

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, June 24, 2024, 6:30 pm - 8:30 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.

In-Person Attendance

Barbara Wilson; Brian Bauer; Courtney Krahn; Ellen Whelan-Wuest; Ellie Romp; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Jason Chance; Joanna Doria; Laura Harthan; Mary Heather Noble; Matthew Corrente; Suzanne Buck; Tricia Allen; Wendy Baker

Remote Attendance

Steve Orzech

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching A Quorum

Barb Wilson 5 min

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. Introductions - Board Members, Administrators and Staff

ACSD Staff present:

Wendy Baker, Superintendent
Matt Corrente, Director of Finance and Operations
Courtney Krahn, Director of Teaching and Learning

2. Motion to Adopt Agenda

Motion to adopt agenda.

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

B. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Barb Wilson 10 min

No public comment.

C. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of June 10th, 2024

Barb Wilson 5 min

Motion to approve minutes of June 10, 2024 meeting.

Move: Jason Chance Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed

D. Approve ACSD Bills

James Malcolm 5 min

James Malcolm reported the ACSD Bills read since June 10, 2024:

General Fund: \$607,580.68

McGilton Fund: \$3,428.03 (for Everybody Wins! program)

Payroll: \$494,551.24

Payroll: \$4,012,615.63 (Note: the magnitude of this bill is due to many teachers taking their summer pay as one lump sum – confirmed by Matt Corrente.)

Motion to approve payment of ACSD Bills as presented.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

E. Report of the Superintendent

Wendy Baker 45 min

1. Board Hiring Approval Protocol for July

Dr. Wendy Baker reported that they are in the process of hiring staff for the 2024-25 academic year and anticipate several people completing the hiring process in July. She requested that the Board provide authorization to enable Central Office to approve/complete the hiring process for these candidates during the Board's July recess. She would be happy to take on the responsibility and report the details at the Board's first meeting in August.

Note: Laura Harthan abstained from voting.

Motion to authorize the ACSD Superintendent to oversee the hiring process during July 2024, with final hiring decisions to be reported to the Board at the first August 2024 board meeting.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed

2. Personnel Items

Note: Laura Harthan abstained from voting.

Motion to approve the ACSD appointments and resignations as provided in the June 24, 2024 agenda.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

a. Appoint Michaela Bicknell, Social Worker, 1.0 FTE, Step 5, effective 7/1/2024

b. Appoint Victoria Flynn, Special Educator, 1.0 FTE, Step 2, effective 7/1/2024

c. Appoint Jason Huntoon, Math Teacher, 1.0 FTE, Step 19, effective 7/1/2024

d. Appoint Josephine Sinopoli, Classroom Teacher, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, effective 7/1/2024

e. Appoint Samuel Lews, School Counselor, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, effective 7/1/2024 (1 year only)

f. Appoint Adelaide Brooks, Classroom Teacher, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, effective 7/1/2024

g. Accept Resignation of Margaret Baker, UPK Coordinator, 1.0 FTE, effective 6/30/2024

h. Accept Resignation of Bridget Sullivan, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, effective 6/30/2024

3. ACSD Implications/Impacts - Yield Bill

Matthew Corrente

Dr. Baker invited Matt Corrente to report on the recently passed Yield Bill (which was vetoed by Governor Scott and overridden by the Legislature). Implications for ACSD:

- Yield has been set at \$9,893, which sets ACSD FY25 tax rate at \$1.50 (recall the tax rate for FY24 budget was \$1.47).

- Note: the \$1.50 FY25 tax rate includes the state's \$0.13 tax rate discount as part of the implementation of Act 127, so the actual tax rate would be \$1.63. The tax rate discount for FY26 is expected to only be \$0.10.

- The legislation creates a Commission for the future of public education in Vermont, which will include reps from all the major education groups, including the VT School Board Assoc, VT Superintendents Assoc, the VT Business Manager Assoc, etc.

- The legislation provides new required language for ballots, regarding how budgets are presented to voters.

- The legislation also establishes an Education Fund Advisory Committee to keep an eye on education spending, and re-establishes the State Spending Threshold for FY26. The threshold punishes any district whose per-pupil spending exceeds the average state per-pupil spending by 18% or more.

BOARD QUESTIONS:

Steve Orzech asked where ACSD currently sits with respect to the average per-pupil spending in the state. Matt Corrente reported that the average per-pupil spending for FY25 is \$13,292 and ACSD's per-pupil spending is \$16,099 -- which is very close to the threshold. These numbers will likely shift as the final few districts pass their budgets, but it provides an idea of where ACSD sits as planning for FY26 budget begins.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest noted that ACSD will inherently be far from the average per-pupil spending in the state by virtue of having passed its budget the first time, while many other districts had to make cuts and re-vote before passing.

4. Approval for Line of Credit

Matthew Corrente

Matt Corrente explained that every year, the administration seeks Board approval to open an operating line of credit for part of the summer to allow payment of salaries during a time of low revenue for the District (due to the timing of tax payments in member towns).

Brian Bauer asked how much using the line of credit ends up costing the district. Matt Corrente responded that the District paid less than \$5,000 in interest for the one time it needed to dip into the line of credit to cover operational expenses during the summer. James Malcolm reminded the board that the district usually doesn't need to do this, but the timing of tax payments has impacted the revenue stream.

Note: Laura Harthan made a motion to amend the original motion to reflect the correct "due by" date to June 30, 2025. Joanna Doria seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the original motion was amended.

Motion to Approve a \$4,802,247.00 operating line of credit from the National Bank of Middlebury, due no later than June 30, 2025, at an interest rate of 4.69% and authorize the

Treasurer, Business Manager, and Assistant Business Manager to borrow against the line of credit as needed on behalf of the board.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jason Chance Status: Passed

5. Policy D6 (Class Size) Implementation Report

Courtney Krahn

Dr. Baker explained that policy D6 requires central office to provide a report on class sizes to the Board. Since the FY25 budget passed, central office has been working with ACSD principals to plan class cohorts for next academic year. Dr. Baker invited Courtney Krahn to provide a presentation to the Board to illustrate what that process looked like, and illuminated some chronic issues that continue to emerge with the fluctuations in grade enrollments at the rural schools.

Courtney Krahn provided powerpoint slides to board members and projected them onto the screen (presentation can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bzv2UTGBDWY&t=1s> -- starting at 32'26" into the video). She explained that development of class sizes is a factor of many things including student enrollment, EQS, and budget resources, and is primarily guided by student needs (curricular, instructional, and social/emotional). The process is also guided by the District's desire to provide high-quality instruction across the district, and to put educators in the best places for their skills & experience.

The issue that frequently emerges during this process is when grade cohorts are very small and combining classes may still not achieve the requirements set forth in ACSD's procedure for Policy D6 Class Sizes. The procedure provides that class sizes should be between 10-19 student for K, between 10-20 students for 1st through 3rd grades, and between 10-24 students for 4th through 12th grades. The incoming kindergarten class is 4-5 for Bridport, 3 students for Weybridge, and 2 students for Ripton -- so to achieve at least 10 students per class for those schools will require combining 1/2 at Bridport to get 13 students, combining K/1 at Weybridge for 11 students, and combining K/1/2 at Ripton to get 12 students.

The concern that Courtney and Dr. Baker are bringing to the board is the challenges that can occur when trying to deliver a coordinated curriculum to students in these schools, who (depending on the configuration of combined grades from year to year through the duration of their time at an elementary school) may end up either missing or repeating keep grade-level concepts. Courtney provided an example: If a student receives 1st grade instruction their first grade year and then ends up in a 1st/2nd split class for 2nd grade with a teacher whose curriculum is focused more on the 1st grade concepts, this student may miss the 2nd grade curriculum. This issue is most problematic in schools for which the enrollment in grade cohorts varies widely and combined classrooms change from year to year.

Other challenges include movement of teachers away from their area of expertise to respond to inconsistent classroom configurations, and disruption of teacher teams for grade level curriculum work.

There was some discussion around the difference between class size and class consistency -- the issue of having students potential miss or repeat part of the coordinated curriculum is a consistency issue. Courtney noted that if combined classes were predictable and stable at our schools, this would be less of a concern because the curriculum could be specifically designed for split classrooms and still cover the required concepts.

Courtney walked the Board through the process that was used this year to plan classes for the 2024-25 school year. The schools that had this specific concern for next year included

Ripton and Salisbury, but it may happen at some of the other schools in the future, depending on grade enrollment numbers. Central office worked with principals to offer stakeholder meetings to problem-solve around the issue for next year, and generally agreed on the following:

- Classes should be at least 10 students (for peer relationships and group work);
- Classes should not combine more than 2 grades in a class (for instructional and developmental reasons); and
- Students should not spend more than 2 years with the same classroom teacher (so they are exposed to different instruction styles and educator expertise).

She provided the proposed class sizes for all elementary schools. The outlier is the proposed K/1/2 in Ripton. Several classrooms at the rural schools will also have less than 10 students, including:

Bridport (2nd and 5th grades at 9 students each)

Ripton (3rd grade at 7 students)

Shoreham (7-8 students in K, 7 students in 1st, 9 students in 2nd, and 9 students in 3rd)

Salisbury (9 students in 1st and 6 students in 5th)

Dr. Baker closed the presentation with a request of the Board: How can policy/procedure be updated and improved so that she has clarity about the authority she has to provide relief for these circumstances (ie., what options does the Board agree that she can use to create the best classrooms for kids based on EQS, student needs, best professional practices, and the agreed-upon concepts shared with stakeholders?). She noted that this is a persistent issue that requires board attention, and that despite exhaustive efforts, there is no way to guarantee reaching the curricular targets if these circumstances persist.

Board Question & Discussion:

- Brian Bauer asked if putting all students in 1 elementary school would address the issue. It might, but Courtney also pointed out the relative importance of class consistency over class size. Stability in grade level cohorts is the issue. This was not a conversation about the merits of combining grades.

- Mary Heather Noble asked about whether the issue presents challenges for ACSD's IB and NEASC accreditation. She also asked about the fairness in teacher experience across the district, and what families and teachers have shared during these conversations.

- Ellie Romp asked about the larger sections at Mary Hogan School -- why are there only 3 sections for 3rd and 4th grade instead of 4 sections?

- Ellen Whelan-Wuest echoed that point, noting the teacher request for 4 cohorts across all grade levels.

- James Malcolm thanked Dr. Baker and Courtney for showing the complexity of the problem. It comes up a lot in the community, and it presents real challenges for social/emotional development when peer groups are very small and/or homogeneous (e.g, classes that are mostly comprised on one gender).

Jason Chance asked how central office arrived at the proposed K/1/2 classroom in Ripton. Courtney explained that it was a local decision that Central Office supported, due to the particular teacher expertise in this situation.

Suzanne Buck mentioned that historical data confirms this issue and brought up the question of school choice. It was not provided as an option in the past due to the inability to provide transportation to families who exercise school choice -- which becomes another equity issue. She also worries about some teachers having a greater number of high-need students and hopes Central Officer factors that into decision-making.

Steve Orzech brought up school consolidation as the clearest solution, both fiscally and educationally. Combining students at Ripton and Salisbury would solve this problem.

Jamie McCallum asked Dr. Baker: What aren't you able to do now that you would like to be able to do next March?

Dr. Baker noted some possibilities the Board could consider: Looking at Policy C30 School Residence to re-draw the attendance area boundaries for elementary schools and re-distribute students to ACSD schools; authorizing school choice to families when class size is <10; temporarily combining grade populations of 2 schools to achieve larger class sizes.

Joanna Doria noted the outdated nature of some policies that treat the District like an SU, but also expressed concern about the disruptive impact of some suggested solutions on student learning environments in smaller schools.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest suggested that while the District is beholden to geography there are lots of ways to think about stabilizing school populations.

There was considerable discussion about the work done during the Facilities Master Plan process and examining the distribution of students to consider re-drawing school boundaries.

Dr. Baker noted that right now the first place that ACSD students come together is MUMS, which is bumpy, and the District also spends a lot on academic recovery. When you consider that some of this recovery may be needed because of these unintentional curriculum gaps, it might save the district money to improve Tier 1 classroom instruction with consistent classroom environments. There are 43 K-5 classrooms in ACSD. She is asking the Board: How many classrooms do we need, and how can we make them stronger? We need to look at this like a district.

Several board members thanked Dr. Baker and Courtney for their presentation and the work involved in illustrating this complex issue. Barb Wilson asked about best ways to proceed. Some ideas included having the Policy Committee work on Policies D6 and C30 and present for Board consideration, creating an Ad Hoc committee to research and recommend options, and having the Facilities Committee return to its original work of identifying the most effective and sustainable school configuration for the district. Several board members expressed interest in being involved in the problem solving. The Executive Committee will discuss further and put it on a future agenda.

F. Report of the Chair

15 min

1. Retreat Follow-up Items

Barb Wilson

a. AOE Rules Prioritization and Selection

Barb Wilson
Suzanne Buck

Barb Wilson invited Suzanne Buck to report on the VSBA's progress with creating rubrics for the new AOE Governance Rules. Suzanne explained that the rubrics are still in development and provided a few details. Barb Wilson suggested that for now the Board focus on the rule that board members prioritized in its survey: that the budget reflects the board's stated priorities. She explained that this work can be incorporated into the work plan for 2024-25, and that the board can add more if needed. There was unanimous agreement with this approach.

b. Superintendent Goal Setting and Evaluation Process (5 minutes)

Barb Wilson

Barb Wilson provided a summary of the conversation she had with Judy Sclair-Stein about establishing Superintendent Goals and the Superintendent Evaluation process. The goal-setting part is covered as "Phase 5" of the McPherson & Jacobson's contract for recruitment services; however, Judy recommended an in-person board training to educate the full board on conducting a thorough superintendent evaluation. This idea is similar to what the PAHCC just did with Judy Sclair-Stein and is supported by the Executive Committee.

Barb provided Board members with the proposed contract for their consideration. The cost would be \$3,000 in professional fees; travel fees could be shared with PAHCC if the training is scheduled on August 17th or August 24th since she is already coming to Middlebury to do consulting work with them.

There was some discussion about the which work is already covered by the Phase 5 part of the contract, and what additional services are being provided with the supplemental contract between ACSD and Judy. There was also discussion about the policy concerning the Superintendent Evaluation and whether the responsibility for the evaluation falls upon the Executive Committee or the full Board. Suzanne Buck and Mary Heather Noble explained that the Executive Committee is tasked with ensuring that the evaluation is conducted, and delivers the results of the full board's findings to the Superintendent, but that it has always involved the full board. Mary Heather explained that the policy does not prevent the full board from receiving the training, which would also provide important artifact/procedures to follow for future boards to conduct future evaluations.

Motion to authorize Board Chair Barb Wilson to execute the contract with consultant Judy Eclair-Stein in the amount of \$3,000 to provide supplemental board training around conducting a superintendent evaluation.

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Laura Harthan Status: Passed

c. Work Plan

Barb Wilson

Barb Wilson noted that the 2024-25 work plan has been shared and will be adjusted as needed to reflect tasks affiliated with the AOE rules.

G. Report of the Board

30 min

1. Policy

Jamie McCallum

Jamie McCallum provided the updated version of Policy A-20 to reflect the revisions suggested during the June 10, 2024 meeting. He will provide a cleaned-up version to Darcie so she can warn for the next board meeting in August.

a. Revised A20 - Board Meetings, Agenda Preparation & Distribution

2. Negotiations

Steve Orzech

Steve Orzech reported that the Negotiations Committee will be meeting on June 26th and July 1st to wrap up final details. The only outstanding issue is how to incorporate some staff whose positions were not included in the teacher contract and are new to the support staff contract.

3. Communications & Engagement

Tricia Allen

a. Draft Procedure for Public Comment at Board Meetings

Tricia Allen explained that the C&E Committee is working on procedures to provide a "how to" for the Board w/r/t communications & engagement -- and shared the portion of that work that accompanies Policy A-21 Public Participation at Board Meetings. The procedure proposes:

- Enforcing a 3-min time limit on public comments;
- Providing a copy of the agenda for participants;
- Maintaining 2 public comment periods in board meetings (1 at the beginning and 1 at the end), but not restricting the topics to agenda items;
- Providing an opportunity for Board reflection in the agenda, where Board members can comment on issues brought up by the public. This is not for dialogue with the public, but more to identify things that might require further discussion in a future meeting.

James Malcolm asked why the committee is still recommending 2 comment periods, and why the topics won't be restricted. Members of the C&E Committee responded that the intent is to remove barriers to participation, and that they did not wish to require student stakeholders to wait until the end of a board meeting to comment on non-agenda topics. The suggestion of maintaining 2 comment periods is up for board debate -- though having 2 allows latecomers to comment and also allows people to weigh in on topics discussed during the meeting.

There was some additional discussion about the movement toward adding these components to board meetings and the impact it has on meeting length, etc.

Tricia Allen also noted that the C&E Committee is suggesting trying an informal coffee & cookies a half-hour before traveling board meetings to provide an easy opportunity for public engagement without adding separate stand-alone meetings to the board's busy schedule.

4. Facilities

Jason Chance

Jason Chance reported that the Facilities Committee has not yet met -- but will be meeting on June 27, 2024.

5. Finance

James Malcolm

James Malcom reported that the Committee will be meeting next week. There was some discussion about how ACSD Bills get paid during the Board recess. James reported that bills are usually read and reviewed as usual, paid and then presented to the Board in August.

It was decided that a special procedure for paying bills during the Board's recess in July is not needed.

a. Bill Approval Protocol

6. Addison Central SEPAC Update

Joanna Doria
Suzanne Buck

Joanna Doria reported that the SEPAC's annual meeting has been postponed to the fall. The group anticipates being able to provide a full presentation to the Board then.

7. Middlebury Community Television Update

Barb Wilson

Barb Wilson did not have anything to report for MCTV.

8. Parks and Recreation Update

Mary Heather Noble

Mary Heather Noble reported that the Parks & Rec Board has not met, but noted that the Department stepped up recently to provide a cooling station and keep the town pool open for all area residents during the heat wave last week.

9. Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center

Steve Orzech
Tricia Allen

Tricia Allen reported that the PAHCC Board finalized its academic year and officially signed off on its first evaluation of the new Superintendent.

H. Public Comment - Any Topic

Barb Wilson 10 min

Mary Slosar of Weybridge provided comments on a few items discussed during the board meeting:

- Re: Class size discussion, she noted that some kids have been moved to other schools due to their education/behavioral needs, and invited the Board to think about this as it problem-solves for rural school stability.

- Universal design is not happening in ACSD, and would like the board and administration to address this.

- Re: public participation in board meetings, she wants to emphasize that this requires a cultural/mindset shift not just to let people talk, but actually listening to community members. There is a difference between feeling heard and just letting people talk.

- Re: the 3-minute rule for public comment, she feels that this has not been equally enforced, and suggests using a timer or something to ensure consistency.

I. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9: 25 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Laura Harthan Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 2h 5m

*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.