MINUTES

Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, October 1, 2024, 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm
49 Charles Avenue
Middlebury VT
05753

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

Laura Harthan; Mary Heather Noble; Tricia Allen; Wendy Baker

Remote Attendance

Joanna Doria

Not In Attendance

Ellie Romp

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum

Meeting called to order at 4:35 p.m.

1. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff

Emily Blistein, ACSD Director of Communications & Engagement participated remotely. Dr. Wendy Baker, ACSD Superintendent also joined.

B. Public Comment - Agenda Items

No public comment.

C. Recommendation to Approve the Minutes from 9-17-24

Motion to approve the minutes of September 17, 2024.

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed

D. Committee Discussion:

1. Board Update Letter for Fall 2024

The Committee reviewed the Fall 2024 Board Update letter that Mary Heather Noble had drafted. Several members of the group worked on the Google document to streamline the

language and reduce the character count to the maximum allowed for translation. Language was also updated to incorporate updates provided by other Board Committee Chairs. Mary Heather had mistakenly confused Policy A20 and A21, so the group reviewed past Board meeting minutes to confirm that both policies had been updated and adopted by the Board since the Spring 2024 Board Update.

Emily suggested holding a place for a link to the online Board Questions/Feedback Form that the Committee is developing.

Tricia stated that she will submit the draft update letter to be included with meeting materials for the October 14, 2024 board meeting.

2. Board Engagement via Website

Tricia Allen reminded the Committee that the plan was to try and develop some kind of online feedback form for ACSD stakeholders to use to be able to contact the Board directly with their comments and questions. She thanked Mary Heather for providing example online feedback/input forms from other Vermont school districts, and identified her favorites: Essex-Westford School District's roadmap for directing stakeholder questions to the correct place and Rutland NE's "Reach Out!" page.

The Committee discussed the pros and cons of each example, and how ACSD might attempt to combine the ideas behind both approaches. Tricia reminded the group to consider the Committee's goals in constructing an online form, and to think about how the input will be handled when people do submit questions & comments via the form. Some important points from the conversation:

- The Committee likes the user-friendliness of the Essex-Westford roadmap approach, so that people can link directly to the appropriate places to take their concerns and questions.

- The Committee would prefer to have some kind of general "ACSD Board" email that directs input to the entire board (or at least a designated Committee) to keep the process consistent and simple for stakeholders, and allow all board members to see the input (as opposed to having emailed comments only directed to a few board members).

- Dr. Baker noted that IT Director Will Hatch has begun to remove the email addresses for ACSD teachers and staff from the website due to phishing an other cybersecurity issues. She expects the same will happen for Board member emails.

- The Committee would like the directions on the form to be clear about when stakeholders can/should contact the Board.

- Emily Blistein offered to talk to Will Hatch about creating a general ACSD Board email address for this purpose, and to begin creating an online input form that is a hybrid between the two examples that Committee members favored.

3. Ideas for Public Engagement

Tricia Allen invited Dr. Baker to share the idea that she had for public engagement around the FY26 budget. Dr. Baker explained that several other VT school districts are working to get ahead of the sticker shock expected to occur during FY26 budget development, due to the significant state-level budget drivers (uncertainty w/r/t education funding, the State's CLA adjustment factor and spending threshold, etc.). She provided an example of a recent letter that the CVU School District's Superintendent send to voters, which outlines the challenges of the upcoming budget planning season and invites voters to participate in a survey to express

their education priorities. The CVUSD is also hosting a public meeting to gather community input early in the process.

Dr. Baker proposed that either she or the Board organize a similar meeting & survey, and issue a similar communication to put stakeholders on notice about the ACSD's equity-based budgeting process for FY26, and invite input into the process. Committee members were agreeable with the idea, and there was some discussion about the logistics of making a survey, public meeting, and communication happen in a timely manner. Dr. Baker explained that the Board will likely receive the first presentation on the full FY26 budget on October 28th, so the meeting and survey would be most useful to inform the process if it happens before then.

There was some discussion about the questions in a survey and likelihood of meeting the October 28th timeline if it was a board-driven effort vs. having it come from the Superintendent (as was done with CVUSD). All agreed that it was a better idea to come from the Superintendent, and be offered to the Board as another sign-up opportunity for public engagement.

Dr. Baker noted that she would likely try to keep the survey questions simple and somewhat open-ended, such as: 1) As ACSD develops the FY26 budget to address the budget constraints, are there areas in our public education that you would like to see strengthened/prioritized? and 2) What else do you want us to know? (e.g., taxes are too high, or other factors that might impact a voter's ability to support a budget.)

Potential dates for a public meeting: Tuesday, October 22nd or Wednesday, October 23rd. (Dr. Baker will be at a conference on Thursday the 24th and Friday the 25th.) She will check with Matt Corrente to see if those dates might work for him.

Emily Blistein will work with Dr. Baker on the letter to the community, and will also forward some budget ambassador resources to the rest of the committee.

Tricia Allen summarized the update that will be provided during the October 14, 2024 Board meeting:

- C&E Committee recommends a vote on the public comment procedure document it created to accompany Policy A21;
- Presentation of draft Fall 2024 Board Update letter for the Board's approval;
- Update to the Board on the C&E Committee's efforts to create an online contact/feedback form;
- C&E Committee's partnered efforts with Dr. Baker to do some early community outreach for the FY26 budget development (letter, survey, public meeting)

The Committee wrapped up the meeting with some items to be included on the next meeting's agenda, and some initial conversations with MCTV about the logistics of providing recording services for Board meetings at outer ACSD schools. Tricia Allen asked Mary Heather Noble to check in with the Executive Committee about putting the issue on the agenda for a Board vote (all agreed that this would be necessary to direct any improvements/expenses undertaken to allow traveling board meetings to occur).

E. Public Comment - Any Topic

No public comment.

F. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

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

*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.