

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
ACSD Board
Board Meeting
Monday, November 11, 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-Person Attendance

Barbara Wilson; Brian Bauer; Ellen Whelan-Wuest; Ellie Romp; James Malcolm; Jamie McCallum; Jason Chance; Joanna Doria; Mary Heather Noble; Matthew Corrente; Navah Glikman; Nicole Carter; Sophia Lawton; Steve Orzech; Suzanne Buck; Tricia Allen; Wendy Baker

Remote Attendance

Courtney Krahn; Laura Harthan

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

Other ACSD staff present:

Ashley Bessette, Universal Pre-Kindergarten Coordinator
Jen Kravitz, Mary Hogan Principal

2. Motion to Adapt Agenda

Barb Wilson added the following item to the agenda, under the Superintendent's Report:

1.c) Resignation of Isabell Gogarty, 1 FTE, from MUMS.

Motion to approve the agenda as modified.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum 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. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of October 28, 2024 Barb Wilson 5 min

Barb Wilson pointed out one error on the minute: Under the Report of the Chair, the reference to the date November 28th should be October 28th.

Motion to approve the minutes from the October 28, 2024 Board meeting, as corrected.

Move: James Malcolm Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

- D. Approve ACSD Bills James Malcolm 5 min

James Malcolm reported that he and Jason Chance read the ACSD Bills on November 11, 2024 and summarized as follows:

General Fund: \$353,385.37

Payroll: \$70,807.30

Payroll: \$731,943.55

Payroll: \$328,379.52

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

Sophia Lawton reported that MUHS clubs are collaborating for "Tigers Giving" to raise money and awareness for some local organizations. There will be a cornhole tournament for students after school in support of Hope Happens Here. Navah Glikman reported that the Student Coalition on Human Rights is doing work to bring awareness around hunger and homelessness, and is sponsoring a canned and pantry food drive for HOPE. The Middlebury Environmental Action Club (MEAC) is also sponsoring a clothing swap to support environmental sustainability -- this will be held on November 20, 2024.

Barb Wilson asked if Board members could help support the canned food drive. Mary Heather Noble suggested the Board members bring canned goods when they attend the MUHS fall musical this weekend. Suzanne Buck also suggested that the SCOHR group expand the canned food drive to include donation bins at other ACSD schools.

- F. Report of Superintendent Wendy Baker

1. Action: Personnel Appointments and Resignations 5 min

Wendy Baker provided the latest ACSD appointments and resignations, including the resignation of Isabell Gogarty from MUMS.

Ellie Romp noted the email that Isabell Gogarty sent to the Board, offering to participate in an exit interview -- is this going to happen? Barb Wilson agreed to add it to the agenda for the next Executive Committee meeting. Tricia Allen reported that she has heard from MUMS parents who have expressed dismay over Izzy's resignation and that it is a blow to the MUMS community.

NOTE: Laura Harthan abstained from voting.

Motion to accept the following personnel actions:

- a. Appointment of Karen Callicott, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 10/21/2024

b. Appointment Kyle Lussier, JV Basketball Coach, Step 6, Effective 11/11/2024

c. Resignation of Isabell Gogarty, Wellness Educator, Effective 11/22/2024

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

a. Appoint Karen Callicott, Paraprofessional, 1.0 FTE, Step 1, Effective 10/21/2024

b. Appoint Kyle Lussier, JV Basketball Coach, Step 6, Effective 11/11/2024

2. ACSD Universal PreK Presentation

30 min

Ashley Bessette, ACSD UPK Coordinator provided a presentation on the UPK program in the District. This is a new position to her -- prior to this she served as the Program Director for the Evergreen private PreK program in Vergennes, so she brings her private sector operations perspective to the work as well.

Note: presentation slides available in meeting materials

here: <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1731342587/acsdvtorg/fojhev51dlzgbtu8cch/ACSDMeetingPaq11-11-24.pdf>

Highlights from the presentation:

- UPK was enacted in 2016 and provides funding for 10 hrs/week for 35 weeks of Pre-K for 3, 4, and 5 year-old children.
- UPK is overseen by both the AOE and Child Development Division
- Currently 400 UPK programs in VT; 48% private; 37% public; 10% FCCHP and 4% Head Start
- Each family receives \$3,884 from the state toward PreK (through the District for enrollment in public and private partner programs)
- All UPK must be licensed by CDD, meet certain quality standards, have licensed early educators and special educators, and are subject to IDEA and state special education laws

- In ACSD: 153 PreK students, 24 on IEPs -- which will likely increase. Most of these children are placed in private, center-based programs (72.4%), public programs (26.9%) and a few in home programs. Families choose programs based on a variety of factors (availability, duration of programming/full-year, proximity to home or work, cost & financial assistance)
- 77% of ACSD PreK students are placed in programs within the District; 23% are placed in partner programs outside the District (most likely chosen due to proximity to parent workplace)
- Of 91 current Kindergarteners, only 2 students did not participate in PreK

Additional information was shared about the enrollment/planning process, which includes an interest survey and coordination among all the public and private partner programs to accommodate the most students seeking placement. PreK classrooms are created with an effort to balance classrooms with 1/3 students with disabilities, 1/3 students from vulnerable populations (e.g., living in poverty, from migrant families, etc.), and 1/3 students not meeting either of those criteria -- this creates socioeconomically diverse learning environments. Enrollment/student population figures for ACSD PreK students by town and by age were also shared. Finally, Ashley provided some information about current challenges in PreK programming (staffing shortages, substitutes, transportation, etc -- similar to regular primary & secondary education), how special education is accessed for students served by IEPs, and current efforts to expand PreK programs in Addison County.

BOARD QUESTIONS:

- Brian Bauer asked about how/why 2/3 of PreK spots are reserved for kids with disabilities and other vulnerabilities and only 1/3 for [other]* kids. Families need more than 2 hours a day for their kids. Ashley clarified that the state pays for 10 hours a week, but that most programs are longer than that -- families just make up the difference in cost, many with financial aid and other subsidies.

- Mary Heather Noble asked if the no-cost public program spaces were reserved or preferentially given to families with financially based need. Ashley said that they weren't, but that there were lots of resources for families, and that she and many of the program directors work to connect families with resources so they can receive financial assistance for the programs that work for them (based on their work location/schedule, etc.). Ellen Whelan-Wuest also provided some additional information about financial assistance for families.

- James Malcolm noted that this is an issue with which he lacks direct contact since he does not have young kids but that it has been an issue of recent concern expressed during public comment, as if ACSD is not providing what is needed. How are we responding? Ashley noted that some of the concern may be due to the the discontinuation of programs operated in Ripton and Salisbury, and a perception that it is not as available to those families, whereas in some Districts there has always been 1 district-wide program available to all district families.

- Suzanne Buck noted the importance of transportation to families in order to access PreK programming.

- Jamie McCallum asked about the Kindergarten-readiness of preK students. Do we know this statistic? Dr. Baker and Ashley mentioned the Kindergarten readiness (Guild?) assessment data that the state collects for this.

Ashley invited all interested Board members to reach out if they would like to tour any PreK facilities.

* There was some back and forth between Mary Heather Noble and Brian Bauer about the appropriate language to use for referring to disabled students verses non-disabled students. Steve Orzech also made a statement about the use of appropriate terminology.

3. Budget Presentation #2 and Board Budget Target Discussion

Matthew Corrente 40 min

Matt Corrente provided Budget Presentation #2 to the Board. Presentation slides available with meeting materials at <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1731342587/acsdvtorg/fojhev51dlzgbytu8cch/ACSDMeetingPaq11-11-24.pdf>

Matt explained that for FY26, the Administrative team is looking to: 1) identify and address programmatic inequities; 2) strengthen universal instruction; and 3) streamline student services. He also reviewed the budget components:

- enrollment-based portions of the budget (staffing to comply with Board policy and meet EQ standards, facilities, curriculum, supplies, etc);
- need-based portions (student services including special education);
- student opportunity-based portions (resources to provide enrichment the District has

identified it wants to provide all students, including athletics & activities, environmental education, trips, etc)

- performance-based portions of the budget (resources specifically allocated for targeted tasks, including equity-improvement measures, additional student supports or programming to meet district goals, etc.)

Performance based budgeting is founded upon: 1) What outcomes are we trying to achieve? and 2) What resources are needed to meet progress goals? He introduced the triangle plan (slide 4), which involves a coordination of instructional providers, system supports and instructional coaches. This is a newer way to budget, rather than just adjusting what schools have historically received.

The Board's Role: The ACSD Board must decide whether to Level Fund for FY26 (same \$ amount, no increase to the general fund budget) or Level Service (increase the budget to maintain the same program resources, due to cost drivers).

Slide #8 provided an overview of increased costs to maintain level services: \$3,063,000 in new cost to keep the same level of service & programming as FY25 (due to increase healthcare, staff salary, insurance, transportation and other costs). Note: this does not include the expected increase to PAHCC student tuition.

Slide #9 provided a chart with a summary of possible scenarios for Financial Feasibility Targeting, should the Board choose to lean more toward Level Fund (or somewhere in-between level fund/level service). Of note:

- a 0% increase, assuming 2487 LTWADM results in \$16,099 per pupil (right at the spending threshold)

- a 0% increase, assuming projected 2682 LTWADM results in \$14,931 per pupil

- a -1% increase, assuming 2487 LTWADM results in \$14,753 per pupil

- a -1% increase, assuming 2682 LTWADM results in \$13,683 per pupil

- a 6.1% increase, assuming 2487 LTWADM results in \$17,081 per pupil (way above threshold)

- a 6.1% increase, assuming 2682 LTWADM results in \$15,842 per pupil (close to threshold)

There was some discussion about the accuracy of the projected LTWADM for FY26, noting the new methodology for counting students living in poverty and how that increases the student weighting for ACSD's enrollment. Steve Orzech cautioned against making assumptions about the benefit of weighting, especially since this change in estimating students living in poverty is being implemented across the state. The pie is still the same, so our share of it might not change that much.

Ellen Whelan-Wuest, James Malcolm, and Dr. Baker all commented on the unknown factors in budget development and how the Board might set a goal that keeps the general fund budget below the state's per-pupil spending threshold.

Mary Heather Noble and Suzanne Buck both noted the importance of the taxpayer perception, especially given the most recent increases from the FY25 budget. People have noticed the change and are feeling it. The atmosphere from this recent election is also

suggesting wariness around additional tax increases.

a. Action: Set Board Budget Targets

Barb Wilson introduced the task before the Board: setting a budget target for FY26. She noted her feeling that the Board should look at the total number, not just per-pupil spending, because many voters will be looking at that figure in comparison with FY25. Last year the Board asked for some grace because it wanted stability for new leadership. Now is the time to demonstrate that it is serious about creating a more sustainable budget. We need to do something hard.

Steve Orzech made a motion to task the Finance Committee with setting the feasibility target at a 2% increase to the General Fund (which would translate to ~ \$1M cut). James Malcolm seconded.

Ellie Romp asked why the feasibility target can't be set as a more descriptive rule to not exceed the spending threshold. Dr. Baker explained the reasoning behind setting a more concrete figure -- to give the administration more time for "backing into" a budget goal and planning operational decisions around that. How the budget will be distributed to meet educational and strategic plan goals is a separate conversation.

Suzanne Buck expressed concern about increasing the general fund budget even by 2%, and made a motion to amend the target to a 1% increase instead (translating to approximately \$2.5M reduction to the general fund). Jason Chance seconded.

There was lengthy discussion about the proposal, and how much increase the general fund budget can withstand before passing the spending threshold. Matt Corrente assisted in crunching some quick per pupil spending estimates based on the District's current (2487) LTWADM and the District's projected (2682) LTWADM for FY26. There was continued discussion about how much cutting would be needed to safely assume a budget figure that won't pass the threshold or result in loss of education services for students.

Mary Heather Noble pointed out that there is room for the District to increase efficiency in how it is delivering education to students, considering current underfilled classrooms -- being more efficient with the District's dollars does not by definition mean a loss of services. Ellen Whelan-Wuest acknowledged this point but also noted the challenge of asking the administration to conduct a reconfiguration between now and the next year.

Dr. Baker noted that the District will not be able to get to this target without cutting people.

Jamie McCallum questioned the need to set a target right now. Most of the variables are beyond the Board's control. We should be careful about how we talk about the price and quality of education. We need to communicate to voters why it is so important to pass a school budget. What we are doing is taking a defensive position. Dr. Baker reiterated the value to setting a target for the administration so that her team can design a budget with appropriate cuts as soon as possible. Her team will need ample lead time to design a configuration that the Board believes it can afford.

Ellie Romp responded to Mary Heather's comment regarding efficiency -- no district has

seen a reduced budget as a result of cutting schools. We will not save \$3M if schools are closed.

Barb Wilson called the vote on the amendment to the motion:

5 Ayes: Joanna, Jason, Ellie, Suzanne, James

7 Nays: Ellen, Mary Heather, Steve, Tricia, Brian, Laura, Jamie

The proposed amendment failed. Back to the motion on the table -- setting the budget target to a 2% increase.

There was continued discussion about the proposal, including concern about scaring ACSD parents and stakeholders with a 0% increase to the total budget number (requiring 6.1% reduction in the general fund), concern about the PAHCC tuition figures, and other unknown variables. Dr. Baker explained that her team would focus on a 2% target, and come to the Board with recommendations on how to get there. James Malcom noted that 85% of the budget is spent on staffing, so staffing cuts will be necessary to get there.

Barb Wilson called the vote on the 2% increase budget target:

8 Ayes: Ellie, James, Jamie, Steve, Tricia, Ellen, Joanna, Laura

4 Nays: Brian, Suzanne, Mary Heather, Jason

The Motion passes -- the FY26 budget target is set at a 2% increase from the FY25 general fund budget.

G. Report of the Chair

Barb Wilson 5 min

Barb Wilson thanked Board members who filled out the Formative Evaluation survey for Dr. Baker. There were 10 responsees. She reported that the Exec Committee met with Dr. Baker on Nov 9th after the Board retreat that morning to share the feedback. The Exec Committee will have another Formative Evaluation for Dr. Baker in February, which will focus on the budget process. Stay tuned for the invitation to complete another feedback form to support that process.

Steve Orzech apologized for missing the deadline and asked if he could still share feedback. Dr. Baker welcomed additional feedback. Mary Heather said she would open the survey and share the link with him.

H. Report of the Board

10 min

1. Policy E20 - Community Use of School Discussion

Jamie McCallum

Jamie McCallum reported that he and Darcie Arensmyer discovered that the Policy Committee had not reviewed the highlighted part of the updated Policy E20 -- Community Use of School Facilities. The VSBA's recommended language provided two choices for school boards to consider: 1) allowing outside groups to bring firearms or other potentially harmful weapons on campus (e.g., only for instructional or trade show purposes); or 2) prohibiting firearms and any other harmful or deadly weapon to be present on campus for outside community use. He said the Policy Committee is recommending prohibition of firearms and other potential deadly weapons in Policy E20, which gives the Superintendent some discretion in the interpretation of "other harmful or deadly weapons."

Brian Bauer asked about how this would apply to law enforcement or armed services and their use of school facilities. Is there an exception for them? Dr. Baker clarified that law enforcement are allowed to bring weapons to school campus as part of their role. Ellen Whelan-Wuest also noted that if the ACSD policy allows firearms or weapons, than the

District cannot necessarily restrict which outside groups can use the property (e.g., if they are allowed for gun training purposes, then they would also be allowed for a gun show). Laura Harthan brought up the issue around the fencing club that currently uses Mary Hogan gym. The prohibition clause does provide the Superintendent some authority to determine what activity might constitute the use or possession of a deadly weapon.

Jason Chance made the motion to amend Policy E20 to prohibit firearms and other dangerous/potentially deadly weapons. Steve Orzech seconded. The motion passed with 11 'Ayes' and 1 'Nay.' Jamie McCallum stated that the amended policy would be warned for a final vote at the 11/25/24 board meeting.

Motion to amend Policy E20 Section 2 (g) to state: shall prohibit possession or use of a firearm or a dangerous or deadly weapon.

Move: Jason Chance Second: Steve Orzech Status: Passed

I. Second Public Comment Period

Barb Wilson 10 min

Mary Slosar of Weybridge provided the following comments:

- Re: the use of "normal" to describe non-disabled students -- She also cringed when it was said but also thinks board members should give each other a little grace. It is important not to shame people who make mistakes and suggests that we use objective facts to describe people.

- Re: Budget discussion -- she doesn't think that increasing the budget by some predetermined percentage is the most thoughtful way to approach it. Nor is budgeting by a don't-increase-my-taxes approach. A more thoughtful approach would be to identify where there is fluff to cut (e.g., administration, which has grown in recent years). The Board's job is to support the kids, not to worry about the taxes. Determine what is needed and then sell it to the community.

J. Board Reflections

Barb Wilson 5 min

1. Meeting Conduct and Effectiveness

Ellen Whelan-Wuest

Ellen Whelan-Wuest reflected on the meeting and expressed that she felt it went well. The Roberts Rules protocol is restrictive to actual conversation, but she felt the Board did a great job in having a productive meeting.

2. Meeting Content/Other

Suzanne Buck noted that budget discussions are always hard because of how it affects members of the community, and how emotional the issues can become. She expressed gratitude for everyone's conversations.

James Malcom agreed. There are so many variables in the budget process and he felt the Board had a deliberate conversation. Riffing is the most painful thing a Board ever has to do.

Dr. Baker reassured the Board that ACSD Principals and Program Directors are working hard to structure their cost center budgets on a different set of priorities than has been done in the past. They are working in support of the Board's strategic plan.

K. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Suzanne Buck Second: Jamie McCallum Status: Passed

Total Meeting Time: 2h 15m

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