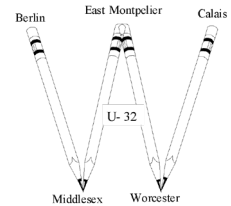


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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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WCUUSD Finance Committee Minutes 8.19.24 5:00 - 6:00 PM U32/Virtual

Present: Flor Diaz Smith, Zach Sullivan, Ursula Stanley, Steven Dellinger-Pate, Chris McVeigh, Susanne Gann, Mckalyn Leclerc, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Alicia Lyford, Noah Weinstein, Dell Waterhouse, Allison Fayle, Patrick Whelley, Daniel Keeney, Timothy Couture, Robert M., Allen Gilbert, Jarrod Weiss, Honi Bean Barrett, Lisa Hanna, Caroline May, Elizabeth Brown, Jeanie Phillips, Caitlin Howansky, Julia

1. **Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.
2. **Discussion/Action**
 - 2.1. **Configuration Study**
 - 2.2. **Data**
 - 2.2.1. **Configuration Conversation Survey Responses**
 - 2.2.2. **7.2.24 Virtual Forum Notes**
 - 2.2.3. **6.26.24 Meeting Notes**
 - 2.2.4. **Letter from Worcester**
 - 2.2.5. **Worcester Community Letter**
 - 2.2.6. **Synthesized Data from Community Input**
 - 2.2.7. **Draft Criteria Synthesized from 7.31.24 Finance Committee Meeting**

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate reviewed from the retreat that the decision was made to hold a configuration meeting before the next board meeting in order to share what data we have and to determine what other data points are needed. He invited the board to ask for clarification or expansion of the data that is presented, so it can be prepared for the board meeting later this week. He shared a slide deck titled: *Configuration Study Data August/ September 2024*. Included in the data was information about optimal class size, what constitutes a “small school,” and student enrollment. Chris McVeigh asked what the definition of “optimal” in the context of optimal class size is. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated that it encompasses many criteria, some being student behavior, social-emotional impact, and student academic outcomes. Some discussion followed around school and class configuration proposals, including the idea of multi-age classrooms. Alicia Lyford explained that the decision to offer multi-grade classrooms is a philosophical decision and student population often drives it and what is the best-case scenario for each particular population, given the resources available. Patrick Whelley asked what the long-term student population trend indicates as far as multi-age classes. Mckalyn Leclerc asked whether there are educational benefits to multi-grade classrooms, aside from considering logistics and one particular student population. Alicia Lyford stated that there is research to indicate that multi-grade classrooms positively affect student outcomes. The data included classroom configuration data for elementary schools in a three-school scenario. A proposed staffing pattern data chart was shared. Some discussion followed around ESP staffing patterns, including food service and custodial staff. In the slide “How Taxes Pay for Education” figures for FY24, residents, non-residents (of each town), and the General Education Fund were shown. Daniel Keeney stated that he would like to look for data about renters versus homeowners in the towns, related to education taxes. The group agreed that this is pertinent information to consider. Some discussion followed around budgets from FY20 to FY25, including how COVID-19 funds had an effect. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that some of the budget presentations from past years might provide some insight into where we prioritized resources. Chris McVeigh asked how much it costs each school to run. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that transportation and special education are at the WCUUSD level, which is hard to consider per school; also, some of the capital spending is at the WCUUSD level. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the next presentation would include more specific data about transportation. Jeanie Phillips facilitated a discussion protocol to reflect what was heard from the community and to provide parameters for the administration in going forward with configuration conversations. Flor Diaz Smith reviewed the survey responses, overall. Those present took time to consider the data that was presented in the table. Jeanie invited feedback after looking over the data. Mckalyn said the criteria seems specific and “answerable” Alicia stated qualitative versus quantitative data. Daniel said nothing stands out but the more specific criteria feels more compelling. Generally, they cover the list of input. Alicia asked how we measure the impact on student well-being. Are there other districts that have collected data around student well-being? Diane asked how this connects to our core beliefs and our

strategic plan. Also noted that we have been hearing concerns around our timeline. We have acknowledged that our timeline has moved. At what point do we make the decision about a period? Alicia stated the group has spoken about the process in small steps, and checking in after each step. Diane said we have been hearing from our communities that we have not been transparent enough in planning the timeline. Flor stated that the task for today is to answer what the criteria is so that we can ask leadership to come back with more information to consider. Daniel said “sustainability” is too broad - if we are talking about financial sustainability, and then name it. Also would like to add something about resilience. How if we close schools, do we rebound if we suddenly have more students? Related to class size, the EQS seems less important than our ability to maintain intentionality around class size. Chris McVeigh said we should model a 4-elementary school scenario. He senses that at least one of the communities will say “no.” In addition, would we set criteria, for example, that budgets will increase only a certain percentage each year for the coming years? Zach stated in looking at implications on individual towns - we have a value that all decisions are student-centered. He worries about conflict if we are worried about the impact on a town versus the impact on student outcomes. Ursula suggests adding specifics around savings. People are interested in this. She reiterated Alicia’s question - how do we measure student well-being? Mckalyn would like to see modeled “taxes this year as is....” “Taxes with the proposed model” Susanne replied that we could model this with current long-term ADM, and CLAs; however, this is a factor that changes greatly. Mckalyn heard concerns in Worcester about __ [***at this time the sound was lost***]. Patrick read comments about ways to combine positions or create new positions; not sure, if it is an appropriate criterion to eliminate shared or part-time positions. Chris asked if there would be a minimum. e.g., no less than 0.6 FTE? Alicia said we do have some positions in our district that are not full-time. Eliminating would not be a goal. Mckalyn asked if full-time nursing and counseling were still on the table. We discussed this in terms of the budget but not in terms of configuration. Is there historical data/ climate data from each school to address the well-being criteria? Alicia said there is historical data but the conditions have changed (e.g. staffing patterns, administration), so it may be like comparing apples to oranges. Mckalyn stated there was a question of a lien on the property in Worcester. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate advised we are looking into ownership; considering the deed in each school. This was affected by Act 46 and was addressed by the legislature. Flor stated some of the questions of well-being - transportation have been spoken of, also class size from the lens of “what is too small?” Students having a full after school care option. Ursula stated we had seen comments related to sports. Travel to different schools affecting participation – it would be helpful to consider some of the elementary school sports programs - how we are doing it now versus how it might look in the future? Flor Diaz Smith expressed appreciation for everyone’s attention to detail and for the input. She reminded those present that we would be considering this at this week’s board meeting. Daniel asked how the discussion from tonight would be reported to the board. Flor Diaz Smith stated there would be a revised document based on tonight’s discussion. Chris McVeigh said it would be helpful to indicate how the

document has been revised. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate: September 3, September 16 - possible next meeting dates for this group. Board meeting for October may change due to Rosh Hashanah.

3. Future Agenda Items

4. **Public Comment:** Lila Richardson stated it is difficult to have these meetings where material is presented to the board, but we do not have access to the material. Would be helpful to have a link to the material. Gillian Fuqua - lives in Middlesex - it will be important to model five years from now, not just this coming year. E.g., Middlesex's budget is affected by road conditions. Dell Waterhouse was shocked by the definition of a small school. She pointed out that there are some amazing advantages to a school the size of Doty. As a former teacher who went by choice to a multi-age classroom, there are many advantages to having a multi-age class, having students two years in a row, having a multi-year curriculum, etc. She would love to see multi-age happen more as opposed to discussions around eliminating.

5. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Grace, Committee Recording Secretary