

MINUTES



Addison Central School District

ACSD Board

Board Meeting

Monday, September 9, 2024, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Middlebury Union High School Library 73 Charles Ave, Middlebury

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 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; Nicole Carter; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Tricia Allen; Wendy Baker

Not In Attendance

Darcie Arensmeyer

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

Nicole Carter, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Equity & Student Services

Courtney Krahn, Director of Teaching & Learning

Matt Corrente, Director of Finance & Operations

Emily Blistein, Director of Communications & Engagement (remote)

Navah Glikman and Sophia Lawton, Student Reps to the Board also present.

2. Motion to Adopt Agenda

Barb Wilson explained to Board members that there was a problem with the meeting agenda being properly published on the ACSD website. Because of this, she and Dr. Baker briefly consulted with legal counsel and determined that the best course of action was to hold the meeting and have discussion on agenda items, but not take any board actions. Barb has emailed the full board to request their availability for a special Board meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, September 16, 2024 to carry out the Board actions.

Jamie McCallum made a motion to adopt the agenda. Joanna Doria seconded. Barb Wilson made a motion to revise the agenda to refrain from taking any Board actions, and to add an item for a Communications & Engagement Committee update per Tricia Allen's request. Joanna Doria seconded Barb's motion.

Barb Wilson called the vote on the amendment to the original motion. It passed unanimously. She then called a vote on the amended motion, which also passed unanimously.

Motion to adopt the agenda as amended.

Move: Jamie McCallum Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed

B. Public Comment Period Barb Wilson 10 min

No public comment.

C. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of 8/26/2024 Barb Wilson 5 min

To be approved at the September 16, 2024 meeting. James Malcolm commended the Board Secretary on the minutes. Mary Heather Noble noted the misspelling of student rep Navah Glikman's last name and said that she would make the change in Boardpaq.

D. Approve ACSD Bills James Malcolm 5 min

To be officially approved at the September 16, 2024 special meeting.

James Malcolm reported the ACSD bills, which he and Jason Chance read on September 2, 2024:

General Fund: \$1,488,985.49 (Note: \$392K of this is to Broadloaf Engineering for the remainder of the Mary Hogan School HVAC project; \$104K is for Chromebooks; and ~\$600K is for health and dental benefits, which covers staff for the year)

McGilton Fund: \$815.00

General Fund: \$4,230.00

Payroll: \$907,214.60

He recommended that the Board approve payment of the bills at the next meeting.

E. Report of Student Representatives Sophia Lawton 5 min
Navah Glikman

Navah Glikman reported that MUHS activities & clubs are beginning to meet. She serves on the Student Coalition on Human Rights (SCOHR), which will begin its weekly meetings. She also noted that the MUHS schedule with the later start time in continuing to go well. She also reported recent wins by the the MUHS football team and Girls Soccer team.

Sophia Lawton reported that the Hope Happens Here club is beginning to meet regularly and start their projects. Picture Day was last week. The Homecoming football game is on Friday, September 27th -- with an Alice in Wonderland theme. Peer Leaders will be taking the incoming Freshman class to Middlebury College's Bread Loaf Mountain campus for fun & team-building activities on September 17th.

Sophia also reported some negative feedback from students on the mandatory Advisory period in the afternoons -- many students (esp upperclassmen) are unable to leave when their classes

are done because of this new change, and are having to stay a few hours longer to satisfy this requirement. Mary Heather Noble also reported that Peer Leaders who are enrolled in afternoon Career Center programs have to leave their classes to do peer leading activities during the Advisory period.

F. Report of Superintendent

Wendy Baker 20 min

1. Action: Personnel Appointments and Resignations

5 min

To be approved at the September 16, 2024 Special Board meeting.

Wendy Baker noted that some of the listed individuals are coaches who are already working but are being presented to the board for retroactive approval. She is excited to report the addition of a 1.0 FTE Spanish teacher, which means that Spanish is now fully staffed. (note the position was advertised as a 0.6 FTE, which was very hard to fill, so they hired a 1.0 FTE and an existing Spanish teacher will move into the 0.6 FTE position.)

New paraprofessionals have also been hired, which brings the vacancies down to 11 positions.

Dr. Baker also invited Board members to accompany her to Shoreham Elementary School on September 23rd at 5:15 p.m. to see recent classroom improvements.

- a. Appoint Riley Fifield, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 3, Effective 9-9-2024
- b. Appoint Rose Caron, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 2 Effective 6/6/2024
- c. Appoint Rodrigo Placencial, World Language Teacher, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective TBD
- d. Appoint Mac Rattie-Bicknell, Varsity Boys' Soccer Coach, Step 4, Effective 8/24/2024
- e. Appoint Eric Reid-St. John, Fall Drama Director, Step 6, Effective 8/24/2024
- f. Appoint Laura Steward, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective TBD

2. Action: Ripton K-2 Grade Configuration

Dr. Baker reported concerns emerging from Ripton's K-2 grade configuration. She reminded the Board about Courtney Krahn's June 24, 2024 presentation and the options that had been explored to resolve the issue of 2 Kindergarteners, 3 First graders, and 7 Second graders. The K-2 solution was chosen because having a K-1 classroom with only 4 or 5 students is not best practice for that developmental level and was rejected by all education professionals.

Now school has begun and many parents have expressed strong concerns about the configuration and the school's ability to equitably serve students across all three grade levels. It has become a daily conversation inside and outside the school. Many parents won't accept this configuration and it has become untenable to the point that the admin and staff at Ripton are unable to attend to their duties. The K-2 classroom was a precarious solution that was proposed in light of the classroom teacher's specific training and skill set, but without parental support the likelihood of success is rapidly diminishing.

Dr. Baker attended the Ripton PTO meeting on September 5th -- this was the predominant conversation. Parents want second-graders either blended with the third grade class or removed from the K-2 classroom -- neither of which are supported by Administrators in light of the tiny size of the remaining K-2 group. She also does not have the ability to add a teacher to the school to accommodate such a change without causing significant disruption elsewhere in the District. She is requesting the Board take action to empower her to move students from the school to another stable classroom in the District. Her suggestion would be to move students to Salisbury so transportation could be provided.

There was considerable discussion with back-and-forth questions between Board members and Dr. Baker. Some Highlights:

- Parent concerns about the current grade configuration are 100% valid and understood.
- The Board's mission is to provide high-quality, equitable, and varied learning environments that inspire a passion and growth among our students.
- The current D6 and C30 policies do not provide the Superintendent with remedies to resolve the situation to ensure high-quality classrooms when student populations are not stable.
- The admin team does not support blending 2nd with 3rd at Ripton because 1) it leaves only 5 students in a K-1 classroom and 2) requires the 3rd grade teacher to change their curriculum to a blended grade curriculum, which is a big ask. This also disrupts the most students and families.
- The admin team does not support removing 2nd from the K-2 classroom and becoming its own classroom at Ripton because 1) it leaves a tiny K-1 class, and 2) Dr. Baker does not have another available classroom teacher to bring to Ripton without causing trouble elsewhere.
- The least disruptive solution would be to move the Kindergarteners from Ripton to a larger classroom at another school; the most disruptive solution recommended would be to move both K's and 1st graders from Ripton to another school.
- The District can provide transportation if students are moved to Salisbury, but this may not be guaranteed if the intra District placement is to a different ACSD elementary school.
- The situation is highly stressful for the kids, families, teachers, and administrators involved. Board members are concerned about all of this, and especially the SEL of involved students.
- Dr. Baker has not proposed any of these solutions to Ripton families without first seeking Board approval.
- Several Board members agree that the matter before the Board is an emergency requiring a swift solution and is separate from the larger D6 and C30 policy discussion.
- Several Board members advocated for empowering Dr. Baker to move students to resolve the issue quickly so students have an opportunity to integrate into new classrooms earlier than later.
- Several Board members expressed concern about the precedent that might be set by removing students from Ripton, and the long-term implications for the school's sustainability.
- Several Board members agree that the Board needs to engage with Policy C30 School Residence to explore broader possibilities for stabilizing student populations in ACSD classrooms.

Barb Wilson asked Board members if they needed more information to make a decision to take action at the Special Board Meeting on September 16, 2024. Responses included:

- Whether Salisbury classrooms can accommodate additional students, and whether there will be impacts to student supports.
- Whether impacted Ripton families would consider/prefer Salisbury or Mary Hogan elementary.
- How the District can solve the issue in a manner that disrupts as few families as possible.

Barb Wilson summarized the discussion and the Board's desire to have Dr. Baker initiate some conversations with impacted Ripton families to see how movement of K and/or K & 1st graders would be received. Dr. Baker thanked Board members for their partnership and will come to the September 16, 2024 meeting with a recommendation.

G. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson 20 min

1. Action: Class size and Attendance Boundaries

Barb Wilson reported that related to the prior discussion, the Executive Committee had discussed how to return to the issues that Courtney Krahn outlined in her June 24, 2024 presentation related to the Policy D-6 Class Size report. She reminded the Board that at that meeting, members had suggested one of the following options:

- Charge the Policy Committee with revising Policies D6 and C30 to provide the Superintendent with remedies if the class size guidelines cannot be met;
- Create an Ad Hoc Committee to investigate and propose a solution to this work; or
- Charge the Facilities Committee to return to its prior work of instructional footprint planning, with investigation and recommendation of solutions for this issue.

Barb reported that the Executive Committee is recommending that the Policy Committee be tasked with this work, and be charged with prioritizing this project. The Board can't vote on it today, and because charging committee work is within the purview of the Board Chair, she would be willing to do so unless members of the Board have objections to this approach.

Jamie McCallum noted that the Policy Committee has also taken a look at Policy D4, Comparability -- which also has implications in this discussion. He suggests that if the Policy Committee is tasked with the work of updating Policies D6 and C30, then D4 should also be part of this discussion.

Brian Bauer made the point related to Policy C30 that if the Board agrees that PreK is beneficial, then all schools should have PreK. To do otherwise is wrong.

There was some discussion about how the Policy Committee normally gets tasked with its work, which is largely related to VSBA policy updates and state-required policies -- all of which start with templates. C30 does not seem to have a VSBA or National School Board Association template.

Mary Heather Noble expressed support for having the Board Chair direct the Policy Committee to do the work, but requested that the charge be grounded in the ACSD's mission of providing high quality, equitable, and varied learning environments across the district so the goal is clear. The Policy Committee will have lots of examples in how other districts manage school attendance boundaries. Ellie Romp agreed, and also echoed Brian Bauer's concern about PreK opportunities.

Steve Orzech noted that the State Committee on the future of Public Education in VT is specifically looking at class sizes and consolidation of high schools. He suggested investigating what happened in Addison, and also encouraged people to attend the VSBA annual meeting to discuss this with other district board members.

Dr. Baker thanked and commended the Policy Committee for its prior work, and expressed optimism about the Committee being able to identify solutions on this issue.

2. Recording of Committee Meetings

Barb Wilson reported that since the person who had accepted the Student Services support position ended up withdrawing, Darcie is still doing this work in addition to the admin support for Dr. Baker and the Board. The work is considerable, so Dr. Baker is requesting suspending some of the board-related work that is above & beyond the Board's legal requirements for Open Meeting Law. This includes posting meeting recordings for Committee meetings -- which has proven to be difficult because of the effort to get the zoom recordings to sync with the website.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest advised the Board to make sure that Committees select someone to complete meeting minutes if the usual recorder has to leave early (recording have been used to fill the gaps when portions of meetings are missed).

Ellie Romp expressed reservations about ceasing recordings since they do hold people accountable.

Jason Chance suggested having recordings available to board members for minute-taking purposes.

Dr. Baker clarified that the recording of meetings is not the issue; rather the process of uploading the recording to the website is a lot of work for so many committees. Recordings are above and beyond what is required of committees, though the board is free to continue doing it.

Barb Wilson suggested that the posting of Committee Meeting recordings be paused for the time being and revisited when the Student Services support position has been filled.

H. Report of the Board

15 min

1. Action C9 - Local Wellness Policy

Jamie McCallum

To be voted on at the September 16, 2024 meeting.

Jamie McCallum reminded Board members that Policy C9 has already had first read and discussion, but that there had been some which-comes-first questions about whether the policy should be passed as is to create the Wellness Committee with all the mentioned stakeholders, or whether the committee should be created first to review and revise this draft policy. He is uncertain how to proceed and is looking for Board direction.

Brian Bauer provided comments and questions on several paragraphs of the draft C9 Wellness Policy:

Paragraph II.A -- How will referrals to health services be provided?

Paragraph !!.D -- Needs clarification on what this means to provide first responder care.

Paragraph II.F -- Do parents have any rights/discussions about what sexual education happens at school vs. home?

Paragraph III.A -- Re: referrals to outside agencies where appropriate -- again, are parents involved in this?

Paragraph IV -- What does "safe and supportive learning environment" really mean?

Paragraph VI -- Ambiguity around employee wellness. He's never seen this.

Paragraph VII -- Re: Family engagement -- what does "engagement" really mean? He wants specifics.

Jamie McCallum, Barb Wilson, and Suzanne Buck offered clarification on the level of specificity that should be provided in a policy vs a procedure that is developed from a policy. The policy itself cannot get too granular.

There was follow-up discussion about Jamie's original question, about whether to bring the policy to vote at the next meeting, or gather a wellness committee first. The majority of Board members supported bringing the policy to vote to initiate the implementation process (which will include establishment of a wellness committee with the stated stakeholders).

2. Policies - First Reading

Jamie McCallum

Jamie McCallum introduced the newly revised policies and took questions.

A20 Code of Conduct has one additional sentence in blue, to clearly state that Board members should not exert influence or authority over operational decision making, and provide a process for board members to follow when requesting information about operations.

A30 Role and Adoption of School Board Policies provides the mechanism by which the Board may update and adopt policy -- the changes are in red, and reflect new VSBA language and formatting.

E20 Community Use of School Facilities -- the Policy Committee met with legal counsel to examine the options for revision. The Committee decided to specify ways in which ACSD buildings can be used to keep them a viable public spaces but not used for political stomping grounds.

F1 Travel Reimbursement -- VBSA updates.

Board questions:

Jason Chance asked for clarification on E20 -- no meetings would be allowed except for those related to school and government? Ellen Whelan-Wuest answered that the Committee's choices were between all or none. Dr. Baker checked into current uses and confirmed that all current uses would be allowed under the draft policy update.

James Malcolm brought up the issue that happened with Vergennes High School last year, and how their loose policy made it possible for an undesirable group to host a presentation. There was some discussion about this and how the recent Supreme Court's ruling on issues

like this make the legal liability more concerning.

- a. A5 -CODE OF CONDUCT
- b. A30 - ROLE AND ADOPTION OF SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES
- c. E20 - COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES
- d. F1 - TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

I. Public Comment on any Topic

Barb Wilson 10 min

Before opening the floor to Public Comment, Barb Wilson invited Tricia Allen to provide her Communications & Engagement Committee Update.

Tricia announced that ACSD Open House events are scheduled for this week and next, and that she will be sending a sign-up sheet for Board members to staff a Board information table at the events. She also noted that she was able to attend the Ripton Elementary School PTO meeting with Dr. Baker on Sept 5th, and that there will be opportunities to attend more of those as well. Mary Heather Noble noted that she would prepare Board Outreach Materials for each school and have them available in District Office.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mary Slosar of Weybridge provided the following comments:

- Re: Policy E20 Use of ACSD Buildings -- she wonders if the SEPAC meeting or Friends of Weybridge School meeting would be able to be held at school libraries under the current policy language.

- She objects to not having recordings of committee meetings recorded, and brought up the recording of a facilities committee meeting in which a board member said inappropriate things about another board member. Perhaps recordings can be linked to a Google doc that is publicly accessible.

- She thanked Dr. Baker for bringing the K/1/2 classroom issue at Ripton forward to the Board -- this needs to be a transparent discussion. Her sense is that part of the problem is that parent didn't feel brought along in the decision making. Her family experienced a 3-grade classroom in Weybridge when she first moved to Vermont and they were able to make it work. She recommended considering how the decision making is handled.

J. Board Reflection

Laura Harthan 2 min

Laura Harthan expressed gratitude for how board members handled a difficult discussion, and felt that it was respectful even with strong opinions on both sides of the road.

K. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Laura Harthan Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 1h 42m

***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.