census Block Grant
- \$500K IDEA Grant
- \$2.6 M local funding

TIER 2

- "leftover funds" from Census Block Grant
- \$300K Medicaid reimbursement
- \$540K Title 1 funds
- \$4.5M local funding (Matt Corrente noted this figure might be off)

Individual school cost centers will have the above Tier 2 funds and personnel expenses removed from their budgets, so it is important to keep this in mind when reviewing the FY25 budget numbers for each school.

Board questions:

Steve Orzech expressed concern about the sensitivity of Tier 2 "leftover funds" to high-need special education students -- if the District has a few high-needs students, are we at risk of not being able to provide/afford appropriate Tier 2 interventions? Nicole Carter reminded the Board that the State provides reimbursement for significant special education costs above a certain threshold, so Tier 2 services should not be at-risk in such a scenario.

Joanna Doria asked about the alignment of the student services personnel slide with the staffing model from prior budget presentation. What is important for the Board to know? Nicole responded that the idea is to have the resources be able to respond to the student need as it fluctuates over time and geography across the District.

Barb Wilson asked about the data that are being used to identify student need. Nicole responded that the District uses several types of data, Fast Bridge screen data, SEL screening data, State testing, behavioral data, etc.

Mary Heather Noble asked about how this new organization will still ensure provision of adequate services to schools with fewer students needs intervention/special education. It is good to hear that the intent is to direct more resources toward the greatest student need, but how do we make sure kids in lower enrollment schools aren't forgotten? She expressed concern about the resources being spread too thin -- is there enough butter to reach the edges of the bread?

Jamie McCallum asked how the District determines when it needs more resources to meet the need. Do we even currently have enough to meet the need? Nicole Carter acknowledge this as the primary challenge, and provided an example with math intervention. ACSD only has 2 math interventionists for 9 schools and ~1600 students. Ellen Whelan-Wuest underscored this issue, noting that 12 interventionists for the student population is not enough.

Suzanne Buck asked if teachers have the appropriate training to use Edu-Climber to be able to identify the need for student intervention in real time and adjust their instruction appropriately. Nicole acknowledged that this is a professional development opportunity/priority.

Matt Corrente took over the presentation and walked the Board through the latest revisions to the FY25 budget. Of note: the creation of the new Special Education & Student Services cost center -- which will re-assign some personnel and other expenses from their current location in individual school cost centers. He also led the Board through the State's new student

weighting formula, "LTWADM" -- which assigns weights based on the types of students and other factors that impact the cost of educating them (eg., grade level, English learners, students living in poverty, etc.). Although ACSD does receive a population parity weight, it is not considered sparse enough to qualify for "small schools" weight. He provided a few different scenarios (e.g., if the state gives ACSD a higher or lower LTWADM, or if teacher contract negotiations result in higher salaries) to illustrate the sensitivity of the calculations to these variables. The district will need to be very careful to keep the budget below the 10% increase threshold that the State is imposing. There are still many unknowns, but current information suggests the FY25 tax rate will increase \$1.55.

Board questions:

Steve Orzech asked about the data used to determine poverty -- is this Free & Reduced Lunch numbers? This figure is notoriously unreliable because families often don't fill out the required paperwork, so our count is often lower than our actual figures.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest pointed out the flaws in the funding system -- that the state is basing weights on census data that counts non-permanent residents (college students), and also fails to provide more accurate mechanisms for accurately counting students living in poverty.

James Malcolm wondered about translating this complex information for public information.

Jamie McCallum asked how the district is budgeting -- again referencing the issue of sufficient interventionists. Is the budget based on the need, or is it just what's been done in the past? There was some discussion about how to evolve away from status quo to make the budget more reflective of student need. Some also noted the historical parameters around budget historic planning, and how the district's configuration of schools had influenced resource distribution.

G. Report of the Chair

1. Discussion: Board Meeting Location(s)

Barb Wilson revisited the topic of having Board meetings at ACSD schools, since the matter had not been decided at the Board retreat. The Board launched right into strategic planning and the superintendent search, so hasn't resumed the practice of having every other meeting at an ACSD school. Barb expressed reservations about resuming the practice this far into the year, since that would mean several schools get left out. Her suggestion is to keep Board meetings for the remainder of the 2023-24 academic year at 208 Charles Ave. She then invited Board members to weigh in.

Steve Orzech noted the technology challenges of hosting meetings at the schools -- online participants often can't hear the meeting when they are held at schools. This issue needs to be resolved before resuming.

James Malcolm expressed appreciation for the schools and their presentations, but is concerned about how few members of the community actually show up. He wonders if the additional effort is worth the trouble.

Mary Heather Noble noted that having meetings in the schools is really the only time that many board members step inside ACSD facilities -- so if we do not resume having meetings in schools, we need to make other efforts to make sure board members see the facilities and meet the people in those buildings.

Jamie McCallum expressed his preference for going to the schools, and suggested making a

better effort to invite the community in.

Tricia Allen agreed, but expressed concern about the length of the school presentations -- it really cuts into Board work time.

Lindsey Hescoock said that it feels strange to only have meetings in Middlebury, but that the technology issue is a real concern. She would also like to see more people come.

Bjarki Sears suggested the Board consider its goals in the decision -- if the intent is to see the school in action, it would be better for Board members to come during the school day. If the intent is community engagement, it would be best for Board members to come during planned school events.

Mary Heather Noble noted that the Communications & Engagement Committee is working on this suggestion -- and has reached out to school leaders to see when/where Board members might be able to connect with their respective learning communities. She also suggested investigating the technology concern, since that seems to be a barrier.

H. Report of the Board

1. Ad Hoc Strategic Plan Report Update

Barb Wilson invited Ellen Whelan-Wuest to walk the Board through the modifications that the Ad Hoc Strategic Plan Committee has made to the draft Strategic Plan. Ellen reviewed each of the Board's comments/concerns, as captured in the November 6, 2023 Board meeting minutes, using the table provided in the meeting materials to guide the discussion.

Tricia Allen made a point to thank Emily Blistein for her work to incorporate the Board's changes into the working document. Jason Chance noted the distance the Board has come to bring the draft strategic plan to a place that everyone can support -- he expressed gratitude to all who helped get the Board to this point. He also wondered if the document is still clear enough with respect to the recommended action steps being the work of the Action Team and not the Board. Perhaps "Recommended" should be "Suggested"?

Lindsey also wondered about the clarity around that. She worries about readers being confused as they read through the plan. Emily Blistein suggested moving the Recommended Action Steps of the Action Team's work to an additional appendix. Several agreed that this would be a reasonable option.

Suzanne Buck pointed our Strategy 3 of Goal 2 on page 8 -- and wondered if the language says that ACSD is planning to hire on the basis of identity. How would this be done if these are not things that can be asked during an interview? How would the District prioritize diversity in its hiring practices? Mary Heather Noble and Ellen Whelan-Wuest expressed the importance of intentionality in hiring and mentoring a diverse staff. There are ways to recruit and support all kinds of people.

Lindsey Hescoock and Eddie Fallis noted that the current language will likely be interpreted as engaging in affirmative action. There was considerable discussion around this, to make sure the the Board's intention is clear, and that its practices are not misinterpreted as hiring quotas, but that the District wishes to attract and retain a diverse staff. Matt Corrente suggested having intentional hiring practices that look beyond ACSD & Vermont geography to find potential candidates. Emily Blistein and Ellen Whelan-Wuest both offered some changes to the language to resolve the concerns. Emily will incorporate both into the next draft, and allow the Board to choose at the December 11th meeting.

Jamie McCallum asked about the wording in Goal 3, Strategy 4, "coherent and transparent" profession development. Mary Heather Noble and Ellen Whelan-Wuest explained the origins of the wording from the Burlington School District's plan, and that the idea was to make sure that parents & families understand what training their teachers are getting -- that it is relevant and appropriate.

Lindsey Hescoock asked if we could add a definition to the glossary for "Diverse Identities." James Malcolm also suggested increasing the prominence of the blue-highlighted description under the Recommended Action Steps section.

Emily will incorporate the changes to prepare the draft for the Dec 11th Board meeting.

2. Committee Reports

a. Communications & Engagement

Mary Heather Noble said that the Communications & Engagement committee has reached out to ACSD Building Principals to identify community events that Board members can attend, and see what times might work for the Board to informally engage with school communities. The Committee is thinking about outreach for the Strategic Plan.

b. Facilities

Jason Chance reported for the Facility Committee that the MUHS kitchen project is complete and came in under budget. There has been a failure of part of the well system at Ripton School -- Facilities is working on those repairs.

c. Finance

James Malcolm spoke on behalf of the Finance Committee -- they have been working on budget development, but have also received the first quarter report for FY24, and it looks right on track. He informed the Board that the district had to borrow \$1 million for the short term to address cash flow and have payroll covered (this was due to the tax collection schedule -- it is common for Boards to need this. ACSD hasn't for a few years due to availability of ESSER money, but will likely resume the need to borrow at certain times of the year).

d. Negotiations

Steve Orzech reported that the Negotiations Committee has met with the teacher's union reps and will be exchanging proposals this Friday Dec 1st. They are also meeting with the support staff reps soon.

e. Policy

Suzanne Buck reported that the Policy Committee has several new policies ready for Board review and approval. These will hopefully be on the next agenda. The Committee has been spending considerable time on the new AOE Wellness policy.

f. Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center

Steve Orzech and Tricia Allen reported that the Open House went well, and that the tuition numbers that ACSD is awaiting for its budget have still not been released.

g. Addison Central SEPAC Update

Joanna Doria reported that the SEPAC successfully hosted a literacy event with Heather Gebo.

h. Parks and Recreation Update

No update to report.

i. Middlebury Community Television Update

No update to report.

I. Public Comment - Any Topic

No additional public comment.

J. Executive Session: Superintendent Search - Personnel 1 VSA 313 (a) (3)

Entered Executive Session at 9:23 p.m.

Exited Executive Session and re-entered Open Session at 9:59 p.m.

Motion to move into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters, as allowed under 1 VSA Section 313 (a) 3.

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

K. Action: Approval of Superintendent Appointment

Barb Wilson read a statement in support of Dr. Wendy Baker's qualifications:

Dr. Baker is a multigenerational Vermonter with thirty years of demonstrated success supporting students, teachers, schools, and leaders to achieve at high levels. Dr. Baker spent the first twenty years of her career serving Vermont public education, including her work as a tutor within the Chittenden County Correctional Center, a Nationally Board-Certified Middle School Humanities teacher, a School Improvement Specialist within the Vermont Department of Education, a Middle School Principal, and a Superintendent of Schools in the Orange East Supervisory Union.

As a higher education administrator with Southern New Hampshire University, Dr. Baker led the development of non-traditional programming for support staff, teachers, and leaders across New England. She also managed strategic partnerships that brought transformative, place-based academic programs to students, teachers, and leaders across the country and in many countries throughout the world. Her team's work was nominated for an EdTech Award in 2020 in recognition of its outstanding contribution to transforming education through technology to enrich the lives of learners everywhere.

Dr. Baker served as the Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Clinton Community College, which focused her attention toward community partnerships, philanthropy, and grant acquisitions. Currently, she collaborates with community organizations as a philanthropic developer and independent advisor for state, federal, and foundation grant opportunities. Dr. Baker's passion is deeply rooted in social justice and equity. Alongside her full-time roles, she has sought to gain perspective across cultural contexts as a consultant with more than fifty diverse organizations across the United States, in Liverpool, England, and in Johannesburg, South Africa. Since 2013, she has developed and taught graduate coursework and advised doctoral research in equitable teaching and leadership practices, socially just public policy, and positive organizational development.

In her free time, you'll find Dr. Baker on the basketball court officiating boys and girls varsity games on both sides of Lake Champlain, playing the imaginary game of the day with her granddaughter, or digging deep into the shelves of the secondhand bookshop she owns with her husband Rich in Plattsburgh, NY. She looks forward to getting to know the priorities, people, and communities of ACSD more deeply in the coming months.

Barb Wilson then shared a statement of appreciation from Dr. Baker:

"I'm humbled by the Board's selection as ACSD's next Superintendent of Schools. The communities of this district are known widely for their dedication to the education of children and youth. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to join the District's talented team."

Mary Heather Noble expressed gratitude to Barb Wilson for her hard work in finalizing the hiring process, and to the rest of the Board for working together on this hire. She is excited for ACSD's future.

Tricia Allen agreed, and expressed appreciation to the community for stakeholder feedback -- the Board relied on the feedback from its volunteers.

Motion to appoint Dr. Wendy Baker to the ACSD superintendent position, pending final contract execution and approval by the Agency of Education, effective July 1, 2024.

Move: Ellen Whelan-Wuest Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed

L. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mary Heather Noble

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

*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.