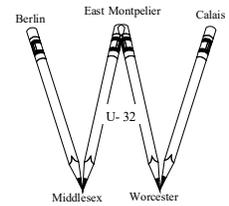


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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 Minutes
1.10.24
4:45-6:45 PM
Central Office, 1130 Gallison Hill Rd. Montpelier
Via Video Conference

Present: Chris McVeigh, Amelia Contrada (arrived at 5:22 p.m.), Amy Molina, Natasha Eckart

Without a quorum, those present informally discussed “school choice.” Chris McVeigh asked, are we thinking of opening school choice to everyone/ anyone, or are we thinking of having some parameters around students accepted. Amy Molina stated that it seems to make sense to have some sort of parameters. Tonight’s packet contained some model policies for the committee to consider. The policy to be considered is through the lens of school choice in the elementary schools in WCUUSD. Amy stated that she is not a fan of “first come first serve” regarding school choice. Some discussion about staff who work at one campus (but live in another town within WCUUSD) and want their child to attend that campus. Chris stated that this might be appropriate if the student’s attendance would not require the school to hire additional staffing. Natasha wondered if creating a policy at this time would be premature if our schools are going to look different in a year, based on the discussions that are currently underway with WCUUSD. Chris asked whether anyone present has any ideas about what the Finance Committee is currently discussing around some flexibility around town lines determining school attendance. (Realigning geographically rather than by town lines.) Natasha had brought that idea up at a previous meeting. The topic of transportation was discussed: currently transportation is provided to/ from the school that you are assigned to. Transportation is not the responsibility of the school except when it is part of a child’s IEP.

- 1. Call to Order: Chris McVeigh called the meeting to order at 5:24 p.m.**
- 2. Approve Minutes of 12.13.23:** The committee did not take action on this.

3. Policy for Discussion

3.1. School Choice: Natasha spoke about the idea of some parents being able to get their child to a school of their choice versus other parents who are not able for whatever reasons to work that out. This goes to the idea of equity. All of the schools should be able to provide equal opportunities to all students. Natasha stated that she feels that school choice has the potential to take students who already have privilege, to the school of their choice, and leaves behind other students. Chris McVeigh spoke about the variety of personnel and how it affects each school. Amy Molina spoke about instances where a family may want to be at a different school; it might not be about “privilege” - it could be logistical. Amelia Contrada wondered about a policy where school choice exists with parameters such that an exchange is part of the agreement. Is there a way to regulate if someone wants to attend a school it can happen if there is a “swap;” if not, it would come to the board to decide. Chris McVeigh spoke about the impact on staffing, for example, small schools can only lose one or two students before class size is affected negatively. Amy Molina suggested researching the pros and cons of school choice policy. She believes there has been much discussion around this; there are probably resources out there that would facilitate the discussion. E.g., “does it unintentionally create segregation?” This is a big topic especially when we have made a commitment as a supervisory union to look at all policies through the lens of equity. Natasha offered to gather information (reach out to NEA) to share with the committee for further discussion of this policy. Chris McVeigh asked whether we would like to discuss the cases where parents move out of the district and ask for permission to have their child continue to attend the school in the district. Natasha suggested this is a good topic for discussion, based on some of the situations the board has faced in the recent past. Amy stated that she feels there have been more requests in the past years because of the housing crisis (e.g. families that move from Berlin to Barre but want their child to remain at Berlin School.) Amy stated that in the past at U-32 when parents ask for this, it is typically granted only when the child is in their senior year, as an allowance to let the child finish their high school career. For other grades, it has not been granted (typically.) However, she feels that might be changing recently. Chris McVeigh spoke about the instances when a house is being renovated (or a house is being built) and residency is considered in the district even though they are temporarily living elsewhere. Natasha spoke again about the idea of equity - for example, with the flooding, when families are forced from their homes and cannot afford to continue to live in the district but request that the student continue to attend their school. Amelia stated that we are probably going to keep coming back to what are the parameters for the exchange and what are the extenuating circumstances. It would be helpful to create some parameters/ guidance for the board to make these decisions. Chris asked what is the financial harm of saying “yes” to a student who is already there. Natasha stated if a student has started the year with us and moves mid-year if they move out of the district, what happens to the funding (does the funding follow the student, or does the money stay in the original district.) Amy Molina shared that October 15 is the date each year when we report our student enrollment, which affects per-pupil funding for that year. However, after that year, in the following years,

she does not believe that the funding would follow the student if the student did not live in our district. She stated that previously, we would allow a student to finish the semester, but not typically let the student finish the entire school year. An appeal to that would come to the board. Some of the questions about funding need to be answered by Superintendent Roy or Susanne Gann. Chris McVeigh suggested the policy could be that if a student attends beyond the October 15 (student count deadline) then the student could attend for the remainder of the year, but the board would consider anything beyond that. Amelia suggested that when the board is considering extenuating circumstances, they could consider some guidelines during the Executive Session, based on: humanity, justice, and equity values. She would be interested to hear what others have to say about extenuating circumstances or parameters for the board to consider requests. Chris McVeigh spoke about the concept of “parental deception” and that this should not play a role in the objective decision-making of the board. Amy asked if there was a way to measure, is this was in the best interest of the student. Is there some data that we can consider - e.g. is staying in the original school really in the best interest of the student? Does it create access issues, truancy, etc.? Natasha stated that there should be an understanding that, to the extent possible, the parent’s responsibility is to ensure that the student attends. Chris McVeigh stated that this could be part of the agreement. Amelia asked if hearing from the student that they have the support of a teacher or mentor, to write their statement - in terms of what they value about the decision to stay at the school, how they would be supported - having direct student voice in the matter would be helpful to the board. Chris McVeigh stated that this has happened in the past with high school students. We could make this part of the process for consideration for middle and high school students. Chris McVeigh stated that there is a difference between school choice and a residency request. Should there be two separate policies? Amy suggested an interdistrict transfer (school choice) and a residency waiver are two different issues even though they have some similarities and overlapping issues.

3.2. F26 Security Cameras: This will be moved to the board for adoption.

4. Future Agenda Items

4.1. Next Meeting: February 14, 2024

4.2. will continue the discussion of school choice

5. Adjourn: The committee adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Grace, Committee Recording Secretary