

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, October 14, 2024, 6:30 pm - 9:00 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; Joanna Doria; Laura Harthan; Mary Heather Noble; Matthew Corrente; Navah Glikman; Nicole Carter; Sophia Lawton; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Tricia Allen; Wendy Baker

Not In Attendance

Jason Chance

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching A Quorum

Barb Wilson

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

1. Introductions - Board Members, Administrators, and Staff

5 min

Tracey Harrington, ACSD Director of Special Education and Julie Haugan, Special Educator at MUMS also present.

2. Motion to Adopt Agenda

Motion to adopt agenda.

Move: Jamie McCallum Second: Ellen Whelan-Wuest Status: Passed

B. First Public Comment Period

Barb Wilson 10 min

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.

No public comment.

C. Executive Session: Student Discipline, 1 VSA 313(a)(7) and Personnel, 1 VSA 313(a)(3)

Barb Wilson 30 min

Entered Executive Session at 6:33 p.m. Exited Executive Session and re-entered Open Session at 7:45 p.m.

Motion to enter Executive Session for student disciplinary hearing per 1 VSA Section 313 (a) (7) and for personnel matter per 1 VSA Section 313 (a) (3).

Move: Mary Heather Noble Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

D. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of 9/23/2024 Barb Wilson 5 min

James Malcolm noted a minor correction to the minutes -- the Facilities Committee meeting referenced in the minutes was on 10/7/24, not 9/27/24.

Motion to approve minutes of 9/23/24 with minor correction.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Steve Orzech Status: Passed

E. Approve ACSD Bills James Malcolm 5 min

James Malcom reported a summary of the ACSD bills:

Read by James Malcolm and Jason Chance on 9/30/24:

General Fund: \$1,486,687.11 (~\$360K of this was to CSAC for contracted services and \$618K to health and dental benefits)

Payroll: \$1,046,791.30

Read by James Malcolm and Jason Chance on 10/14/24:

General Fund: \$200,876.77

McGilton Fund: \$3,000

Payroll: \$1,087,481.11

Motion to approve payment of the ACSD Bills as presented.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Ellie Romp Status: Passed

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

Student Rep Navah Glikman reported that the past few weeks at MUHS have been difficult in light of teacher & coach Derek Bartlett's unexpected passing. MUHS students have greatly appreciated the support of their administrators and community around this huge loss. Fall break was a good restart for students. On Wednesday 10/9, MUHS Juniors went to the College Fair at St. Michael's College, and there has been a lot of focus on Counseling Office services for post-graduate planning.

G. Report of Superintendent Wendy Baker

1. Action: Personnel Appointments and Resignations Wendy Baker 5 min

Wendy Baker presented the list of ACSD appointments for board approval, and specifically mentioned Roxanne Greene, the new hire to assist with leadership at Ripton Elementary School. Roxanne has been hired as a 0.5 Associate Principal and 0.5 interventionist there, and will be sharing leadership duties with Bjarki Sears, who will be the official Acting

Principal at Ripton in addition to his roles as the Principal at Salisbury. Courtney Krahn will support Roxanne and Ripton teachers with curricular needs.

James Malcolm asked how the District will be covering Derek Bartlett's vacancy. Dr. Baker said that Colleen Renquist, former math teacher at MUHS, has come out of retirement to assist with the immediate needs. She is working with MUHS Principal Caitlin Steele to determine how long she can provide this coverage.

Laura Harthan abstained.

Motion to approve the following ACSD appointments:

- a. Appoint Kelly Devino, School Nutrition Assistant, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union No Step Placement, Effective 9/24/24
- b. Roxanne Greene, Associate Principal .5/Academic Interventionist.5, 1.0 FTE, Step 23, Effective 10/4/2024
- c. Kristi Jennings, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 4, Effective 10/14/24
- d. Kayli Manning, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 2, Effective 10/7/24
- e. Appoint Tina McMahon, Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 8, Effective 10/14/24
- f. Appoint Christopher Schaner Jr., Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 10/1/24
- g. Appoint Claire Schreiber, Learning Center Clerical Assistant, 0.4 FTE, Non-Union No Step Placement, Effective 9/30/24
- h. Appoint Melinda Smith, Student Services Administrative Assistant, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union No Step Placement, Effective 10/14/24

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

- a. Appoint Kelly Devino, School Nutrition Assistant, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union No Step Placement, Effective 9/24/24
- b. Roxanne Greene, Associate Principal .5/Academic Interventionist.5, 1.0 FTE, Step 23, Effective 10/4/2024
- c. Kristi Jennings, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 4, Effective 10/14/24
- d. Kayli Manning, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 2, Effective 10/7/24
- e. Appoint Tina McMahon, Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 8, Effective 10/14/24
- f. Appoint Christopher Schaner Jr., Custodian, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 10/1/24
- g. Appoint Claire Schreiber, Learning Center Clerical Assistant, 0.4 FTE, Non-Union No Step Placement, Effective 9/30/24
- h. Appoint Melinda Smith, Student Services Administrative Assistant, 1.0 FTE, Non-Union No Step Placement, Effective 10/14/24

2. Student Service Programming

Nicole Carter 20 min

Nicole Carter presented a summary of Student Services in ACSD and focused on 2 areas:

1) Special Education in the District and growing need for mental health supports and services; 2) How ACSD is responding to mental health needs. The slides for the presentation are included in meeting materials for the 10/14/24 meeting: <https://www.acsdvt.org/school-board/board-meetings>

Nicole first noted that the language used by the Federal special education laws can be somewhat dated, and pathologize mental health conditions. She specifically stated that ACSD does not subscribe to a belief that children needing mental health services are in any way different than the rest of the student population. She provided some background

information about the disability eligibility categories for Special Education, including Specific Learning Disability (including dyslexia, dysgraphia, etc.), Other Health Impairment, and Emotional Disturbance (which can encompass ADHD, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and other co-occurring conditions). Many of the conditions that fall into the OHI and/or ED categories are often understood as "Neurodiversity Learning Styles" and also intersect with another disability category in Vermont's special education legislation: "Functional Skills."

Important points re: special education and mental health needs in VT and ACSD:

- In ACSD, there has been significant growth in the number of students qualifying for IEPs under the OHI and ED categories (as compared to the SLD category).
- The number of ACSD students qualifying for IEPs in secondary school are largely OHI and ED, and there is also a gender disparity observed in those students (more males with OHI and ED designations than females).
- 30% of surveyed high school students in Vermont reported feelings of sadness/hopelessness. In Addison County, that number was 24%. Of those, the figures were much higher for females (35%) than males (13%), and significantly high for students identifying as LGBTQ (46%).
- Based on community surveys, there also appears to be racial and socioeconomic barriers to access to mental health support services in Addison County.
- Also of note: compared to the national average and a range of other states from 2010-2018, Vermont has the highest percentage of IEP students qualified under Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. (Note: the number of IEP students qualifying under OHI in VT is on par with other neighboring states). What is happening in Vermont? Why are so many special education students in VT qualified under the Emotional Disturbance category? Some possibilities: Increased need with poor in-house capacity to address need, weak funding for early support services, and the possibility of some families moving to VT to seek services.

How ACSD is responding:

- Improved access by accommodation (for students on 504 plans and IEPs) -- this makes it possible for students to access their education, and may include things like: additional time, mental health breaks, fidgets, executive function/planning supports, check-ins and other scaffolding, counseling, etc.
- Improved access through specialized instruction (only for students on IEPs) -- these are unique to each IEP student, and have different instructional approaches to specifically address learning gaps.
- Specialized programs for students needing additional services/alternative learning environments: e.g., Autism support and Wellness & Learning Centers at the elementary schools; Addison Central Program (ACP) centers for middle & high school students (partnered with ANWSD and MAUSD); and out-of-district residential placements.

Nicole finished the presentation with an overview of staffing resources for each of the special education programs.

Board questions:

- Is the state helping to direct funding toward this increased need? (Boards of Cooperative Education Services, or BOCES may help to provide grant funding and encourage shared services between counties and districts).

- Observation: the need for special education and mental health services in Vermont is great and growing, but several Board members expressed concern about the reported data. Why is the number of special education students with emotional disturbance so high in VT? Is this accurate? If so, what is this really indicating?

- Re: tension between legal and ethical need to provide services with the District's limited resources. How does ACSD best serve these students in the long run? Is it better to invest in local program with fixed costs that may or may not be needed from year to year (but may be less expensive than sending students out of district)?

- Clarification of the definitions for "Alternative Programming" and the Federal requirement for students to be educated in the "least restrictive environment."

3. Budget Drivers #2 - Student Services

Matthew Corrente 30 min

Matt Corrente led the Board through the final part of the Student Services presentation, which focused on the funding for special education and student services. Primary drivers for the student services part of the ACSD FY26 budget:

1. IDEA B Reconfiguration: in FY24, ACSD primarily used the Federal IDEA grant money for staffing. But the Finance Department noticed that additional expenses are incurred because any staff paid with this funding must also be given the Federal retirement program, so a special education teacher paid through this grant costs the District more than if the teacher was paid through the General Fund.

In FY25, ACSD moved positions from the IDEA B grant and spent the Federal money on other qualified expenses. This saves ~ \$146,000 in the long run.

2. ACP Therapeutic Programs: Total cost for ACSD's 3 ACP locations (in facilities and staffing) is \$1.4 million. Note: The costs were initially equally shared between ACSD, ANWSD, and MAUSD, but we are finding that ACSD is bearing a higher portion of the total cost.

3. Census Block Grant to increase by \$400,000. This is the final step toward statewide uniform base funding for census-based student services support.

The combined effect on the FY26 budget: Since 42% of student services is covered by other Federal and State revenues, the ACSD General Fund must cover 58% of the Student Services budget. The good news is that ACSD is now in compliance with its State and Federal Special Education requirements.

Board observations & questions:

- How does the increased need for mental health services factor in the ACSD's efforts to create and implement Universal Design into its delivered curriculum? (This is a work in progress; the Health & Wellness Policy will help to guide that work.)

- The ACSD's Strategic Plan specifically prioritizes addressing the learning gap and supporting students with higher need. If 58% of Student Services budget comes from the General Fund, the Board will need to be very efficient with its general education classroom spending (e.g., class sizes).

- ACSD needs to examine whether it is putting together the most efficient programming for student services as well (e.g., re-examining the ACP spending and cost-sharing arrangements with other districts).

H. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson

Barb Wilson reminded board members that the District has scheduled pre-budget public meetings in each member town on October 22, 2024 to include voters in the budget conversation before the first draft of the budget is fully developed. Barb requested board members to volunteer to attend the meetings, to provide a Board presence at the gatherings and serve as ambassadors for the budget development process. Tricia Allen asked Board members to email her about their availability by Tuesday, 10/15, and encouraged people to attend meetings at schools other than their town school.

1. Action: Superintendent Performance Review Process and Evaluation Instrument Approval Suzanne Buck 10 min

Suzanne Buck presented an overview of the Superintendent Performance Review Process and Evaluation Tool, a hybrid developed from the Board's preferred models selected during the August Board training with Judy Sclair Stein. There were some questions about how board member feedback would be gathered to incorporate into the evaluation, but all were satisfied with the tool.

Motion to approve the Superintendent Performance Review Process and Evaluation Tool.

Move: Steve Orzech Second: Suzanne Buck Status: Passed

I. Report of the Board

1. Action: A21- Public Comment Procedure Approval Tricia Allen 5 min

Tricia Allen presented the Board's Procedure for Public Comment to accompany Board Policy A-21, Public Participation in Board Meetings. She explained that the Communications & Engagement Committee wanted official Board approval on the procedure, to ensure that the public comment procedures are clear and consistent, regardless of Board membership and leadership.

Jamie McCallum made a motion to adopt the Procedure for Public Comment. Ellie Romp seconded.

There was some brief discussion about whether the procedure applied to both full board and committee meetings, or just full board meetings. Mary Heather noted that the A-21 policy applies to both, and that it should be consistent. There was further discussion about clarifying the language.

Jamie McCallum made a motion to amend the original motion, to modify the Procedure for Public Comment to remove "Board" from references to "Chair" so that the Procedure would clearly apply to both committee and full board meetings. Laura Harthan seconded. Barb Wilson called the vote and it was unanimously supported.

James Malcolm expressed his reluctance to support the two public comment periods without

topic restriction; he feels it would be best to restrict the topics in the first public comment period to those on the agenda. Tricia Allen and Ellie Romp spoke in support of two unrestricted comment periods, primarily to accommodate students and other stakeholders that may not be able to wait until the end of a Board meeting to share their comments.

Barb Wilson called the vote on the amended motion. It passed with 11 "Ayes". James Malcolm abstained.

2. Fall Update Letter

Tricia Allen 5 min

Tricia Allen presented the draft Board Fall Update Letter that the C&E Committee had prepared. She asked board members to get their comments to her by the next day (10/15) so that the letter can go out to ACSD stakeholders ASAP.

J. Second Public Comment Period

Barb Wilson 10 min

Mary Slosar of Weybridge offered the following comments:

- Re: the tension between the legal/ethical need to provide student support services and the financial/budgetary limitations -- Act 173 requires districts to implement Universal Design in their classroom environments, and this is intended to relieve some of this tension.

- The eligibility category numbers presented in Nicole Carter's presentation do not necessarily reflect the need. There are kids on IEPs in other categories who also have mental health service needs, even though their IEP eligibility category might be Other Health Impairment or a Specific Learning Disorder. And some kids with IEPs qualify under multiple categories, so their need may not be reflected in these figures.

- Re: 30% of kids on IEPs are in the "Emotional Disturbance" category figure from Nicole Carter's presentation. The question is why kids are qualifying in one category over another -- it could be that their disability should be recognized in a different category and their needs aren't being met, so they are "qualifying" for their IEP based on their resulting behavior. She thinks this could partially explain the increasing numbers in the ED category and is happy to discuss this further with board members if they wish.

K. Board Reflection

Ellie Romp 2 min

Ellie Romp shared that she felt the evening's meeting could be summarized with the word "cooperation" since everyone seemed to work as a team. She invited others to share a word to describe the meeting. Among the words shared by board members: Educational, Dense, Informative, Engaged, Stressful, Long, Intentional, Gratitude, Dedication, and Budget-Drivers.

L. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 2h 27m

*Public Comment Guidelines:

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