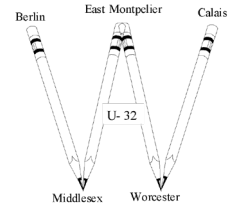


# Washington Central Unified Union School District

*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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## Washington Central Unified Union School District School Board Meeting 4.3.24 6:15-9:15 PM \*\*\*Virtual\*\*\*

**Board Members Present:** Flor Diaz Smith, Ursula Stanley, Jonathan Goddard, Mckalyn Leclerc, Chris McVeigh, Zach Sullivan, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Kealy Sloane, Daniel Keeney, Natasha Eckart, Michelle Ksepka, Amelia Contrada

**Others Present:** Superintendent Meagan Roy, Susanne Gann, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Principal Steven Dellinger-Pate, ORCA Media, Celia Guggemos, Karoline May, Cat Fair, Jes Wills, Kerra Holden, Daniel Velez, David Delcore, David Hannigan, Jen Donovan, Julia Pritchard, Lisa Hanna, Lisa LaPlante, Maria Melekos, Michael Sherwin, Ainsley Burroughs, Allison Fayle, Daisy Scarzello, Hannah Brown, Laura Giammusso, Lauren Chabot, Sarah Snow, Annie Ledue, April Davis, Samantha Jackson, Alden Bird, Jill Abair, Alicia Lyford, Allen Gilbert, Aly Mahoney, Amber Larrabee, Amy Young, Andy A, Ashley Smith, Bekah Mandell, Jeanie Phillips, Jenn Ingersoll, Jenna Howard, Jennifer Chambers, John Riley, Jordan Nobler, Kara Rosenberg, Karen Lieberman, Kari Bradley, Kate McCann, Kathryn Dodge, Katy Preston, KChesser, Kevin McCollister, Kim Sturgis, Kristin O'Connor, Larry Gilbert, Laura Lafaille, Lauralee Curavoo, Lawrence Miller, Leigh Garrity, Linda Emmons, Lisa Wilson, Liza, LP, Madeleine Dougherty, Marc, Mark, Mark Brown, Mary Carpenter, Mavis, Meg Allison, Meg Dawkins, Megan Mitchell, Meredith Crandall, Maggie McGlynn, Michelle Meacham, Morgan, Neha Shukla, Nicholle Schaeffer, NWS, Penny, Rachel Hernandez, Reagan Weiss, Robin, Ron, RTerri, Ruben Bennett, Shannon Miller, Shelley Vermilya, Sonya Rhodes, Susanne Gann, Susan Deforge, Suzanne Lowden, Talitha Landis-Marinello, Tony Snow, Traci Thompson, Tracy Curtin, Wendy Freundlich, Will Baker, Addie Wheeler, Annie Ledue, Arlyn Bruccoli, August, B Goodwin, Brigitte Kalat, Brittany Perry, Carl P, Carrie, C Ecklund, Chani Waterhouse, Danielle LaFleur Brooks, David Lawrence, Deborah Bloom, Denise Wheeler, Derek Dunning, Elijah Hawkes, Elizabeth Marks, Elizabeth Brown, Emily Palmer, Erica Rose, Erin Mooney, Erin Mullaney, Estero, Gillian Fuqua, Heather C-W, Heather McLane, Heidi Dimick, Jamie Bohn, Jarrod Weiss, Jean Cadorette, Jeff Dean, Jessica Heinz, Brittany Powell, John Brabant, Kari, Lauri Scharff, Noah Weinstein, Sharon S

1. **Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.**

2. **Welcome:** Flor Diaz Smith welcomed those present and made a statement about the commitment of the board and the work ahead.
  - 2.1. **Adjustments to the Agenda:** Flor Diaz Smith stated that we are going to table the presentation from Calais since we are having a virtual meeting (due to weather); the Calais presentation will take place at the May board meeting (at Calais.) **Ursula Stanley moved to approve this agenda adjustment. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.**
  - 2.2. **Reception of Guests**
  - 2.3. **Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note:** Hannah Brown commented regarding the meeting procedure. She noted that there are interruptions from board members. She would appreciate it if board members can finish their thoughts and not be talked over. Jill Abair stated that she had shared an email with the board about concerns about proposed cuts in library positions. Bekah Mandell stated that the way this conversation is framed is important, to help the community understand that we are starting from a place of it being more expensive to educate children today to be part of a 21st-century world. She also stated that having these conversations without knowing how many people pay taxes based on income versus how many people pay taxes based on property is difficult. That is important information. She stated that cuts to foreign languages, library, and allied arts - these are penny-wise but pound-foolish. She asked about some of the line items in the budget - increases in tech and increases in the superintendent services. Honi Bean Barrett spoke about equity: equal programming and equal staffing. She stated that equity is different from equality. She stated that the differences in equity and equality between elementary schools and high school are quite massive. Erica Rose spoke about the proposal to cut FTE in art teachers while asking teachers to teach more art classes, especially those teachers who travel between schools. The quality of the art program will be jeopardized. She asked the board to reconsider this proposed cut to the program. Kathryn Dodge (student at Calais) spoke about concerns with the proposed decrease in FTE of school counselor and school nurse positions at Calais.
3. **Presentation:** Social Emotional Learning: Calais Elementary (tabled tonight)
4. **Presentation: Strategic Plan and Configuration Simulations:** Jeanie Phillips presented a slide deck of the Strategic Plan, based on the work to date. Configuration simulations were included as part of planning forward. A breakout discussion was planned; after fifteen minutes, groups returned and shared.
  - 4.1. **Public Comments:** Breakout Groups share:
    - The importance of small schools to small towns, which we need to take into account.
    - This seems like a good time to talk with Montpelier about their next steps.
    - Thinking about a burgeoning of resources with the idea of reconfiguration.
    - Concerns around busing; how long students are riding the bus.
    - Impacts on climate change (e.g. additional busing)
    - Excitement toward expanding opportunities and enrichment
    - Concerns around going too far, too fast, too big
    - Excitement around the idea of strengthening services in arts, music in larger schools.

- Concerns around transition of 6th grade to high school - what does this mean to teachers? Regarding licensure, employment etc. - this is a current stressor to teachers.
- Excitement around increase in opportunities
- Concerns around specifics: the devil is in the details. What does increase in opportunities mean?
- How are we making the decision about which schools to expand etc.? What are the criteria that we are looking at? The value of smaller schools.
- The idea of looking toward Montpelier was brought up.
- Make sure we have many voices at the table.
- Excitement about increased opportunities, especially for 6th graders at U-32; excitement about childcare.
- Concerns - how do we support communities? How to strengthen the bonds in our communities?
- Questions about class sizes? What are the optimal class sizes? When is a class too big?
- Concerns around logistics/ licensure for teaching staff.
- Excitement about the possibility of child care (for employees to access as well).
- Increased opportunities for students.
- Questions: how do we repurpose a school so that is still vibrant in the community?
- How do we make it so students do not feel like they are just “absorbed” into another school? (Renaming the school?)
- Concerns around transportation
- What will the experience be for children at a larger school?

5. **Presentation: Revised Budget:** Superintendent Roy and Susanne Gann provided a slide deck to present a revised proposed budget with various scenarios including percentage increases ranging from 6 to 10%.

**5.1. Public Comments:** Suzanne Lawden stated she was confused by lower enrollment meaning that students still enrolled in school do not warrant having a full time nurse. There are students who have serious health conditions; this creates risk and an unsafe environment for them. Meredith Crandall: both school counselor and school nurse positions are very essential for the health and the mental well-being of students. Traci Leibowitz asked the board to go in the direction of the most generous increase, allowing for fewer cuts. The board has not yet found the sustainable option; it is not wise at this point to make significant cuts. Once some of these programs go away, it is difficult to get them back. What are the transportation costs when considering consolidating preschool and kindergarten? Lauralee Curavoo: can we consider taking the least amount from our budget as we are planning for consolidation in the coming years? Concerned that we could lose good teachers, as well as administrators by reducing positions. Feels that the previous budget did not show overall support by board members in unity with each other. Whatever goes forward really needs to be sold to the community. It is not too far out of the box to consider cutting transportation to high school. Honi Bean Barrett: The ripple effect of the proposed cuts is hard to understand if you are not currently in the buildings. She spoke about collaboration between other staff in the building. These opportunities will be affected; duties for teachers will increase, creating less time to plan and collaborate. She urged the board to consider what reducing the nurse position will mean, e.g. other staff covering nurse duties under the license

of the school nurse. Aly Mahoney had provided a letter to the board about the importance of teaching librarians. She expressed concerns about stretching allied arts teachers further. She spoke about teacher burnout; she spoke about the difficulty for teachers to make connections with students when they have access to them twice a week or less, especially in light of absences, weather days, etc. Ainsley Burroughs expressed concerns about proposed cuts - many of which, community members have already rallied against. We are going to lose quality education if we settle on any of these budgets. She has heard the constituents ask things of the board. It does not feel that the board is responding. The community is not united in this budget because it does not feel that the board is united in this budget. Allen Gilbert - the number one thing you need to do is get a budget passed. The savings that consolidation was supposed to create have not materialized; the work of the board is very difficult. He urged the board to put this on hold, and create a budget with a 5% increase, which he feels will pass. John Brabant agrees with the suggestion of going forward with a 10% increase; then we need to have a conversation with Montpelier - they are in a worse situation than we are. He urged the board not to cut school nurse positions; he spoke from his personal experience as a parent. The stated education fund has become a slush fund to fund other efforts; our state needs to work to narrow where the education funds are being spent, inside our schools. He stated that he does not know why anyone would want to be a school teacher in this day and age. We are seeing what makes this country great, get hollowed out - please do not think radically. Shannon Miller has concerns about reducing allied arts teaching positions; she believes we will have a hard time filling those positions. She complimented Amy Young at Berlin School. She spoke about "selling" the vote for the budget. We have some work to do on marketing. What can we say to our communities with a united voice? To garner support? Cheryl Ecklund stated it is unbelievable, the cuts and slashes to programs such as allied arts. She stated her concerns with these proposed reductions. Meg Allison expressed concerns with reductions in positions, especially in the library positions. We realize there are changes needed in the future but these proposed reductions are premature. Rubin Bennett stated that defenses of positions and individuals is not appropriate; at the end of the day, this board has to create a budget that will pass. For two years, you have made promises to make cuts that you did not make. Now we are in a corner. These cuts are overdue; they are not premature. This board can't not do anything for another year. He discouraged the board from using fund balance. He encouraged the board to consider the 6% budget. This would have been less drastic had it been done over time - none of this comes as a surprise - we cannot keep kicking the can down the road.

**Board Deliberation:** Mckalyn Leclerc asked for clarification around Buildings and Grounds positions. Steven Dellinger-Pate provided clarification - creating a buildings and grounds director and a "lead custodian" in one of the budget scenarios. Daniel Keeney asked for information about the per bus route cost. He asked for a response to the proposal to cut transportation to the high school. Steven Dellinger-Pate indicated that the administration has not considered cutting transportation to the high school; it is felt that this would create difficulties for students accessing school. Kealy Sloan asked for estimated changes the tax table - can we see that as a percentage change? Chris McVeigh: re: 10% proposal - asked for clarification when considering the chart in the packet. He asked, could we mix and match where different cuts are coming from? Superintendent Roy indicated that the administration has tried to organize reductions through the lens of providing what students

need. Typically, the board provides a dollar amount and the administration considers the more specific staffing considerations. Michelle Ksepka asked for clarification around an increase to the superintendent's office. Superintendent Roy explained that this is due to an increase in the human resources position, which had been discussed and approved by the board earlier in the year. Michelle Ksepka stated that with the percentage decreases that were proposed, the superintendent's office did not show the same reduction that other departments show. Susanne Gann stated that there is not a lot of flexibility within the superintendent's office, for further reductions. Amelia Contrada asked for a comparison between slide 23 and the increases for the budget that was last proposed (and failed)? It could help with communicating more clearly to the community. We can reduce the cuts as much as possible and continue conversations with the community about reconfiguration. A good outcome of this budget failure is that there is more education among the community. She suggests waiting until April 10th to continue this discussion. Jonathan Goddard: considering the use of fund balance - if we use, e.g. \$923K and combine with the building and grounds position, this will create further reductions. He noted that the State of Vermont needs to figure out another way to fund education. Flor Diaz Smith stated that we could not wait for the legislature to figure it out. Discussion at the state level continues but we need to pass a budget before the end of this school year. Mckalyn Leclerc expressed concern that the health education position at Doty is filled by positions that are proposed to be reduced - she is concerned around student access to health education. Superintendent Roy stated that health education is a requirement, and we will provide it, possibly using a different model. Zach Sullivan stated that people rally to defend specific positions. He believes that in order to get something to pass, we need to look at scenarios that include the larger cuts. The proposed cuts are in response to declined enrollment. Daniel Keeney agrees with concerns about using fund balance. He worries about the lower percentage proposals because of the magnitude of positions proposed for reduction. He noted that whatever we agree to use from the fund balance, we need to plan to replenish in the years to come. Hopefully next year all of the contributing factors that created this perfect storm will not exist. He stated that he prefers the 9 or 10% option. Chris McVeigh asked for clarification around what is meant by "central office budget." He stated that ballots were not mailed because of the tight timeline that was created. He believes we can look at the different scenarios "a la carte" and create a combination of the different proposals. He would like to keep as many of the direct services to students as possible. That is where we get the most "bang for the buck." Maintain nurses, school counselors, and other arts positions. Flor Diaz Smith asked the board to consider the effect of "a la carte" - the effect on the administration in making changes to the proposed budget overall. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked why we are not looking broader. When considering vacancies, anticipated vacancies, is there an opportunity to consider structuring around the reality that we may not be able to fill said positions anyway in this hiring climate. Ursula Stanley leans toward 8% proposed budget. She stated that the board taking an "a la carte" approach to the budget proposals would undo the hours of work that the administration has done to get to these models. We know that every time we talk about decreasing or eliminating positions, they are real people, we know how hard it is. It is our job as a board to remember all of the people, who have expressed concern to the board, including those who are expressing concerns about tax increases being unsustainable, including those who are not present tonight. **Ursula Stanley moved to approve the 8% increase proposed budget. Seconded by Zach Sullivan.** Discussion: Diane Nichols-

Fleming stated that if we have identified that one of our core values is community engagement, we need to be open to what that engagement looks like. We had an amazing turnout tonight. She is feeling torn about whether she is ready to vote tonight. Flor Diaz Smith stated that there are also people who work in our community and live in our community who are not present tonight and have engaged with the board. Additionally, the budget vote speaks of the community's desire. Michelle Ksepka stated that she would support the 8% budget. Could we move the U-32 Buildings and Grounds position over, and keep the administration as they are? She offered a friendly amendment to the motion. That the bldg and grounds position be moved over and the building administrators be left where they currently are. Ursula Stanley stated that she is not accepting of the amendment.

**Michelle Ksepka moved to amend the motion to move the U-32 Building and Grounds position out and to keep the building administration positions as they are. Seconded by Ursula Stanley.** Discussion: Kealy Sloan stated that she does not understand the dollar amount implications to this amendment. Susanne Gann explained, specifically that the result would be an additional reduction to the 8% by \$59,939. Principal Dellinger-Pate stated that each proposed budget was carefully considered and that the intention was not to opt to take from one and add to another; he stated that at the 6%, there is a more substantial cut to programs and schools. Chris McVeigh stated that by offering these options you have indicated that these are positions we could do without if we needed to. Karoline May stated that if the board is going to take anything from the 8% reduction, she does not think taking the administration will land right with other staff; she would not feel right about it. She noted that every percentage we considered increased the impact, and is less desired by administration. **A vote was called on the amendment. The motion to amend was defeated.** Returning to the original motion of 8%: Discussion: **Chris McVeigh** would like to find the value of each of the proposed cuts; this provides context. **He moved to table this matter until we have this information, and would like to vote on April 10th in person at Calais. Seconded by Kealy Sloan.** Ursula Stanley indicated that because we had a motion on the floor, we could not make another motion. Point of order: Flor Diaz Smith stated that we have a motion to postpone the matter; this is allowed under Roberts Rules. Discussion: Kealy Sloan stated that she is hesitant to vote on a budget without sharing more information with the public. She feels that we need to do a better job of communicating with the public. Flor Diaz Smith stated that we as a board need to take action at this point; we have been discussing since September. She expressed concern about running out of time before the end of the school year. Ursula Stanley stated that we are elected and it is our job to pick the budget. We have heard from a variety of people over time, we have provided opportunities to discuss the budget since October. We need to pick one and then work on selling it. Natasha Eckart clarified; will we still meet our timeline if we wait until the April 10 meeting? She would like to have time to process information and input from tonight. Would like to be thoughtful about the decision. Would support the idea of postponing the vote until April 10th? Flor Diaz Smith clarified - we are not asking the administration to come back with an additional iteration of the budget. **A vote was called on the motion to table this vote until April 10. This motion carried.** Superintendent Roy clarified what the board would like for information: dollar amounts for reductions proposed on the chart.

Kealy Sloan asked to see 10% Net Ed spending without art and library cuts as a response to what community members expressed - can we explore that as a board? Daniel Keeney - administration's philosophy around the 10, 8 and 6% proposal - for clarity. Kealy Sloan asked, before we move on, can we take a straw poll to see what most are feeling? Would be good to get a sense. 10% - 7 board members 8% - 3 board members Amelia indicated that she too would like to consider the 10% version, without elementary allied arts position decreases.

*(The remaining agenda items were not addressed, due to the late hour : 10 p.m.)*

**6. Board Operations (Discussion/Action)**

**6.1. Adopt a Revised Budget**

**7. Personnel**

**7.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE**

**8. Consent Agenda(Discussion/Action)**

**8.1. Approve Minutes of 3.11.24, 3.13.24**

**9. Future Agenda Items:**

**9.1. 2023-2024 Board Work Plan**

**10. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 10:00.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary

NOTE: To ensure the board has time to conduct its business, the board will adhere to a strict 1.5 minute public comment time limit per person. Microphones will be muted when time is up. If there is not enough time on the agenda for all members of the public wishing to comment at the beginning of the meeting, there is additional public comment at the end of the meeting.

**WCUUSD Board Norms - Adopted November 18, 2020**

- **Public input** –Notify the community about public forums and opportunities for public comment at board meetings.
- **Community involvement during regular meetings of the board** – Every meeting will include at least one opportunity for public comment. Public comment is an opportunity for board members to listen and ask clarifying questions. If a board member feels a concern raised in public comment warrants further board discussion, they may request that the issue be added to a future agenda.
- **Community dialogue** – The board may periodically schedule community forums that allow for dialogue, questions and answers from the board or the district leadership team.
- **Stay on time** – Start and end on time. The chair may appoint a time-keeper.
- **All voices will be heard** – Every board member gets a chance to speak. Some topics warrant having each board member speak in turn to ensure full representation.
- **Reflection** –To allow time for reflection, the chair and agenda steering committee will plan time for complex or contentious issues to be discussed at more than one meeting before the board votes, except where a decision is urgent.
- **Announcements in reports** – Announcements from the administration will appear in the reports and not as discussion items.
- **Role of the board** – At the end of each board meeting reflect on whether the board remained focused on its policy-making and oversight role during the meeting, rather than operational details that are the responsibility of leadership team.
- **Respect each other** – Listen, allow others to be heard, share concerns, assume positive intentions, be present, and celebrate successes.

**AGENDA KEY**

<b>Agenda Section</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Role/ Responsibility</b>	<b>Description</b>
Call to Order	n/a	Board Chair or designee	Formal opening to meeting. Superintendent calls to order during annual reorganization
Public Comment			Opportunity for public comment on items not on the agenda. Board will adhere to a strict 1.5 minute public comment time limit per person. Microphones will be muted when time is up. If there is not enough time on the agenda for all members of the public wishing to comment at the beginning of the meeting, there is additional public comment at the end of the meeting.
Executive Session	Personnel Student Matter Negotiations		Only for discussion of items covered in VSA §313. Formal actions not taken in Executive Session
Reports to the	Superintendent/	Administration	Both regular/recurring reports and one-time reports happen here. One-time reports



Board	COLT Student Report		are determined by the Board workplan or requested by the will of the Board. Generally, reports invite clarifying questions but not formal discussion/action
Committee Reports	Finance Policy Education Quality	Board	Chair of the committee reports on substance of most recent committee meeting. Generally, reports invite clarifying questions; any discussion or action items would be listed in the respective section of the agenda
Discussion Items		Board with input from administration	Items on the agenda specifically for discussion of the Board. Chair can seek input from audience during discussions. Generally not intended for action (although nothing prevents the Board from taking an action)
Action Items	Personnel approvals	Board	Items formally on the agenda for Board action. Discussion can occur after a motion is on the table
Consent Agenda	Board Orders Minutes	Board	Designed for items that need proforma approval and/or are sufficiently routine. Board acts on all items in the Consent agenda and does not discuss any item unless it is pulled out during Agenda Adjustments