

AGENDA



**Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 4:30 pm - 5:30 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.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88100202531>

- A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum
- B. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff
- C. Public Comment
- D. Recommendation to Approve the Minutes from May 21, 2024
- E. Committee Discussion:
 - 1. Draft Public Comment Procedure
 - 2. Format for Travelling Board Meetings
 - 3. Engagement Brainstorming
- F. Public Comment - Any Topic
- G. Adjournment

***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.

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, May 21, 2024, 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm
208 Charles Avenue, Middlebury VT & Virtual Connection**

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In Attendance

Joanna Doria; Laura Harthan; Mary Heather Noble; Tricia Allen

Not In Attendance

Ellie Romp

- A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum**
Meeting called to order at 4:32 pm.
- B. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff**
Emily Blistein, ACSD Director of Communications & Engagement also present.
- C. Approve the Agenda**
Motion to approve the agenda.
Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed
- D. Public Comment -Agenda Items**
No public comment.
- E. Approve the Minutes of April 30, 2024**
Motion to approve the minutes of April 30, 2024.
Move: Joanna Doria Second: Laura Harthan Status: Passed
- F. Committee Discussion:**
1. Board Update Letter for Spring 2024
Tricia Allen reported that she had both Barb Wilson, Board Chair and Committee Chairs review the draft Board Update and provide comments. She has not received any other feedback from Board members since presenting it at the last full Board meeting. If the

committee does not have any other additions, the update is ready to be sent out.

Mary Heather Noble gave an overview of what happens next: the Google doc is shared with Emily, who can post to the About the Board page on the website and send it out via School Messenger (this allows for translation). Emily noted that the document can't be translated if it is over 5,000 words -- so the committee should keep this in mind for future Board Updates. The link to the update will also be included in the next District newsletter, the next weekly principal update, and in the District news posted on Front Porch Forum.

Laura Harthan requested that the update NOT be distributed on a Friday, since it could get lost among the Friday Principal communications.

2. Review of Committee Documents '22

Tricia Allen presented the 2021-22 Communication & Engagement Committee documents that Mary Heather Noble had shared with her, which outlined a Draft ACSD Board Communication Plan and Procedure Document for handling Public Comments. Mary Heather explained that this was something the C&E Committee had developed to try and define the scope of its work, and standardized the way in which the Board handled communications & public comments. The plan was something the Committee had shared with the Policy Committee when Mary Gill chaired it, but it was never fully acted upon since other policy matters were more urgent (e.g., researching the Articles of Agreement for a potential Charter change).

Joanna Doria noted that the Board has since passed a policy on public participation, so this draft procedure document should probably be reviewed to make sure it aligns with current policy. Laura Harthan mentioned the Policy Committee will soon be working on a policy that addresses a similar topic, so the draft would also benefit from their review. Mary Heather agreed, noting that that was the original intent.

Tricia asked Joanna to review the draft communication plan and procedure document for alignment with current policy and then the C&E Committee can ask the Policy Committee to review it before asking the full Board to adopt it.

Tricia Allen also presented the slides from the C&E Committee's 2021-22 presentation to the Board on its priorities, expressing appreciation for the way the committee organized its work into three main "buckets": 1) Informing the Public; 2) Inviting & Managing Input from the Public; and 3) Active Community Engagement. Tricia used this as a springboard to discuss opportunities for improvement in each of these categories, especially active community engagement.

3. Ideas for Public Engagement

Highlights from the discussion:

- Tricia would like the committee to consider having Board hats or shirts (or signs) for Board members to use when they appear at ACSD events on behalf of the Board. Something that encourages people to approach them and ask questions.

- Joanna noted that the Board stopped holding Board meetings at ACSD schools, and hasn't replaced this with another effort to bring Board members into member towns. All agreed that this practice was beneficial for engagement and should be continued in some manner.

- Mary Heather mentioned the school Board for Mount Mansfield holds informal "Refreshments and Conversation" sessions for a half hour prior to their board meetings. This might be something that the ACSD Board could try without too much effort, especially if it is done in combination with returning to all the schools. The group discussed the logistics of pursuing this options -- e.g., providing refreshments, and navigating the technology issues of recording/zooming the meetings.

- Emily Blistein suggested pairing the effort with simplified bite-sized summaries for the public, something that provides a very brief overview of "here's what happened at the last meeting, here's why it's important," to give people a starting point for questions. One of the biggest barriers the Board currently has is public understanding/comprehension of Board work.

- The group discussed meeting on Tuesdays to quickly develop a bi-weekly recap of Board meetings to provide a sort of Cliff's Notes version of meeting minutes for people.

- There was some discussion about how the committee and/or full Board can synthesize/answer public comments that are presented to the Board. This will require additional consideration, since responses must be voted by the Board.

- Tricia Allen also proposed having at least one annual child-centric Board meeting in which students are invited to the meeting and families have an opportunity to participate in a family-friendly manner.

- The committee agreed to have Tricia Allen update the full Board with the plans to resurrect the 2021-22 draft Communication Plan & Procedure Document, recommend returning to ACSD schools for some Board meetings, engagement activities, and develop abbreviated summaries of meeting minutes.

- There was also some discussion about how other districts handle public comment period at their board meetings. ACSD's current process is not inconsistent, but several on the committee believe the current practice of separating public comment into two sections (i.e., comment on agenda-related items at the beginning of the meeting and comments on all other matters at the end of the meeting) poses a barrier to some stakeholders, especially students and parents of young kids. All recognize the need to preserve board work time, but would like the Board to consider a different structure for public comment. Tricia will also include this in her Committee update at the May 28th Board meeting.

G. Public Comment - Any Topic

No public comment.

H. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

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Draft Procedure Document for Receiving and Responding to Public Comment To accompany A21

Intent:

As expressed in its Governance Commitment (Policy A1), the ACSD School Board Vision requires the Board to engage with each other, administrators, teachers and staff, parents, students, and community members in ways that promote its mission of supporting all students to reach their full academic potential and be prepared for success as engaged citizens.

The purpose of this Procedure Document is to enable consistent ACSD Board responses, ensure the Board is proactively reducing barriers to public engagement and actively taking all public comment into consideration.

General Procedure:

Board members will observe and honor the distinction between the role of the Board and that of the Superintendent and will refer questions, comments, and concerns to appropriate staff members of the ACSD, in accordance with Policy A2 -- Key Responsibilities of Board Members, which states in part:

“The Board’s responsibility is to ensure leadership success without micromanaging. School board member interactions with school personnel shall respect appropriate reporting relationships. It is the responsibility of the Superintendent, not members of the Board, to direct the administration and coordination of educational programs in the district. When presented with citizen concerns, board members [shall] refer them to appropriate levels of authority in accordance with our policies and procedures for complaints.”

Individual members of the Board are welcome to respond to questions and concerns as needed, with the understanding and acknowledgment that they are not speaking on behalf of the full Board unless they have been specifically authorized to do so, per Policy A5 -- Code of Conduct, which states in part:

“...Board members’ interaction with public, press, or other entities shall recognize the inability of any individual board member to speak for the Board except as explicitly stated in board decisions.”

Board members must also respect and keep confidential all personnel issues and all issues of a sensitive nature, in accordance with Policy A5.

Comments Received Via Email:

Incoming emails from ACSD stakeholders may be acknowledged by the Board Chair (or their designee) and then distributed to appropriate members of the Board for additional action or

response as needed. Incoming emails with questions or comments pertaining to ACSD operations and under the purview of the ACSD administration shall be forwarded to the ACSD Superintendent.

When appropriate, board members responding to email communications from ACSD stakeholders about the work of the Board are encouraged to copy their responses to committee chairs and/or Board and District leadership as needed to keep them apprised of communications concerning relevant topics under their purview.

Board members who receive email communications they believe require the attention of the full Board shall forward the email to other Board members for further consideration (e.g., public comments on a matter before the full Board).

Comments Received During Public Comment Period of Board and Committee Meetings:

As expressed in its Public Participation at Board Meetings (Policy A21), the ACSD Board encourages public participation at its meetings and wants to carry out its business with the benefit of public input and expertise. Comments and questions presented by stakeholders during the public comment period of Committee meetings and Board meetings will be recorded in the meeting minutes and will be actively taken into consideration by the Committee and full Board, respectively. Comments and questions expressed in the “chat” feature of remote Zoom meetings are considered to fall beyond the scope of official public comment and will not be included in meeting minutes.

Things to consider adding:

- To ensure that meetings are conducted in an orderly fashion and that the business at hand is completed in a timely manner, the Board Chair will assess the need to limit the time allotted for each commentator and make best efforts to guarantee fairness, i.e. appointing a timekeeper, creating a speakers’ list, etc.
- In an attempt to mitigate barriers to public comment, i.e. length and timing of Board and Committee meetings:
 - post/display the agenda for the public
 - offer two public comment periods; one at the beginning and one at the end of each meeting. Topics of those periods will not be limited.
- To note the importance of public input and expertise to the Board Vision, an opportunity for Board members to reflect on ideas raised in public comments shall be granted. That opportunity comes with the clear understanding of Policy A2: [individual Board members] shall recognize the inability...to speak for the Board.”
- To facilitate the Board taking public input into consideration, the Board will also invite clarifying questions after special presentations.

Comments Received During Other ACSD Public Engagement Events:

Comments and questions presented by stakeholders during other topic-specific Board-sponsored public engagement events will be compiled by the Communications &

Engagement Committee and reported to the full Board for its consideration in a subsequent Board meeting. Responses to questions may also be summarized and addressed in follow-up public communications, including Board updates and newsletters, as well as FAQs documents available on the ACSD website.

Complaints:

Board members receiving a complaint from a stakeholder pertaining to the conduct of an ACSD student or staff member shall forward such communications to the appropriate ACSD school leadership in accordance with ACSD policies and procedures.

Because the Board functions as a quasi-judicial body, Board members should not involve themselves in responding to, or addressing the complaint.