

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
Communications and Engagement Committee
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm
49 Charles Avenue
Middlebury VT
05753**

ACSD District Vision and Mission

OUR VISION

Our vision is for all ACSD students to reach their full learning potential, have a sense of belonging in our schools, and enrich our community and the communities where they live in the future.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide high-quality, equitable, and varied learning environments that inspire a passion for learning and growth among our students.

In-Person Attendance

Laura Harthan; Tricia Allen; Wendy Baker

Remote Attendance

Ellie Romp; Joanna Doria; Mary Heather Noble

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum

Meeting called to order at 4:36 p.m.

1. Introductions: Board Members, Administrators and Staff

Also present:

Barb Wilson, ASCD Board Chair
Wendy Baker, Superintendent
Emily Blistein, Director of Communications & Engagement

Laura Harthan made a motion to amend the agenda to replace D.2 Conversation with Student Reps with D.2 Discussion with Dr. Baker and Emily Blistein re: Communication & Engagement tasks for FY26 Budget. Mary Heather Noble seconded. Tricia Allen called the vote and it passed unanimously.

B. Public Comment - Agenda Items

No public comment.

C. Recommendation to Approve the Minutes from 10-15-24

Motion to approve the minutes from 10/5/2024.

Move: Laura Harthan Second: Ellie Romp Status: Passed

1. VSBA Community Engagement Workshop

Barb Wilson shared her notes from the Community Engagement workshop presented during the Annual VSBA Conference: "365 Days of Effective Communication." She noted that slides and handouts from the presentation are available at www.vtvsba.org/conferencehandouts.

Barb reviewed takeaways from the presentation, noting that many of the recommended actions are already being done by Emily Blistein. But there are a few suggestions that the ACSD Board could consider. The Communication strategy includes 3 building blocks:

Content -- anything/everything that is happening in the district and school buildings, and work of the Board. Concerts, plays, field trips, summer activities, community partnerships, etc. Barb emphasized the Board's completion of its Strategic Plan as a specific thing to crow about.

Target Audience -- students, parents, alumni, general public. Emily's work focuses more on those within ACSD orbit; the Board's audience include these people and everyone else within its member towns.

Distribution -- press releases, articles, photos, presentations, Op-Eds, local newspaper, social media, mail, email, FPF, etc. Barb specifically mentioned opportunities for the Board to do more Op-Eds (e.g., to emphasize the importance of coming to public meetings, or in support of the budget, etc.) and the possibility of creating events to reach our broader audience.

Barb also mentioned the concept of "Budget Buddies" or people with influence within the community, and inviting them into the Finance Committee work to serve as budget ambassadors within the ACSD community.

The Committee discussed the best way to identify high-impact sustainable options in addition to what is already being done. Emily Blistein suggested starting with quarterly Op-Eds in the Addison Independent, which can draw from the same content that is being shared in the Board's quarterly newsletters. Joanna Doria and Ellie Romp both expressed interest in the "Budget Buddies" concept.

E. Committee Discussion:

1. Wrap up "Who Do I Contact" Website

Emily Blistein and Mary Heather Noble provided a brief update of work to improve public engagement via the ACSD website. "Who Do I Contact" pages have been added to both the District and Board tabs -- with descriptive road maps to find appropriate contact information for specific questions/circumstances. This also includes hyperlinks to ACSD schools, District Leaders, and the School Board.

The Committee discussed the landing page for the School Board link -- all agreed that it should be simplified so that people can see a group photo, phone number, email, and meeting calendar. There was some additional discussion about how the remaining material on the board page should be organized. Emily will make some changes and circle back when they go live.

2. Conversation with Student Reps re: Lower School Student Feedback/Updates

The Committee is postponing discussion with Student Reps re: Lower School Feedback, and instead talked with Dr. Wendy Baker and Emily Blistein about Communication & Engagement strategies (and coordinating District efforts with Board efforts) around the FY26 budget.

Dr. Baker explained that she and Finance Director Matt Corrente are working to restructure the budget book to reflect the Equity-based budgeting work the District has done and better illustrate how resources are distributed. She asked for the Committee's opinion on what visuals would be the most helpful, based on the presentations that Matt has shared so far.

Emily Blistein shared that the budget book format has evolved from a dense 73-page book to a more user-friendly overview with school summaries. How does the Committee feel about continuing the school summaries? Do we think voters will benefit from the per/pupil price tag information for certain educational components (e.g., regular operations, student services, technology, etc.)?

Tricia Allen mentioned that people seem to understand and respond to the general concept of setting a budget target and recognizing the distinction between level funding and level service. Joanna Doria mentioned the importance of orienting the budget numbers to stay below the State's spending threshold. Mary Heather noted the benefits of highlighting the different categories of budget expenses per the EDGENOMICS model: enrollment-based (eg., materials, curriculum, classroom teachers, equipment, transportation); additional need-based (additional support staffing, contracted services, additional transportation, etc.); opportunity-based (e.g., enrichment programming, student activities, athletics, etc.); and performance-based (e.g., additional investment of resources toward meeting strategic plan goals). This may help people to understand why investments and/or cuts are being made where they are. Laura Harthan also mentioned the importance of addressing feedback received from the October budget development survey.

The Committee discussed other elements of the Budget Book prep:

- Important to keep summary sheets for each ACSD school. People may become concerned if this granular detail is omitted.
- Per-student price-tagging is helpful for people to see how much is being spent for each component
- It would be helpful to review how other Districts have approached this -- Emily suggested a joint meeting with members of the C&E Committee and Finance Committee to review possibilities.
- Need to make sure that whatever is shared with ACSD member Town Clerks is complete information. Town reports have typically only included their town school -- which won't be a complete picture if figures are being reported on a District-wide basis.
- Would be good to celebrate schools on their summary sheets, and possibly report the MUHS student experience and where their graduates are matriculating to.

To Do: Tricia Allen will reach out to Chip Malcolm of the Finance Committee to schedule a joint meeting with Emily. Dr. Baker offered to do podcasts for budget outreach if there are any local podcasts. Barb Wilson mentioned one with Dave Sharpe -- she will reach out to him.

Dr. Baker also mentioned that Town Clerks from ACSD member towns have offered to help publicize additional public meetings around the School Budget. Mary Heather Noble also suggested utilizing MCTV to do some budget education & outreach too (like was done last year). The group examined possible dates:

- 12/7/24 next C&E Committee meeting
- Additional Committee meetings on 1/7 and 1/14 to plan for a public meeting on the budget prior to Board approval.
- Then use Feb to plan for MCTV and final outreach materials. Next quarterly newsletter also due in Feb, which can include links to budget information.

3. C&E Procedures for Board Policies

Postponed.

F. Public Comment - Any Topic

No public comment.

G. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Motion to adjourn.

Move: Laura Harthan Second: Joanna Doria Status: Passed

*Public Comment Guidelines:

Public comments are encouraged and welcome at each regular board meeting during the period designated for public comment. Comments are limited to three minutes per person. Citizens will be called to make their statement by the board chair. Public comments regarding personnel, students or legal matters will not be heard by the Board.