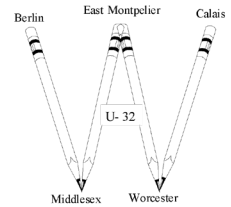# Washington Central Unified Union School District

WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.

1130 Gallison Hill Road
Montpelier, VT 05602
Phone (802) 229-0553
Fax (802) 229-2761

Berlin   East Montpelier   Calais
U- 32
Middlesex   Worcester

**Washington Central Unified Union
School Board Community Forum
12.4.24 6:15-9:15 PM
Berlin Elementary School
372 Paine Turnpike North
Berlin, VT**

**Virtual Meeting Information
https://tinyurl.com/bduhp355
Meeting ID: 849 3594 9997
Password: 297072
Dial by Your Location: 1-929-205-6099**

---

1. Call to Order   6:15 PM

2. Welcome   15 minutes
   2.1. Adjustments to the Agenda
   2.2. Reception of Guests
   2.3. Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note

3. Presentations:
   3.1. Math Program   20 minutes
   3.2. Strategic Planning Update – pg. 4   20 minutes
   3.3. Superintendent Evaluation: Goals   40 minutes

4. Community Input/Dialogue   30 minutes
   4.1. Budget Q & A

5. Board Operations (Discussion/Action)   15 minutes
   5.1. Board Learning: Improving School Board Effectiveness (Read Chapter 1) – pg. 15
   5.2. Configuration Study Update and Next Steps - pg. 35

6. Consent Agenda(Discussion/Action)   5 minutes
   6.1. Approve Minutes of 11.20.24 – pg. 40

7. Personnel   5 minutes
   7.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE –

8. Future Agenda Items   5 minutes

9. Board Reflection   10 minutes

10. Public Comment   15 minutes

11. Adjourn

NOTE: To ensure the board has time to conduct its business, the board will adhere to a strict 1.5 minute public comment time limit per person. Microphones will be muted when time is up. If there is not enough time on the agenda for all members of the public wishing to comment at the beginning of the meeting, there is additional public comment at the end of the meeting.

WCUUSD Board Norms - Adopted November 18, 2020

• **Public input** –Notify the community about public forums and opportunities for public comment at board meetings.
• **Community involvement during regular meetings of the board** – Every meeting will include at least one opportunity for public comment. Public comment is an opportunity for board members to listen and ask clarifying questions. If a board member feels a concern raised in public comment warrants further board discussion, they may request that the issue be added to a future agenda.
• **Community dialogue** – The board may periodically schedule community forums that allow for dialogue, questions and answers from the board or the district leadership team.
• **Stay on time** – Start and end on time. The chair may appoint a time-keeper.
• **All voices will be heard** – Every board member gets a chance to speak. Some topics warrant having each board member speak in turn to ensure full representation.
• **Reflection** –To allow time for reflection, the chair and agenda steering committee will plan time for complex or contentious issues to be discussed at more than one meeting before the board votes, except where a decision is urgent.
• **Announcements in reports** – Announcements from the administration will appear in the reports and not as discussion items.
• **Role of the board** – At the end of each board meeting reflect on whether the board remained focused on its policy-making and oversight role during the meeting, rather than operational details that are the responsibility of leadership team.
• **Respect each other** – Listen, allow others to be heard, share concerns, assume positive intentions, be present, and celebrate successes.

AGENDA KEY

Agenda Section	Examples	Role/ Responsibility	Description
Call to Order	n/a	Board Chair or designee	Formal opening to meeting. Superintendent calls to order during annual reorganization
Public Comment			Opportunity for public comment on items not on the agenda. Board will adhere to a strict 1.5 minute public comment time limit per person. Microphones will be muted when time is up. If there is not enough time on the agenda for all members of the public wishing to comment at the beginning of the meeting, there is additional public comment at the end of the meeting.
Executive Session	Personnel Student Matter Negotiations		Only for discussion of items covered in VSA §313. Formal actions not taken in Executive Session
Reports to the Board	Superintendent/ COLT Student Report	Administration	Both regular/recurring reports and one-time reports happen here. One-time reports are determined by the Board workplan or requested by the will of the Board. Generally, reports invite clarifying questions but not formal discussion/action
Committee Reports	Finance Policy Education Quality	Board	Chair of the committee reports on substance of most recent committee meeting. Generally, reports invite clarifying questions; any discussion or action items would be listed in the respective section of the agenda
Discussion Items		Board with input from administration	Items on the agenda specifically for discussion of the Board. Chair can seek input from audience during discussions. Generally not intended for action (although nothing prevents the Board from taking an action)
Action Items	Personnel approvals	Board	Items formally on the agenda for Board action. Discussion can occur after a motion is on the table
Consent Agenda	Board Orders Minutes	Board	Designed for items that need proforma approval and/or are sufficiently routine. Board acts on all items in the Consent agenda and does not discuss any item unless it is pulled out during Agenda Adjustments

WASHINGTON CENTRAL UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2030

Letter to the Community

To the Washington Central Community:

Those of us in education spend a lot of time thinking about the purpose of our schools. Public education is, for me, perhaps the single most important public service that our society provides for our children. Our schools are here to serve the children in our communities - all of our children - and make sure that when they leave our system they are prepared for whatever they want to pursue in life.

And if schooling is so important to the children in our communities, having a strong, collective vision for what we want for our children is critical. I'm thrilled to share with you the culmination of more than a year's worth of efforts listening to our communities to help define what we believe Washington Central Schools need to be for our students.

Our strategic planning process began in early 2023 with the convening of our Strategic Planning Steering Committee. Over the next 18 months, this committee worked to engage our communities to develop our Vision & Core Beliefs, and then define what steps our district will take over the next several years to enact that Vision. Each step of our process was responsive to what we were learning along the way, and I am so grateful for the many voices who helped us on this journey.

I am proud to be part of a school district that believes that these Core Beliefs are foundational to our work:

1. Humanity, Justice, Community and Belonging
2. Well-being
3. Transparent & Responsible Leadership
4. Community Engagement and Relationships
5. Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction

I know that these values will guide Washington Central well in the years to come, and give our schools the grounding they need to work for all of our children. It has been a privilege to serve as your superintendent through this process.
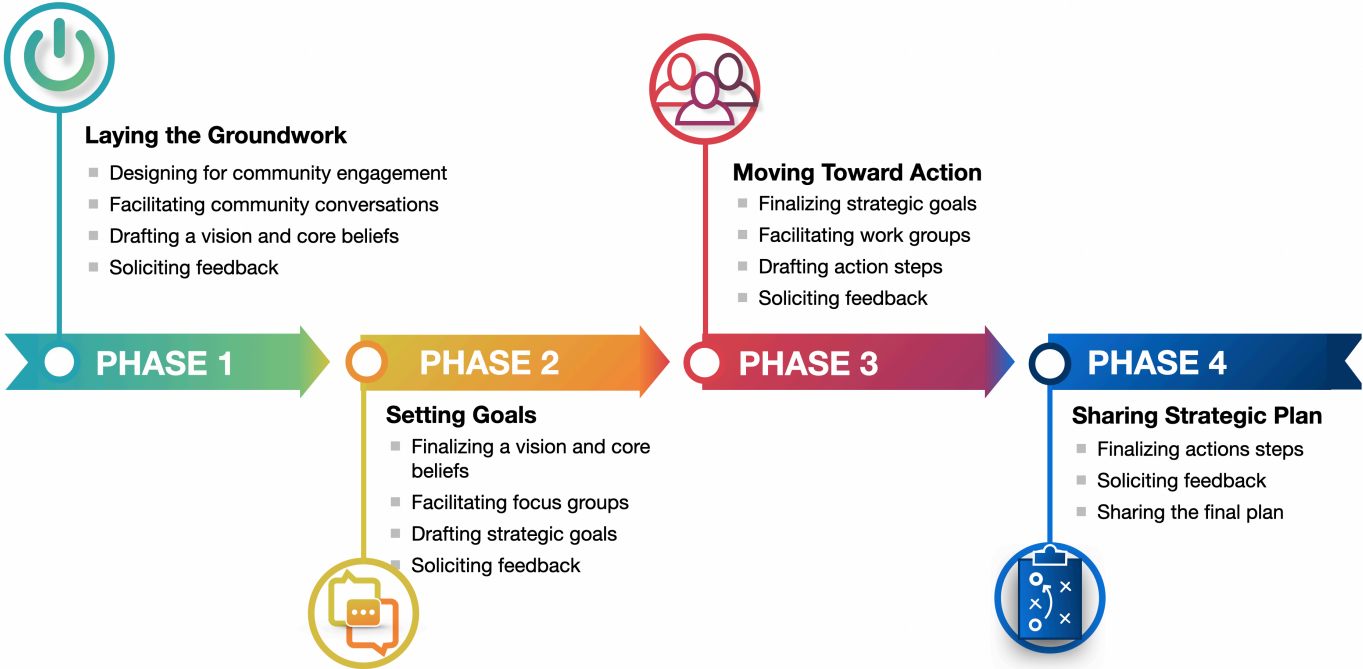

Meagan Roy, Superintendent

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Strategic Plan Development Process

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee began by asking the Washington Central community four key questions:

1. What are the hopes and dreams our community has for our young people?
2. What are the core values that should guide WCUUSD as we make important decisions?
3. What skills and qualities are most important for our students?
4. How will our young people know WCUUSD cares for and about them?

In the spring of 2023, Educators at all 6 WCUUSD schools engaged in conversations about these questions while steering committee members recorded their feedback. Community members gathered at U-32 to share their thoughts and ideas. Three Zoom forums were held for community members who could not attend in person. An asynchronous survey collected additional feedback. The steering committee used this data to draft the WCUUSD core beliefs.

In June of 2023, educators at all six schools reflected on school policies and practices using an Equity Pulse Check tool. These conversations led to rich data highlighting each school's strengths and opportunities for growth, and providing additional data for the strategic plan.

Laying the Groundwork
- Designing for community engagement
- Facilitating community conversations
- Drafting a vision and core beliefs
- Soliciting feedback

Moving Toward Action
- Finalizing strategic goals
- Facilitating work groups
- Drafting action steps
- Soliciting feedback

PHASE 1   **PHASE 2**   **PHASE 3**   **PHASE 4**

Setting Goals
- Finalizing a vision and core beliefs
- Facilitating focus groups
- Drafting strategic goals
- Soliciting feedback

Sharing Strategic Plan
- Finalizing actions steps
- Soliciting feedback
- Sharing the final plan

3

In the fall of 2023, the steering committee facilitated 25 focus groups to solicit feedback on the draft core beliefs and ideas for making those beliefs a reality at WCUUSD. Focus groups responded to these prompts:

1. What do you find most exciting or important?

2. Is there something that is missing or confusing?

3. I see this happening now… We do a good job with…

4. If we do this will, we will see… A school that is really doing this well looks like…

5. What are some things we need to do in order to turn these beliefs into reality? If we do _____, we can accomplish this.

Focus groups were held in all five towns, at U-32, and via Zoom. Staff and students at each school were invited to participate in focus groups. In addition, community members had the opportunity to respond and give feedback via ThoughtExchange.

During the winter of 2023-2024, the steering committee used this data to refine the core beliefs and to draft strategic goals. Work groups developed action steps informed by community input. The steering committee once again sought community feedback via ThoughtExchange.

The strategic plan reflects the WCUUSD's core beliefs:

- Well-being

- Transparent and responsible leadership

- Community engagement and relationships

- Rigorous curriculum and instruction

- Humanity, justice, community, and belonging.

These values are woven into each of the three goals and reflected in the action steps. The strategic planning steering committee is grateful to the community for engaging in the process and sharing their vision for Washington Central Schools.

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Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Special thanks to this dedicated group of educators and community members. They worked tremendously hard to solicit community input and synthesize community perspectives to create a vision that reflects our hopes and dreams for all WCUUSD students. Their thoughtful insights, deep listening, and collaborative work resulted in a strategic plan that will guide us for many years to come

Eric Anderson	School Board Member	East Montpelier
Yolanda Bansah	Student	Berlin
Kari Bradley	School Board Vice Chair	Calais
Arlyn Bruccoli	Teacher	Calais
Steven Dellinger-Pate	Principal	U-32
Flor Diaz Smith	School Board Chair	East Montpelier
Cat Fair	Principal	Calais
Jim Nichols-Fleming	Community Member	Berlin
Adrienne Magida	Community Member	Middlesex
Bekah Mandel	Parent	Middlesex
Jen Miller-Arsenault	Curriculum Director	Middlesex
Julie Moore	Community Member	Middlesex
Uriah Proctor-Mattingly	Teacher	Calais
Beth Stern	Educational Support Staff	Worcester
Chani Waterhouse	Parent	Worcester
Erica Zimmerman	Community Partner	East Montpelier

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WCUUSD Mission and Core Beliefs

MISSION: WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity, and power to contribute to their local and global communities.
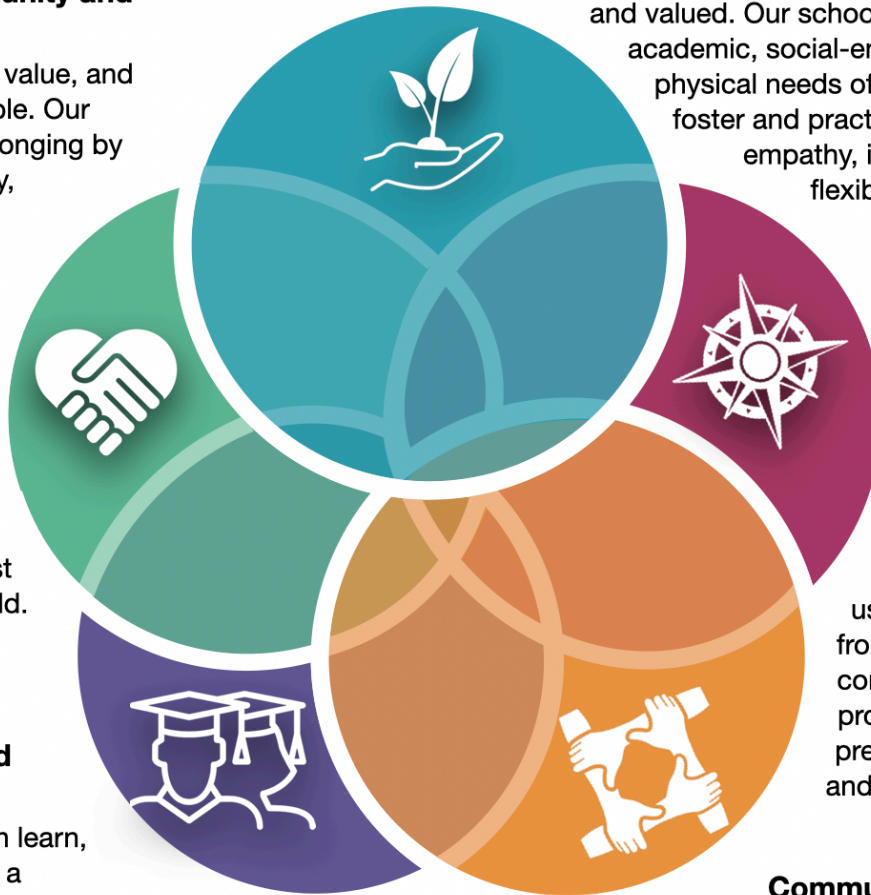

Well-Being:
Schools are spaces where people feel safe and valued. Our schools must meet the academic, social-emotional, and physical needs of all students. We foster and practice joy, kindness, empathy, inclusivity, and flexibility.

Humanity, Justice, Community and Belonging:
Schools respect, value, and welcome all people. Our schools build belonging by honoring diversity, centering equity, and celebrating the different experiences we all bring to our community. We will continue to learn and adjust our practices to create a more just and humane world.

Transparent and Responsible Leadership:
All decisions about our schools must be student-centered. We make decisions using data and input from students and the community. Our processes are clear, predictable, inclusive, and transparent.

Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction:
ALL students can learn, thrive, and make a difference in their communities. Schools hold high expectations for all students and ensure they see their lives and the lives of others reflected in a meaningful curriculum. Educators nurture and inspire students so that students can direct their learning, celebrate their developing identities, pursue interests, and create meaningful pathways to graduation and lifelong learning.

Community Engagement and Relationships:
Strong, positive relationships are essential to our schools, communities, and students. We nurture connections among people and places. The community is engaged in our schools and our students are engaged in the local and global community.

6

Goals, Action Steps, & Indicators of Progress

Goal #1:

Build and nurture a culture of well-being and inclusivity.

Action Steps:

- WCUUSD will design and implement social-emotional learning standards, instruction, and assessments that foster emotional well-being and mental health.

- All WCUUSD schools design and implement plans to engage and build community and connectedness, both within and beyond their school buildings.

- WCUUSD will create a professional learning plan to ensure that all staff can create a safe and welcoming learning and working environment that supports equity, diversity, and inclusion in our schools.

- WCUUSD will expand our comprehensive assessment system to include measures of well-being and belonging so that we can celebrate strengths, provide opportunities for reflection, and hold schools accountable to high expectations for all students.

Indicators and Progress Measures

Existing indicators:
- Common Assessment System
- Board Monitoring Plan/Cycle
- Equity Indicators
- WCUUSD Communication and Engagement Plan

Potential indicators:
- WCUUSD Professional Learning Plan

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Goal #2:

Challenge, empower, and engage each student through evidence-based instructional strategies and curriculum and varied educational opportunities.

Action Steps:

- WCUUSD will leverage its Comprehensive Assessment System to improve our proficiency-based system that holds high expectations for all students and is responsive to their strengths, needs, and interests.

- WCUUSD will partner with students to inform curriculum and instruction.

- WCUUSD will audit the opportunities in PreK-12 classrooms that ensure robust engagement in real-world authentic skills in and with the community, flexible pathways, and outdoor/place-based experiences.

- WCUUSD will leverage its professional development systems to support educators in their learning about:
    - ✦ Antibias and antiracist practices that create more inclusive learning environments and more diverse representation across the curriculum.
    - ✦ Universal Design for Learning so all students are engaged in the curriculum, have the supports they need to learn, and are challenged to meet high expectations.
    - ✦ The intentional integration of transferable skills into their instruction.

Indicators and Progress Measures

Existing indicators:
- Common Assessment System
- Education Quality Monitoring Plan
- Youth participation in existing structures (Curriculum Council, for example)

Potential indicators:
- Youth advisory council
- Regular feedback mechanisms
- UDL System and Educator Self Assessments
- WCUUSD Professional Learning Plan

Goal #3:

Foster and commit to responsible leadership that engages the community and communicates transparently.
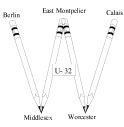
Action Steps:

- WCUUSD leaders will propose a financially sustainable configuration plan that supports the curriculum and culture goals.

- WCUUSD leaders will invest in staff and board development to support our three goal areas.

- WCUUSD leaders will create and strengthen existing connections between families, students, and communities.

- WCUUSD leaders will establish structures, policies, procedures, and accountability frameworks that support the implementation of the strategic plan and report on progress.

- The WCUUSD School Board will utilize its Education Monitoring Plan to monitor district progress toward the strategic plan, identify priority areas for investment, and support the work of the Superintendent as they implement the plan goals

Indicators and Progress Measures

Existing indicators:

- Configuration Study
- Board Goals
- Board Workplan
- WCUUSD Communication and Engagement Plan
- Board Handbook
- WCLT Structures
- Education Quality Monitoring Plan
- Educational Quality Standards

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Washington Central Unified Union School District
Strategic Plan Implementation and Progress Monitoring

Goal #1: Build and nurture a culture of well-being and inclusivity.

Action Step: WCUUSD will design and implement social-emotional learning standards, instruction, and assessments that foster emotional well-being and mental health.

What (tasks)	Who (responsible parties)	When (date)	Progress	Evidence/Artifacts	Indicators/Progress Measures	Notes
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			

Action Step: All WCUUSD schools design and implement plans to engage and build community and connectedness, both within and beyond their school buildings.

What (tasks)	Who (responsible parties)	When (date)	Progress	Evidence/Artifacts	Indicators/Progress Measures	Notes
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
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			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			

Action Step: WCUUSD will create a professional learning plan to ensure that all staff can create a safe and welcoming learning and working environment that supports equity, diversity, and inclusion in our schools.

What (tasks)	Who (responsible parties)	When (date)	Progress	Evidence/Artifacts	Indicators/Progress Measures	Notes
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			

			Progress			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
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			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			

Action Step: WCUUSD will expand our comprehensive assessment system to include measures of well-being and belonging so that we can celebrate strengths, provide opportunities for reflection, and hold schools accountable to high expectations for all students.

What (tasks)	Who (responsible parties)	When (date)	Progress	Evidence/Artifacts	Indicators/Progress Measures	Notes
			Not yet started			
			Not yet started			
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			Not yet started			

To:	WCUUSD School Board
From:	Flor Diaz Smith, Board Chair
Date:	Nov 26, 2024
Re:	Learning Together as a Board

As board members, it's essential for us to embrace our shared responsibility to learn and grow together as a learning community. By continually seeking out best practices for governance, we can strengthen our ability to improve student outcomes while focusing on quality, equity, and sustainability in our schools. This ongoing commitment to learning helps us fulfill our roles more effectively, stay aligned with our strategic plan goals, and build stronger relationships with our superintendent and leadership team.

Chapter 1 of *A Balanced Governance Approach* introduces the concept of "balanced governance." It emphasizes the importance of being both strategic and collaborative in our work. This means setting clear goals, supporting education leaders at every level, and remaining flexible as we address changing priorities. By working together, sharing accountability, and fostering trust with the superintendent and leadership team, we can ensure that our governance approach empowers leaders, reflects community needs, and aligns with the long-term vision for student success. I encourage everyone to revisit Chapter 1 as a reminder of how we can align our efforts and strengthen our impact.

Based on Chapter 1, here are questions that could help us reflect on these principles and evaluate how we apply them:

1. **Roles and Responsibilities**
   - How well do we, as a board, understand and respect the boundaries between governance and management?
   - Are there areas where we tend to overstep, and if so, how can we improve?
2. **Strategic Focus**
   - Are we aligning our board discussions and decisions with our long-term goals for the district?
   - How can we ensure that we stay focused on long-term impact, even when immediate issues are pressing?
3. **Collaboration and Trust**
   - Do we feel that trust and transparency are strong among board members, as well as between the board and superintendent?
   - What practices could help strengthen mutual respect and constructive dialogue within our board?
4. **Adaptability**
   - How adaptable are we as a board to changing circumstances or unexpected challenges?
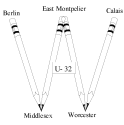
- ○ What are some lessons we've learned from past decisions that could guide our future approach?
5. **Community Engagement**
   - ○ How might we better incorporate diverse community perspectives into our decision-making process?
   - ○ What are some areas where we can improve as a learning community to ensure equity and sustainability? How can we learn together with the community?

My hope is to spark meaningful discussions that help us, as board members, reflect on our governance practices and consider adjustments to better align with the balanced governance approach. I look forward to continuing this journey of learning and growing together. Let's remain committed to learning so we can better align our governance practices with the goals outlined in our strategic plan.

With gratitude for the work you do on behalf of all our students and communities.

1

Board Leadership That Matters Most

Lessons Learned from the Lighthouse Studies

Mary L. Delagardelle

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, school boards have not typically sought or been encouraged to play an active role in instructional reform efforts leading to improved student achievement. Generally, boards and superintendents feel more comfortable leaving instructional matters solely in the hands of the professional staff. However, the increasing public demand for accountability for student learning places emphasis on the responsibility of the board, as a governing body, to participate more fully in the creation of the vision and direction for student learning. It also requires that the board monitor results of student achievement initiatives, in addition to setting policy and providing resources for improvement efforts.[1]

School boards are charged with approving policy decisions that affect what students learn, how students are taught, how learning is measured, how teachers are supported with professional development, how funds are focused on district priorities, and how effectively the community is engaged around student learning. While by their nature school boards are removed from the day-to-day work of teaching and learning, their policy, personnel, and budgetary decisions control the conditions that support successful teaching and learning throughout the system.

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The public cry for improved achievement and accountability in public schools and the traditional lack of board involvement in issues related to student achievement create an urgent need to clearly understand and balance the leadership role of the board as it relates to improving student learning. A better understanding of how board members establish effective district priorities, how the attitudes and beliefs of the board members influence priorities, and which board actions will most likely result in a shared commitment to priorities for student learning is critical for systemic change and student achievement.[2]

The Lighthouse research, funded and supported by the Iowa Association of School Boards, the Iowa School Boards Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education, was a multiphase, multiyear, and multimethod study to develop understanding about the leadership role of the school board in public education.[3] The series of studies spanning thirteen years asked several important questions, including:

- Are school boards in high achieving districts different from boards in low achieving districts in how they approach their responsibilities?
- What are the specific actions of boards that positively affect district efforts to improve student achievement?
- What are the best practices of board-superintendent team leadership that can be learned by others?

The emerging answers to these questions, resulting from the Lighthouse studies, provide insights into the role of local school boards that matter most for improving student learning.

The Concept of Proximity

In an effort to understand how the Lighthouse study results lead to the improvement of practice embodied in these questions, it is important to introduce the concept of proximity. For many years, researchers have tried to determine the aspects of the school experience that are most likely to make a difference in student learning outcomes. For the sake of this discussion, conditions surrounding teaching and learning are placed on a continuum ranging from those closest to the students and teachers (called *proximal* conditions) and those that are farther away (called *distal* conditions).

As we think about a school system and the conditions most likely to affect student learning, we consider the elements of the school district that most directly influence the student (i.e., that are most proximal). Proximal conditions include the interaction between the student and the teacher around the instructional content, instructional strategies, and the learning environment created in the classroom. It is evident that proximal conditions are likely to have the most influence on improving student learning. Governance processes, including school board policy decisions, are much farther away (distal) from the student. However, studies now are finding that distal conditions can also have a significant effect on student learning when they directly affect proximal conditions, that is, when they influence the conditions of practice within the district or affect the learning environment within the schools and classrooms.

Although the board-superintendent team operate "at a distance" from the learner, their goal must always be to strengthen districtwide conditions of practice that affect the learning environment within the schools and classrooms. The Lighthouse studies demonstrate that board-superintendent teams are not too far removed from the work of teaching and learning to have an influence on student learning. Indeed, the importance of recognizing the influence of distal as well as proximal conditions leads to a realistic consideration of the importance of school board decisions and actions and how they can be more effective. Figure 1.1 illustrates the linkages showing the potential influence of the school board on student learning.

While only 35 percent of school board members are professional educators,[4] the Lighthouse research provides convincing evidence that board members can have significant influence on teaching and learning, curriculum and instruction, and the learning environment. A Balanced Governance approach, exemplified by the Lighthouse governance process, does not support the notion that board members need to become educational experts. Indeed, recent findings by Shober and Hartney[5] confirm that school boards composed of a majority of educators are not linked to improved student achievement. The Lighthouse studies do suggest that school board members need to develop sufficient understanding, knowledge, and beliefs in order to create the conditions within the system that will ensure that professional educators can grow in their educational expertise and generate productive change. School board members can enhance their leadership role in

Figure 1.1 Important linkages

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│  The knowledge, skills, and beliefs of board members ... │
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                        │
                    Influence
                        ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Governance policies, priorities, decisions, and actions ... │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                    Influence
                        ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          District and school culture (conditions         │
│        of practice that enable school improvement        │
│             and organizational success) ...              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                    Influence
                        ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Classroom instruction and the students'        │
│          engagement in the learning process ...         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                    Influence
                        ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Student learning outcomes                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

the school renewal process without digressing into micromanaging the system. This chapter shares key findings from the Lighthouse research that shed light on important board behaviors, within a balanced approach to governance, that positively affect district efforts to improve student learning.

BOARD-SUPERINTENDENT TEAM LEADERSHIP

Key Board Actions That Generate Conditions for Productive Change

The conditions within a school district that have been shown to enable productive change in student learning are relatively consistent across studies even though the labels to describe them may be slightly different. Consistently high achieving

districts, or districts that have significantly improved achievement, often attribute their success to the following:

- Clear goals and measurable targets for improving student learning
- Extensive use of data to inform and monitor improvement efforts
- An infrastructure within the school and district that supports collaboration, innovation, and research
- Support for ongoing professional learning that is focused on collaborative inquiry into teaching and learning
- High levels of engagement with parents and the community
- Strong leadership at all levels of the system to guide and protect the work

These conditions of practice are well researched, and there appears to be agreement about the importance of these conditions for producing positive change in student learning outcomes. However, the large-scale presence of these conditions in districts and schools is still lacking. The Lighthouse research supports the possibility that the missing piece in many efforts to improve achievement may be a lack of focus by the leadership at the school board and superintendent level. Specifically, the study results point to the negative effects of a lack of school board and superintendent focus on generating the conditions for student improvement listed above. The conditions described above are system conditions and cannot be adequately managed at a building level without the support of the entire system. Efforts to improve achievement that assume the building is the unit of change and the principal is the most important change leader are not wrong, they just neglect to include the system-level leadership necessary to ensure that the principal's work at the building level can generate the desired results and be sustained over time.

The Lighthouse studies identified seven areas of board action and the specific knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for effective performance in each of those areas (see table 1.1). When boards worked together to build their knowledge and take specific actions, grounded in elevating beliefs about what was possible to accomplish, the culture of the schools improved, the beliefs of the adults became more elevating, and the achievement of students improved.[6]

Table 1.1 Key actions of the board using the Lighthouse approach: An example of a Balanced Governance model

Key areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact
Developing awareness of the student learning needs, and building commitment to systemically address the needs • Clarifying the current status of student learning and the student learning needs Increasing a sense of urgency Using data to focus efforts on the area of greatest learning need Improving the interactions between the teacher and the student around content (instruction) as the key means to improve learning Expecting more Believing it's possible	**Know** • Understand what's at stake if nothing changes (in relation to student learning) • Understand that improving teaching is the most important factor for improving student learning • Understand the importance of improving teaching in the content area of greatest student learning need • Confront their beliefs about what is possible to expect in terms of student learning; understand what is possible to expect (learn from schools that have beat the odds) • Understand the current status of student learning in their district, based on analysis of data • Understand the learning gaps that exist among subgroups of students and how they could be addressed • Understand that boards make a difference (board leadership is critical for improving learning for all students) **Do** • Communicate the urgency for improving student learning • Consistently communicate high expectations • Use data and research to identify the highest priorities for change, define a clear and narrow focus for improvement, and identify specific short-term targets for monitoring progress • Communicate the focus for improvement and model adherence to the focus through board actions and conversations **Believe** • The current level of student achievement is not what we can expect—we can expect much more • How well students learn in school depends primarily upon what the adults in the school do • Improving the quality of teaching is the most important strategy for improving student learning • Virtually all children can meet grade-level expectations • We have become complacent about the achievement of our students

areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact
blying pressure for bountability sing data extensively tting high expectations for provement efining acceptable evidence onitoring progress constantly	**Know** • Understand the important role of pressure and support (accountability and reciprocal responsibility) • Understand key data analysis concepts • Understand the importance of monitoring both implementation and impact • Understand the school culture necessary for improving student learning and key indicators of that culture • Understand the current status of achievement in the district and what needs to change • Understand what are reasonable targets for improvement given the current achievement status **Do** • Set improvement goals and targets that appropriately "stretch" the district improvement eff

Key areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact
Applying pressure for accountability	**Know**
Using data extensively	• Understand the important role of pressure and support (accountability and reciprocal responsibility)
Setting high expectations for improvement	• Understand key data analysis concepts
	• Understand the importance of monitoring both implementation and impact
Defining acceptable evidence	• Understand the school culture necessary for improving student learning and key indicators of that culture
Monitoring progress constantly	• Understand the current status of achievement in the district and what needs to change
	• Understand what are reasonable targets for improvement given the current achievement status

Do

• Set improvement goals and targets that appropriately "stretch" the district improvement efforts
• Identify the indicators the board will accept as evidence of progress toward the goal and/or targets
• Regularly monitor progress toward specific annual targets
• Ensure that conditions necessary for continuous improvement are present in the culture of the school and regularly monitor evidence of progress toward a learning culture for adults and students
• Expect and support corrective action when progress is not evident (in the culture, in the implementation of improvement efforts, and in the impact on student learning)
• Discuss the implications of data reports and references data in decision making and problem solving
• Support decisions with good data and information (internal and external—cost and impact)

Believe

• Frequent monitoring of student learning is critical to improving teaching and learning
• Both formative and summative assessments of student learning are critical for monitoring progress

Table 1.1 continued

Key areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact

Demonstrating commitment
 	
Creating board learning time
 	
Spending time learning together as a board team
 	
Modeling a willingness to learn and innovate
 	
Focusing board conversations around what matters most—student learning
 	
Staying the course
 	
Demonstrating commitment to the focus area for improvement through board actions and decisions (resource allocation, time provision, calendar, negotiations, etc.)
	Know
	• The role of the board for improving achievement
	• The public/governing role of the board in relation to democratic principles
	• Key principles of balanced governance
	
	Do
	• Focus board meetings on the improvement area
	• Use an agreed-upon framework for conversations among board members and with the staff that helps maintain the focus for the conversations/discussions
	• Commit extra board time for work sessions to focus on the area the district is trying to improve and board learning in relation to the focus area
	• Demonstrate commitment through
	  – Negotiations
	  – Calendar development
	  – Budget setting
	  – Policy development and approval
	  – Superintendent selection
	  – Superintendent evaluation
	• Evaluate the performance of the board based on the collective effort to monitor, support, and ensure that the district improvement goals are met
	
	Believe
	• In order for student learning to improve, schools must be organized and structured differently
	• Schools cannot continue to do what they have always done and expect to get different results
	• Doing more of what we are currently doing will not result in significantly improved learning

areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact
Building support for ongoing professional learning Setting clear expectations (outcomes and process) Protecting time Providing financial support Celebrating success	**Know** • Standards for professional learning (what it takes to change practice at the classroom level in ways that will have a positive impact on student learning) • The board's role in relation to selecting improvement initiatives and providing the system of professional learning that is necessary to support them • The criteria to consider when approving and supporting initiatives to improve achievement • The implications of fully implementing potential initiatives to improve achievement (includes general understanding of what it will take for full implementation) **Do** • Analyze the current professional learning system in relation to what it takes to change practice • Consider initiatives to improve achievement from a framework of key criteria

areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact
viding support for ongoing fessional learning etting clear expectations utcomes and process) reating time oviding financial support elebrating success	**Know** • Standards for professional learning (what it takes to change practice at the classroom level in ways that will have a positive impact on student learning) • The board's role in relation to selecting improvement initiatives and providing the system of professional learning that is necessary to support them • The criteria to consider when approving and supporting initiatives to improve achievement • The implications of fully implementing potential initiatives to improve achievement (includes general understanding of what it will take for full implementation) **Do** • Analyze the current professional learning system in relation to what it takes to change practice • Consider initiatives to improve achievement from a framework of key criteria • Analyze the cost effectiveness of current and potential initiatives to improve achievement • Set clear/measurable expectations for the outcomes of professional learning (student learning improves as the primary outcome) • Allocate resources to ensure that a district infrastructure exists to support quality professional learning • Allocate resources to ensure the success of approved initiatives to improve achievement • Monitor progress/success of professional learning in relation to the implementation of initiatives and the established outcomes **Believe** • In order to change outcomes for students, we must continuously invest in building the capacity of the educators • School districts must focus major attention on building cultures of collaborative inquiry to continuously build the capacity of the educators • Collaboration among adults is necessary for substantially improving student learning • Student achievement barriers, such as poverty and lack of family support, can be overcome by the most effective instructional practices

Table 1.1 *continued*

Key areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact
Supporting and connecting with districtwide leadership Building the capacity of the board/superintendent team to provide districtwide leadership for improving student learning Establishing a district leadership team Connecting regularly with the district leadership team Establishing a willingness and readiness to lead and let others lead from their respective roles	**Know** • The leadership role of the board • The importance of distributed leadership • The difference between leadership and management • The instructional leadership role of school administrators • The characteristics of the leadership needed for improving student achievement • The importance of a narrow focus for improvement • A framework for receiving and responding to reports from staff regarding student learning during board meetings and work sessions **Do** • Establish clarity, systemwide, about the most important focus for improving student learning • Communicate consistently about the focus for improvement, the specific expectations/targets, and what the district is doing to improve achievement • Protect the work from fragmentation and distraction • Stay the course • Monitor progress regularly and ensure that corrective action is taken and supported when needed **Believe** • Leadership is either everywhere or it is nowhere • Leadership for improving teaching and learning is critical to school district success

of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact
...ting in a deliberative ...velopment process	**Know** • The difference between discussion and deliberation • The importance of whole-board deliberation throughout the policy development process (for policies directly impacting teaching and learning) • The role of policy for guiding and sustaining district work **Do**

areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact
ticipating in a deliberative ·cy development process	**Know** • The difference between discussion and deliberation • The importance of whole-board deliberation throughout the policy development process (for policies directly impacting teaching and learning) • The role of policy for guiding and sustaining district work **Do** • Study background information related to the policy area • Identify greatest hopes • Prioritize expectations • Determine measures of progress/success for each expectation • Identify support needs for each expectation • Finalize priority expectations based on what can be monitored and supported • Regularly monitor policy implementation **Believe** • Local school governance is critical for ensuring the success of all students • Local school boards can positively impact teaching and learning • The actions and beliefs of board members is critical to district success

Table 1.1 *continued*

Key areas of board action	Knowledge, skills, and beliefs necessary for positive impact

Connecting with the community and building the public will to improve achievement	**Know**
	
	• The importance of the school connecting with the community and the community connecting with the school
	• The different levels of community connection
	  – Informed
	  – Input
	  – Involvement
	  – Engagement
	• What must change, and why, in order to establish a productive school/community relationship
	• Key talking points for
	  – what must change in terms of learning and the learning environment
	  – the compelling reasons for making the change
	  – what the community should expect to see in terms of progress
	  – how the community can help
	
	Do
	
	• Value the important role of the community in helping the district meet its goals
	• Value the role of the school within the larger community (other child-serving organizations) and understand the specific contribution of each organization
	• Consistently communicate the reason for change and the vision for the future
	• Consistently communicate what the district is trying to improve, specific expectations, what the district is doing to reach the expectations, and how the community can help
	
	Believe
	
	• The community must be a partner with the school district in order for the school to improve learning for all students

Nested in the board actions described i[n] sistent starting points for boards wanting influence on district efforts to improve boards need to be willing to create urg[ency] their district and their community, collec[...] understand the role of pressure and sup[port] tinuous improvement.

Creating U[...]

In order to create urgency for improvin[g] Lighthouse districts had to first be clear a[...] in their districts. This was much more th[an] reports about the status of achievement as up their sleeves and worked with other dis[...] complete reflection protocols related to the about what the data were telling them and generate additional questions they would li[...] their staff about the implications and needs

However, this deeper data study about t[...] ment was not enough to create a shared sense to believe that more was possible to expect o[...] leaders indicate they are doing about as wel[l] grounds of the students they serve.[8] These lea[...] underlying belief that factors outside the scho[...] rather than *predictors* of student success. It w[...] outstanding student performance outcomes f[...] hardest to teach, and became convinced that well, that a sense of urgency began to surface.

After being confronted with the data abo[...] from sch[...]

KEY BOARD ACTIONS THAT PROMOTE STUDENT IMPROVEMENT

Nested in the board actions described in table 1.1 are three areas that were consistent starting points for boards wanting to strengthen their leadership and their influence on district efforts to improve student learning. Before anything else, boards need to be willing to create urgency for improving achievement within their district and their community, collectively commit to high expectations, and understand the role of pressure and support in relation to governance and continuous improvement.

Creating Urgency

In order to create urgency for improving achievement, board members in the Lighthouse districts had to first be clear about the current status of achievement in their districts. This was much more than just looking at the data and hearing reports about the status of achievement as most boards do already.[7] They rolled up their sleeves and worked with other district leaders to deeply study the data, complete reflection protocols related to the data study, engage in deep discussions about what the data were telling them and what the data were *not* telling them, generate additional questions they would like to be able to answer, and talk with their staff about the implications and needs that surfaced from the data study.

However, this deeper data study about the current status of student achievement was not enough to create a shared sense of urgency. Board members also had to believe that more was possible to expect of student performance. Many district leaders indicate they are doing about as well as can be expected given the backgrounds of the students they serve.[8] These leaders appear to be communicating an underlying belief that factors outside the school are *determiners* of student success rather than *predictors* of student success. It was not until board members studied outstanding student performance outcomes from districts with students that are hardest to teach, and became convinced that more is possible in their district as well, that a sense of urgency began to surface.

After being confronted with the data about their current status and the data from other places showing what is possible to accomplish, board members had to make it personal in terms of the students and families they served. This included

the need for the school board to wrestle with deepening their understanding of what is at stake for students if nothing changes, and to confront their own willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure excellence for all students. These changes in belief were necessary before school boards were willing to talk about the urgent need to improve achievement with their staff and their community. Board members are much more practiced at being "cheerleaders" for their schools and sharing pride in their school and district than they are at sharing what needs to improve, what they are doing to improve it, and why that is so important. In the Lighthouse training, school board members learn to create stories that both present the data and tug at the heartstrings to be able to communicate effectively what must improve as well as why people should be proud of their system. Interestingly, when done well and communicated without blame or shame, the staff and community seem to embrace the honest assessment of the needs and are more willing to engage in the hard work of change.

As the sense of urgency and the resulting increase in focus and action emerged, so did an increased passion for excellence. As one board member said, "We were very satisfied being good, but now we want to be great!" As board members and staff learned to work together more constructively, failure was no longer an option for any child. They were on a journey to excellence and a relentless pursuit of the best practices that would help them get there.

Commitment to High Expectations

School boards in the successful Lighthouse districts made an obvious commitment to high expectations for improving student learning. They had a strong, shared belief that improved outcomes were possible to expect and that the district had the capacity to create positive change for all students. They did not make excuses for student learning even though their districts were experiencing the same challenges and changing demographics as other districts. They knew that the central core of what schooling is all about—the interaction between the student and the teacher around content—had to be the focus of the district's work, and that everything else was peripheral to the core. They spent time together establishing improvement goals and targets, learning about the district's efforts to improve achievement, and ensuring that they could all consistently communicate

the student learning needs the district was trying to improve. In addition, board members became adept at communicating what the district was doing to improve student achievement, why they believed they would get the results they wanted, and how they were monitoring progress.

Goal setting in the Lighthouse districts became an interactive process between the board-superintendent team and the districtwide leadership team. Typically, district administration and staff establish the goals for improvement and the board approves them.[9] However, the boards in the Lighthouse districts soon realized that without more involvement in the establishment of the goals, they did not have the sense of ownership and commitment that was necessary to make the difficult decisions and provide necessary support. The boards realized that they had fallen into a pattern of approving the goals, hearing annual reports about progress, and then congratulating the district for all the hard work in failing to reach the goals. To break this cycle, the following framework (see table 1.2), defining various components of a districtwide school improvement goal, was useful for helping school boards become meaningful participants in the goal setting and monitoring process without micromanaging the process or engaging in the process in isolation of their district administrators and staff.

Pressure and Support

Elmore,[10] in his landmark piece on school leadership, discusses the concept of reciprocity of accountability. Essentially, he makes the case that anyone in a position of leadership with the authority to hold someone accountable for accomplishing something, has a reciprocal responsibility to make sure they have everything they need to accomplish it. In the context of the Lighthouse work, boards realized they have the authority to hold the superintendent responsible for accomplishing the improvement goals of the district and, therefore, have the reciprocal responsibility to make sure that the superintendent has everything he or she needs to accomplish them. Boards also realized that the best measure of their effectiveness was the degree to which they created the conditions, provided the support, and enabled the superintendent to do what they had asked of him or her. This created a need for a different type of relationship between the board and the superintendent. In order to provide this type of reciprocal support, the board-superintendent team

able 1.2 Components of districtwide improvement goals

omponent	Characteristics	Example(s)	Sample board questions
strictwide improvement al	Clear statement about what we are trying to collectively improve. • Focused on student learning in a content area • Related to the greatest student learning need at this time • Short term • Includes each of the components described below	Increase the number of students demonstrating proficiency in reading comprehension by 10% while maintaining or increasing the number of students performing above grade level as indicated by multiple measures of reading comprehension by May, 20XX. (Measures include but are not limited to: Series assessments, Jamestown Reader, BRI, MAP tests, Iowa Tests)	See questions related to each component of the goal statement.
ntent area greatest stu- nt learning ed	The content area where data indicate the most students are non-proficient. • Multiple data sources confirm the need	• Increase the number of students demonstrating proficiency in reading. • Increase the number of students demonstrating proficiency in mathematics.	• What must we improve right now? What area must we put our collective energy into improving (evidence of need across levels)? • As we study our students' achievement data, which content area appears to be our lowest area across the most levels? Are we confident that is our area of greatest need? Do we have multiple sources of evidence that this is our greatest need?
row us for rovement	A specific strand within the broad content area that focuses improvement efforts. • Broad enough that all levels can contribute • Narrow enough so the efforts aren't fragmented or disjointed • Based on greatest student learning need	• Increase the number of students demonstrating proficiency in reading comprehension. • Increase the number of students demonstrating proficiency in complex mathematical problem solving.	• More specifically, what are we trying to improve? • What strand within the content area needs the most attention? How do we know? • Is there clear evidence of need in relation to this strand? • Is this an area that spans all grade levels? Are the needs similar at different levels across the system? • How will different levels be able to contribute to improvement in this strand? Will the focus need to be different at different levels?

onent	Characteristics	Example(s)	Sample board questions
ic measur- argets for vement	Specific indicators of progress so it is clear when we are making progress toward the goal and when the goal has been reached. • Focused on results • Should include measures that allow for ongoing monitoring of progress (will need to identify measures/types of assessments and define a schedule for monitoring progress) • Describes sufficient stretch—ambitious but realistic improvement	• Increase the number of students proficient in reading comprehension by 10% as evidenced by performance on districtwide measures of reading comprehension such as BRI, MAP, Jamestown Reader, and Iowa Tests (using the measure of grade level proficiency defined by each assessment). • May also want to include how often this will be monitored: Progress will be reviewed by staff during their study teams each week and	• What level of improvement do we want to see? What's the performance we hope to see in our data? • Is the improvement target ambitious enough to produce worthwhile change in student performance? • Is the improvement target realistic—with collective effort is it reasonable to assume we could succeed? • What districtwide measures are available for us to monitor progress? How frequently do they allow us to monitor progress? Do we have enough regular/ongoing assessments across levels that are valid and reliable to provide us with good information on a regular basis?

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mponent	Characteristics	Example(s)	Sample board questions
cific measur- targets for rovement	Specific indicators of progress so it is clear when we are making progress toward the goal and when the goal has been reached. • Focused on results • Should include measures that allow for ongoing monitoring of progress (will need to identify measures/types of assessments and define a schedule for monitoring progress) • Describes sufficient stretch—ambitious but realistic improvement	• Increase the number of students proficient in reading comprehension by 10% as evidenced by performance on districtwide measures of reading comprehension such as BRI, MAP, Jamestown Reader, and Iowa Tests (using the measure of grade level proficiency defined by each assessment). • *May also want to include how often this will be monitored:* Progress will be reviewed by staff during their study teams each week and reviewed by the board at least once each quarter.	• What level of improvement do we want to see? What's the performance we hope to see in our data? • Is the improvement target ambitious enough to produce worthwhile change in student performance? • Is the improvement target realistic—with collective effort is it reasonable to assume we could succeed? • What districtwide measures are available for us to monitor progress? How frequently do they allow us to monitor progress? Do we have enough regular/ongoing assessments across levels that are valid and reliable to provide us with good information on a regular basis? • Will we need different indicators of progress for different levels? • What do we know about student growth (over time) in this area as well as their current level of attainment? • Are there subgroups of students (who perform less well in this area) that we need to be monitoring while we monitor overall districtwide progress?
line for ovement	• Defines the deadline for completion	• 10% increase by May, 2011	• How soon do we hope to see change in performance? • Is the timeline reasonable in relation to the target? How do we know? • What will it take? Are we willing to provide the necessary support to ensure success? • Are we clear about the actions it will take to meet the goal? Can they be taken effectively within this time frame?

needed to be convinced of the importance and reasonableness of the improvement goals. In addition, they needed to trust each other in ways they had not previously pursued, communicate in ways that had not previously been necessary, and be willing to let each other provide strong leadership from their respective roles. This concept of reciprocity of accountability helped the boards understand a key role of the board for providing "pressure and support." Pressure comes from the clear expectations laid out in the improvement goals and targets for the district and the unwavering expectation from the board that the district will be successful in accomplishing those goals. Support comes from the willingness of the board to make sure the superintendent has everything needed to accomplish the goals. Pressure and support as an ongoing interaction includes collaboratively setting goals, determining what it will take to accomplish the goals, negotiating the expectations based on the support needed, providing the support, monitoring progress, and adjusting actions to ensure success. This act of finding the right balance of both pressure and support becomes a significant role of the board relating to improving student achievement.

SUMMARY

A great deal is already known about what it takes to improve the achievement of all students in classrooms and schools. Numerous studies and books have been written describing the characteristics of more effective learning environments. Numerous examples of schools that beat the odds and produce high levels of learning for all students exist. However, less is known about what it takes to lead an entire district to high levels of learning and sustain a culture focused on excellence and equity. Until recently, school boards have been excluded from the school reform literature and excluded from consideration as a unit of change or a key lever in the change process. The Lighthouse studies and the tools, processes, and studies described in this book open the door to understanding how to help local school governance play a role that positively impacts the learning of students in their schools. Each exemplar of the Balanced Governance approach encourages school board members to act not as managers of the school but as governors of the system and important leaders of systemic change in concert with their administrators, teachers, and community.

To: WCUUSD Finance Committee

From: Flor Diaz Smith, Chair

               Ursula Stanley, Vice Chair

               Daniel Keeney, School Board Member

Re: Configuration Committee Charge Draft

Charge
The Configuration Committee shall study Washington Central Unified Union School District education system and make recommendations to ensure all students are afforded quality educational opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and equitable education system that will enable students to achieve the highest academic outcomes. The committee shall make advisory recommendations to the WCUUSD School Board for configuration changes necessary to make WCUUSD strategic plan goals a reality.   - The Configuration Committee will engage in a design protocol to generate ideas about how our schools could be structured to maximize student opportunity in our enrollment realities.   - Composition of the Committee: (3 officers+2 Board members), 5 community members (one from each town) , 3 administrators (1 HS Principal, 1 Elementary Principal, Superintendent)

Must-Dos
- Develop a work plan for stages of committee work and full board involvement.   - Community engagement   - Schedule for reports to the full board   - Develop an Equity Imperative   - Build consensus on conditions of the work: - Act 46   - Projected enrollment (including future housing development)   - Facilities

- ○ Timeline
- ○ Equitable opportunities for students
- ○ Definition of community school
- ○ Education Quality Standards
- Address the conditions in our proposed solutions
- Evaluate proposed solutions
  - ○ Practicality
  - ○ Criteria

Conditions of the Committee's Work

- Demographics
- Strategic plan
  - ○ Core beliefs
  - ○ Goals and action steps
  - ○ Indicators of success
- Strengths & Constraints of our systems
- Criteria

Final Must-Dos	Person(s) Responsible
● Lay out a descriptive plan for any proposed solution's implementation – how will this solution be achieved, and how can our community visualize that solution?	
● Per the practices and processed introducing our Criteria for Configuration, we have an obligation to present/acknowledge credible arguments for and against a proposal.	
● Reports to full Board can either be recommendations for action, or they can be just 'findings'. A finding might conclude that a proposal is possible, advisable, or it might conclude something is irreconcilable with our strategic plan and criteria for improving our district.	

● Including Community Schools model for our future. ●	

| Criteria	Core Belief	Strategies
Impact on student well-being: research and data related to ● Class size and healthy classroom configurations ● Travel time ● Access to aftercare and before care ● Access to programming such as sports, music, guidance, etc.	Well-Being Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging	Focus on inclusion and belonging Rename/rebuild re-configured elementary schools ○ New names ○ New mascots ○ Etc.
Travel time ● Length of bus rides for various age groups ● Travel time for families to school	Well-Being Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging	
Implications of moving 6th grades to U-32: research and data related to ● Student impacts: social, emotional, academic ● System impacts	Well-Being Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction	Intentionally designing and implementing a strong middle grades program will attend to the social, emotional and academic needs of students (The Successful Middle School)

Financial sustainability, fiscal responsibility, resilience and responsiveness to future demographic changes	Transparent and Responsible Leadership	Enhancing Education
Does this configuration set us up to enter a merger conversation with other districts?	Transparent and Responsible Leadership	
Implications of different proposals on specific communities/towns and the community as a whole ● Per pupil spending ● Community viability ● Property values ● Community well-being ● Pros/Cons for all scenarios/options ● Impact of closures on towns (center towns most impacted) ● Cost savings and indirectly tax savings	Community Engagement and Relationships Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging Transparent and Responsible Leadership	Board is committed to making student-centered decisions
Specific educational improvements and opportunities for students ● Equitable opportunities (define) ● That are fiscally sustainable	Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging	
Opportunities/costs to elementary sports programs ● Travel impacts on elementary sports ● Changes to elementary sports configurations for each model		

Allow class sizes that meet Education Quality Standards and are sufficient to provide rich instruction ● Intentionality ● Consistency ● Equitable outcomes	Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction Transparent and Responsible Leadership	
Maintain full-time nursing and counseling ● What does the research say about student access to nursing and counseling?	Well-Being Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging	
Maintain or expand enrichment opportunities that are consistent across the system (music, art, world language, etc.) ● Sustainable	Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging	
Be deliberate, intentional, and creative when creating shared positions across schools and very small FTE	Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging	

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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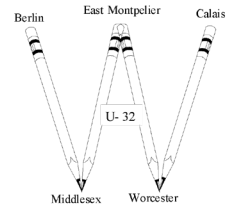
**Washington Central Unified Union
School Board Meeting
11.20.24 6:15-9:15 PM
U-32
1130 Gallison Hill Rd.
Montpelier, VT**

Present: Flor Diaz Smith, Elizabeth Brown, Zach Sullivan, Daniel Keeney, Ursula Stanley, Chris McVeigh, Mckalyn Leclerc, Patrick Whelley, Jonathan Goddard, Natasha Eckart, Lei DeGroot, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Amelia Contrada, Michelle Ksepka, Kealy Sloan, Julia Hewitt

Administrators: Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, Principal Becca Tatistscheff, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Julia Pritchard, Susanne Gann, Celia Guggemos, Alicia Lyford, Jarrod Weiss, Karoline May, Heidi Dimick, Lisa LaPlante

Others: April Davis, Noah Weinstein, Caitlin Howansky, Dell Waterhouse, Allen Gilbert, Leigh Garrity, Adrienne Magida, Allison Fayle, Amber Larrabee, Amy, Annie Ledue, Arlyn Bruccoli, Ashley Ballard, Ashley Lachance, Bekah Mandell, Ben, Brigitte Kalat, Brittany Perry, Cam, Carrie Fitz, Cash, Chartrand, Daisy Scarzello, David Delcore, David Hannigan, David Lawrence, Edith Lane, Elizabeth Marks, Erin Mullaney, Ellen Dorsey, Hannah Brown, Hollis St Peter, Honi Bean Barrett, Jamie Bohn, Jen Pelletier, Jenn Ingersoll, Jennifer Fitch, Jill Abair, John Riley, Kara Rosenberg, Karen Lieberman, Kate McCann, Kathryn Biggam, Lauralea Curavoo, Lisa Garibaldi, Lila Richardson, Mark Brown, Mary Smith, Matt Pelkey, Maya Elliot, Meg Allison, Melanie Kehne, Melissa Purchase, Michael Sherwin, Nicolle Schaeffer, Penny Andrews, Rachel, Robert M, Ross Lieblappen, Rubin Bennett, Scott Isham, Sharon, Tim C, Tyler Smith, Veronica Eldred, ORCA Media, Cathy G, Cindy Griffith, Heather Scandale, Anna Matheson

1. **Call to Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.**

2. **Welcome**
   2.1. Adjustments to the Agenda: Flor Diaz Smith stated that an Executive Session is needed; she would like to add it to the agenda, item 2.3, before Public Comment. **Ursula Stanley moved to accept this amendment to the agenda. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.**
   2.2. Reception of Guests: Flor Diaz Smith welcomed those present from the community, and the leadership team. She expressed gratitude to the administrative team, and for

the community that is staying engaged in this work, and she thanked the board members and staff, for the shared commitment to public education. She spoke about the principles of equity, justice, and freedom.

2.3. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: At 6:20, Ursula Stanley moved to go into Executive Session, for the purpose of discussing employment of an employee, pursuant to 1 VSA section 313(a)(3), and to invite Steven Dellinger-Pate, Heidi Dimick, and legal counsel, Bernie Lambek.   Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried.** Chris McVeigh and Daniel Keeney recused themselves from Executive Session on the grounds of potential conflict of interest. **This motion carried unanimously. At 6:41, Michelle Ksepka moved to come out of Executive Session. Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc, this motion carried unanimously. Diane Nichols-Fleming moved that the board agreed with the recommendation of the administration to enter into a settlement agreement permitting the resignation of an employee, and we authorize the Superintendent to complete the settlement agreement. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried. Chris McVeigh and Dan Keeney abstained from this vote.**

2.4. **Public Comments-Time limit strictly enforced, see note:** Jay spoke to reinforce the importance of libraries. He stated that they are the pillars of the schools and he wanted to reinforce that so that the board would move forward with supporting those resources. He stated that as an attorney, libraries have been his life, his source of research, and his lifeline to his work. Jill Abair spoke about proposed cuts to library positions. She spoke about the technology-related roles of the librarians. She listed the many roles of the library staff in each school. Arlyn Bruccoli spoke about the proposed cuts to the library positions. She stated that this year the programs in our school libraries are already different, due to cuts from the previous budget. She warned the board that these proposed cuts would make it harder to retain qualified staff. Edith Lane, 12th-grade student at U-32, spoke about the role of libraries in her learning experience.

3. **Presentation**
   3.1. **Budget Draft # 1:** Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate, along with other members of the leadership team, presented the slide deck: *FY26 Budget Presentation*.
   3.2. **Long-term Weighted Average Daily Membership (LTW ADM) Information:**
   3.3. **Community Q &A:** Kara Rosenberg asked whether we could be made aware of a specific staffing cut in each school. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we can create this chart but at this time, we do not have specifics. Chris McVeigh stated that this is information that is important to the public. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that he could have this information prepared for the next draft.

   Bekah Mandell asked whether there could be specific information about allied arts positions. She asked for more information about transportation costs since they are affected by special education spending/ funding. She asked what are the plans from the board to address the legislature to advocate for some categorical aid to offset some of the costs such as healthcare. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the Superintendents

Association, Vermont Principals Association and the VSBA are lobbying to the legislature around these issues.

Lauralea Curavoo asked for some information about the foodservice plans for the schools. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that the first step would be to have the position of district-wide Food Service Director. Susanne Gann explained the creation of this job description in more detail.

Heather Scandale asked about the student to staff ratio for example, for the positions of school counselor. She asked how the roles and responsibilities of the position vary from school to school, based on the staffing proposal. She asked whether the full or part time staffing patterns allow for teaching and planning time, and how this varies from school to school. Gillian Fuqua explained that classroom teachers participate during guidance class, so this does not allow for planning time for teachers (as PE, for example, does.) She explained that roles and responsibilities vary from school to school.

Rubin Bennett thanked the board and administration and acknowledged that these conversations are difficult. He noted that it is important to focus on positions and student outcomes and to not personalize. He stated that we have professional administrators who make the hard decisions, and the board should take the work that comes from the administration. He spoke about sustainability over time. Noah Weinstein spoke about sustainability and asked the question of whether shared positions among schools is a possibility, or whether dual licensed teachers, for example, could teach music and art, both, in one school. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that we try, whenever possible, to hire/ create full-time positions.

4. **Reports**
   4.1. **Superintendent/COLT Report:** A written report has been provided. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate highlighted that we are making some changes to the website. Julie Pritchard shared that para educators had received trauma-informed training on November 11 in service.
   4.2. **Principal Report:** The principals had prepared a written report. Some highlights were shared. Jarrod Weiss shared some of the community-building activities at Calais School. Alicia Lyford shared some of the curriculum work from East Montpelier Elementary School, using the "data wall." Chris McVeigh asked whether the use of "data wall" is unique to EMES, and what the positive outcomes of this process are. Alicia Lyford shared some of the details.
   4.3. **Student Report:** Lei DeGroot shared some of the student happenings, including the most recent "Word of Mouth" performance in the high school atrium.
   4.4. **Central VT Career Center Report**: (tabled until next meeting)
   4.5. **VSBA Report**: (tabled until next meeting)

5. **Board Operations**
   5.1. Budget Draft # 1: Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she appreciates the layout and the information that was shared. She would like to have a more detailed explanation of proposed cuts in positions.

    Mckalyn Leclerc appreciates the detail in the presentation. She reiterated that she would like to know more specifics around position cuts. She asked for clarification around FTE for administrative assistant positions at each school. She asked how a 0.6 FTE nurse position would work out over a five-day week. She asked how health education is taught. Gillian Fuqua explained that finding a certified Health Educator is a challenge; she explained how Doty School taught health education with a shared position (e.g. with a school counselor).

    Dan Keeney asked for specifics about Rumney School's health education position.

    Patrick Whelley asked for specific information around weighted student ADM; specifically, the two-year average.

    Dan Keeney spoke about the challenge of this creating potentially more part-time FTE positions. How do we expect this budget to compare to past budgets, as far as shared positions or part-time positions? Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that the size of the schools is driving the FTE of positions, and he reiterated that we strive to create/ hire full-time positions. He stated that one of the harder parts of budgeting is determining the FTE of positions and how to ensure that the positions are sustainable for teachers - for example, teachers who have to work amongst three different schools.

    Michelle Ksepka stated that food service should be listed at each school, too. She suggested that the Doty school counselor be shown how much time is spent on behavior and how much on the school counselor position. She asked whether there was an investigation into sourcing our food service to an outside agency. She stated that it seemed that the number of economically disadvantaged families' number is artificially small, and she wondered whether there was a concerted push to get families to complete the paperwork certification.

    Chris McVeigh stated that he believes the EQS statistics are hard to apply wholesale to the smaller schools in our district. Steven Dellinger-Pate explained that we begin with EQS as a guideline but we also consider other factors, including per pupil spending which he assumes indicate that the students have greater needs and services may need to increase. Rebecca Tatistscheff spoke about the budget development at U-32, redistributing the work that is happening within a different structure, to think about long-term sustainability. This is ongoing programmatic work, and she reminded the board that it is only November and she continues to get to know U-32.

Jonathan Goddard asked whether, with the new incoming federal administration, are we considering how this affects education funding. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we would continue to keep in mind what positions are funded by federal funds.

Dan Keeney asked for some clarification about funds and co-curriculars. Becca Tatistcheff stated that she continues to look at how we keep our school building active during after-school hours, including after-school programming, especially keeping in mind if sixth graders end up attending U-32 - that athletics are not the only "third space." Dan Keeney stated that he believes this could be an area of growth - more specifically spelling out these co-curricular opportunities.

Amelia Contrada expressed appreciation for the administration and the positive framework with which the information tonight was shared.

Ursula Stanley reiterated Amelia Contrada's sentiment; she also asked whether there is some flexibility in the program planning if there is some shift in average daily membership as the start of the school year approaches. Steven Dellinger-Pate shared that the use of fund balance can address this "shock to the system" if the budget does not support it.

Lei DeGroot asked whether we allocate funds to "third spaces" aside from sports. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that there are limited funds allocated to "third spaces" at all of the schools. He stated that we do need to plan for broader third space opportunities such as after school, look at grants, and plan future budgets. This is a priority in the future. He spoke about the idea of Community School.

Flor Diaz Smith asked, what is our plan going forward, for example, a two-year plan? Where do we have duplication of services?   Steven Dellinger-Pate spoke about, in addition to third spaces, the need for instructional coaches. He stated that part of this budgeting process does bring to light some aspects that would be affected by reconfiguring - for example, part-time/shared positions. Some discussion followed around transportation. Gillian Fuqua spoke about the challenges of the bus routes in Worcester.

Some discussion followed around the school nurse positions. Jarrod Weiss spoke about the challenge at Calais Elementary with the shortage of nurse staff.

Draft 2 will include some updates to the budget based on new data, and some details based on the notes from tonight. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether questions or comments could be sent directly to the Superintendent or Business Director.

5.2. Mailing Ballots: A letter had been included in the board packet. Flor Diaz Smith asked volunteers to attend the town Select board meetings. Dan Keeney - Calais, Kealy Sloan - Berlin, Chris McVeigh - Middlesex, Julia Hewitt - Worcester, Zach Sullivan - East Montpelier. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate would like to join as well, if possible.

5.3. Configuration Committee: A draft memo has been provided for board members to consider. Flor Diaz Smith shared the draft charge for the committee. She stated that a criterion for committee member selection has not been developed yet; she suggested that the board hold off on this discussion, due to the late hour. Some discussion followed about this. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked where we stand around the suggestion to bring in a third party to facilitate. Flor Diaz Smith stated that Jeanie Phillips will continue to be available but at this point, we do not want to be prescriptive. Dan Keeney suggested tasking the Steering Committee with drafting a rubric for selecting committee members, and depending on interest from the community, we wait to decide on appointing additional board members. Anna Matheson stated that at some point we need to consider enlisting help from a third party around communication because it continues to be an ongoing problem.

5.4. District Clerk Candidates: Flor Diaz Smith asked board members to consider whether they might know someone who would be interested. This will be posted on the website and Front Porch Forum.

5.5. School Board Member Elections: Flor handed out petitions to Board members whose term is up this year if they want to run for re-election.

5.6. Ed Quality Update: Ursula Stanley stated that the committee would be sharing in December, as they are not yet prepared to share this month.

6. **Finance Committee**
   6.1. Multi-year Capital Improvement Project Budget Review: Ursula Stanley moved to authorize the reduction in the allocation of capital reserve funds from $1,561,749 to $932,066 for the completion of the projects as identified in the 11-15-2024 memo and approve the District moving forward with bid document and bidding as necessary. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously. Ursula Stanley moved to approve to change the amount to budget in the general fund to transfer to the capital reserve fund in FY 2025-26 as $500,000. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.

7. **Policy Committee**
   7.1. First Reading: F45 Fundraising: Chris McVeigh stated that this is an updated draft; he shared the changes in the policy. Ursula Stanley pointed out a typo ("solely"); she asked for clarification around principal or designee versus superintendent or designee. This detail in the policy remains accurate.

8. **Personnel**
   8.1. **Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE**: (none tonight)

9. **Consent Agenda**
   9.1. **Approve Minutes of 11.6.24:** Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to approve the minutes of November 6, 2024. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried unanimously.
   9.2. **Approve Board Orders:** Elizabeth Brown moved to approve the board orders dated 10-1-24 to 11-17-24, in the total amount of $919,411.93. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously

10. **Future Agenda Items**
   10.1. **Board Resolution Discussion:** Chris McVeigh offered to withdraw the resolution that he had presented; he stated the importance of the board chair wearing different hats and being sure to not appear to represent the board versus representing VSBA or other when presenting to the legislature.

11. **Board Reflection**

12. **Public Comment:** Bekah Mandell stated regarding library services - they are far more than books for children and teachers. She spoke about equity - for example, one school has a more robust tech position and she wonders how this plays out with respect to equity.

   Noah Weinsten stated, regarding the charge of the Configuration Committee - it is not clear whether the committee is considering configuration within WCUUSD or whether it is also considering configuration outside of WCUUSD (e.g. Montpelier). Flor Diaz Smith stated that hypothetically the work of the configuration committee could be informed by the work of a larger committee that considers configuration with other districts.

   Superintendent Dellinger-Pate thanked Susanne Gann for the work she put into this budget development.

13. **Adjourn: The board adjourned by consensus at 10:00.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary