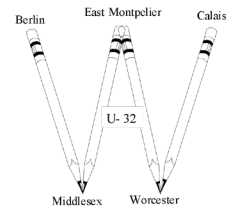


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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



Washington Central Unified Union School District Configuration Committee Meeting

March 19, 2025

U-32

930 Gallison Hill Rd
Montpelier, VT
Virtual Only
5:00-6:00 PM

Present: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate, Kealy Sloan, Shannon Miller, Daisy Scarzello, Julia Hewitt, Daniel Keeney, Lila Richardson, Allen Gilbert, Noah Weinstein, Anna Matheson, Chris McVeigh, Gillian Fuqua, David Delcore

1. **Call to Order: The meeting opened at 5:04 p.m.** Superintendent Dellinger-Pate facilitated the meeting, in Flor Diaz Smith's absence.

2. **Configuration Committee Meeting**

2.1. Agenda: Opening: Equitable student outcomes and opportunities Superintendent Dellinger-Pate shared a slide deck: *Configuration - Programs, March 2025*. He explained that much of what drives our work is our strategic plan; he reviewed the goals of the strategic plan. He reiterated the focus on programming, and then determining what structures we need to have in place to provide those programs. In regards to MTSS, (he shared a detailed slide with bullets regarding MTSS)

- He spoke about the articulated curriculum and the challenge of providing this in multi-age configurations.
- Challenge of opportunities to collaborate for teachers in smaller schools.
- High Quality Instruction & Intervention - he spoke about class size and how to utilize resources so that teachers' expertise is spread across a larger number of students.
- PD - hard to have instructional coaching, hard to embed PD within the day in the smaller elementary schools.
- Allied arts teachers spread across multiple schools.
- Size of school, size of classes, and configuration of classes varies across WCUUSD.

He stated, if we want this type of programming (hearty MTSS), we need to consider what structures will support it.

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that time within the school day is our number one constraint.

Steven Dellinger-Pate invited feedback, questions, and thoughts from committee members.

Chris McVeigh: Do we have a copy of the slide deck? Yes, this was sent to members on Monday of this week.

Chris McVeigh: We need to figure out the “base level” - what is the bare minimum - and then how do we expand from there?

Kealy Sloan: Much of this is not new to many of us. Reflecting on the “iterative-ness” of the process, we need to decide on the core, then what is the next best layer, and under which configuration is that doable? Is that how you see the process going?

Steven Dellinger-Pate: Yes, decide on levels, this is a good first level, this is where we would love to be in a perfect world, where in the middle can we get to at this time, etc.?

He spoke about before and after-school care. Is this a service we should have for everybody? Then, here is the size school (student body, staffing, etc.). We would need to have enough participation to make this happen.

Daniel Keeney: This is a great framework. Next, level though, will these all feel like healthy priorities for a school district and a lot of them will be associated with new costs for the district. We need specific research around that, what is the precedent in other Vermont communities? Another factor - willingness to pay. What cost share models are out there that are successful? (E.g. childcare) He noted that absent from the time allocation is in-school counseling. His understanding is that different schools have different offerings - we need to understand why this might not exist in all of our schools regularly. Who is on the Community Schools Advisory Committee? What is their charge? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate answered: Becca, Amy M, himself, two students, Natasha, Erika Z, Celia, Sean McIntyre, Alden Bird, and 2 school counselors (at this time). The first charge of the committee is to hire someone to help do the work.

Gillian Fuqua: What will you be asking the leadership team to produce as possible models? In terms of programming, what opportunities do we want to offer all students, K-12? The current allocation of minutes per subject area in elementary schools, is built from best practice. If we are thinking about what we want to develop - what are the must-haves, and then may have, and how can we design our structures that allow for the maximum number of “may haves” in addition to “must-haves.”

Shannon Miller: This looks like a menu of many great things from which we can choose. What is not clear is, do we have to make changes? Is it possible to continue operating in the current model and not change anything?

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate reiterated from the slide deck that, regarding the topic of MTSS - some of the bulleted items. We are able to provide very well in some schools and we are not able to provide consistently in other schools, depending on staffing, student/ class size, etc. How to sustain programs across time and not just looking into the next year. What size elementary school, what size middle school do we want to have? To be able to meet as many of those layers of services that we want. That would allow us to work backwards. (Thinking of “economy of scale”)

Chris McVeigh: What is the obstacle to dealing with a “bubble” of students in a school?

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate: For example, it may require multi-grade classes that change along the way, this affects the articulated curriculum. Different configuration of classrooms, across multiple years, This is not a planned structure over time, this is a reactive/ responsive plan. Inconsistencies in configuration make it difficult to have a structured curriculum.

Chris McVeigh: Much of this sounds like the same conversations from the previous Configuration Committee. If we are talking about closing schools then we should talk openly about that as soon as possible. If sacrifices are to be made, being very direct about it would be helpful to the process as a whole.

Gillian Fuqua: There are going to be changes, for sure with the reality of fewer students. There are similarities to the process last year, but this time what we are doing is schematic design. The desired picture of what you want. Therefore, you are providing the vision of what you are hoping to have. Then as the process goes on, you have to make decisions based on your priorities. We might realize there are some things that we cannot do - what are the changes we will have to make?

Steven Dellinger-Pate restated that we are considering programming before structure in this process.

Daniel Keeney: Naming the sacrifices, part of this process will be to address the disadvantages based on the choices that are made. When new criteria enter, the conversation/ new priorities enter the conversation. When the topic of school closure comes up, how to address this? We have a lot of community input built into this process. Our calendar/ timeline might be missing a deeply political/ deeply social piece of the picture. We do not want to be blindsided when we come forward with what we thought was a very well-thought-out and collaborative proposal. It is very important to name the sacrifices.

Configuration proposal process

The Leadership Team is not ready to put this forward yet. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we will need to reappoint someone from Worcester - the board will discuss replacing Matt DeGroot who cannot continue.

Next steps

Put together base programming, what do we want at the core, what do we want to build out from there? As a way of preparing a proposal for what we might like to do.

Daisy Scarzello: We as a committee have not talked about looking at data and how this might affect our decisions around configuration. We keep mentioning this but not digging into it. What particular questions are we looking to answer via data? We should answer this as a group. What questions do we have that the data will help inform us? The committee will continue to work together to agree on the criteria

Closing: Public comment

Allen Gilbert: Would like to raise the possibility that the configuration committee is shut down. This discussion is upsetting to everyone, especially kids. Getting worried that we are going to have a cohort of kids who are going to go through the next four-six years being roiled by how things are changing around them. He has been listening to legislative testimony and is becoming convinced that reconfiguration on a very big scale is going to happen. Mainly on the secondary level, and at the elementary level, people are giving credit to continuing to have small schools in Vermont, because people believe this is valuable. We are about to go through a very tumultuous time; the less we can upset things at this point, the better, knowing that this is coming down the pike.

Noah Weinstein: If there is some way to incorporate more community discussion early on, you will get more views early on, and less of the “blindsiding” that was mentioned. Some people value having a school in their community, that is a priority. The cost of not having a school is greater than other factors. The question of “Would you rather...?” (For example, full-time nursing staff) regarding sacrificing some elements of programming for something that is bigger than programming. What was not in the presentation tonight was what will be the costs to the communities? Are people going to pass it? Do you want to do some polling before you go far down the road? Ask communities, using the “would you rather...” framework. Community approval of a plan is going to be a key component of the plan.

Anna Matheson: However, we narrowed down the conversation, what we do not want to do is not be super clear with everyone about what we are presenting. Be as direct as we possibly can about what we can and cannot do. We have a handful of options and we have to pick one, two, or three to present and be clear. We are all in a district, and the district has to support each other, if we cannot afford certain things, then certain things need to be changed. We have the opportunity to have some say in it or we can wait until it is imposed on us from the higher government level.

3. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Committee Recording Secretary