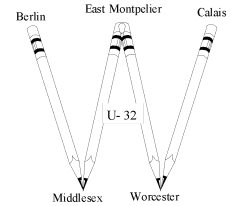


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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 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

Andy Shapiro, Deborah Bloom, Jeannie Phillips, Marilyn Martin, Becca Taitistcheff, Gillian Fuqua, Zach Sullivan, Caitlin Howansky, Community Schools Coordinator Beck Dezan

Opening: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Configuration Proposal Process

Presentation: Steven Dellinger-Pate shared a proposed *Configuration Proposal Process Recommendation*. He explained that this is meant to be with “broad strokes;” that being said, he invited questions and feedback.

Questions and Feedback

Chris McVeigh: re: “board affirms or denies” - there is another option - the board modifies

Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that his hope would be that this would happen earlier in the process.

Deborah Bloom: is the intention to put a timeline onto this proposed process? Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that he realizes there is an “end point” as a committee but he would like to flesh out this process more thoroughly before he specifies a timeline.

The timeline that has been drafted to date is from the backwards planning that has happened to date.

Flor Diaz Smith stated that the ending time should remain firm but as new information arises we can backwards plan.

Daniel Keeney: how do configuration proposals get chosen? His understanding is that more than one configuration proposal will be considered. He noted that our communities have been clear that they would like to see different configurations (e.g. community school, etc.)

Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that, again he would like to start with programming and the configuration will come from that. If we can establish as a committee, working with the community, what our priorities are for programming, then we can come forward with a model. Bringing multiple models to choose from was how we had approached this last time.

Understanding our priorities and the criteria, the administration should be able to bring forward a model in response.

Daniel Keeney stated, in that case, one step should be: Articulate a configuration proposal.

Daniel Keeney suggested that at a certain point in the process it is appropriate to ask for outside help in the process if we do not have the expertise to move the process forward.

Kealy Sloan - it will be important to share “the why” with whatever configuration proposal is brought forward.

Gillian Fuqua stated that as the discussion historically focuses around elementary schools, we need to be clear that this is a systemic shift, K-12.

Flor Diaz Smith suggested that student outcomes should be part of the consideration overall. Operationalizing our strategic plan as best we can.

Steven Dellinger-Pate: Is there something that you hope to see that we have not captured in this outline?

Chris McVeigh: Suggests putting out what is the cost - whatever configuration, is going to have a cost. Need to talk about the cost/ benefit analysis.

Kealy Sloan: Configuration refers to where buildings and students are - but also, what is the same, what is different re: programming offerings - being specific and referring to cost/ benefit analysis.

Steven Dellinger-Pate: our budgeting process gives us tools to address the “cost” aspect.

Andy Shapiro: recalls seeing a large matrix with many configuration options. Steven Dellinger-Pate - this was distilled down into a table (he will share this once it is edited as a result of this meeting).

Andy Shapiro: we are likely to come down to three or four possible models that we can compare. We need to be able to compare those re: how will they work, what will be the cost, how will the communities feel about them.

Deborah Bloom: It is important to address how we communicate this out. At some point we need to have a really clear communication plan that is consistent so that we are all on the same page and sharing the same information.

Daniel Keeney - a change to the process he suggests: when we present the configuration concepts, people want to understand and be able to visualize the change to the new configuration, early in the process. He stated that we do have some communication planning underway.

Flor Diaz Smith - for example, moving to a middle school model - this is likely to take a few years to implement.

Shannon Miller - we are coming up on summer quickly - we are not meeting again until May - when will we have community forums? So far we have talked a lot about process and not about the actual proposals - would be great to hear about those.

Community School Update:

Becca Taitistcheff introduced the discussion: we will not hear a proposal for reconfiguration tonight in this presentation. We will talk about vision and program, in the spirit of programming leading the discussion about structure. She stated that the board has articulated a very specific vision. We want our classrooms, our spaces, our community to feel the spirit of the vision in all that we do.

What if we explored programming that aligns with the vision?

Rebecca “Beck” introduced herself. She has visited two of the elementary schools so far, she approaches the work via relationship building. (needs assessment) What could be happening in our community school? Grant writing for after school programs. Investing in “third space” opportunities, outside of the school day. Some will happen this summer; some this fall.

Family engagement is one of the pillars of community schools. Opening opportunities for evening hours.

Becca Taitistcheff: consider the question of “what does school actually look like.” She noted that we have an opportunity to use grant funding to not only carry out needs assessment (students, families, community members, staff) but build the programming to respond.

Becca Taitistcheff reminded the committee that at this time we are staying in the “visioning and programming” space - not the structural/ fiscal space.

Presentation

Questions and Feedback

Andy Shapiro: Please define what is meant by Community School. Becca Taitistcheff shared the five pillars of Community Schools in Vermont: integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time, active family and community engagement, collaborative leadership and practices, and safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments.

Shannon Miller: expressed concern that the term “Community School” might be misinterpreted by the communities. She asked, how does this work connect to the larger configuration conversation?

Becca Taitistcheff: Vision to program - you can decide to “do school” in a lot of different places. What she has heard from the community is that people are not clear on “what does this actually look like”? That is how Community School can overlap with configuration. Where should we be “doing school” and what could it look like? It is a “way of doing school.”

Daniel Keeney: Because this is a discovery phase and it is happening at the same time that we are making consequential progress in the configuration process, we owe an explanation to the people how the shift from programming to the mechanics happens - a broadening of what our district does -

finances are going to be a piece of any configuration changes. Understanding the process and how the decisions are made needs to be made clear.

Flor Diaz Smith - Does not see this as a new concept. She spoke about Act 67 (2021) and that the Five Pillars of Community Schools aligns with this. Sees Community Schools as something that aligns with our student centered approach which also addresses the equity gaps that we have continued to discuss. An opportunity to achieve what we have been saying that we want.

Becca Taitistcheff - also an opportunity to build coherence. How to build coherence from the many initiatives - how to uncover much of the work that is already underway and name it coherently as part of the whole system.

Deborah Bloom: This also presents an opportunity to be more creative in how we “braid” our funds.

Chris McVeigh: how would we describe the difference between the school that we have now and a Community School? How would rebranding our school as a Community School be different from what we are doing now.

Becca Taitistcheff - this is an opportunity to leverage the five pillars in order to have more equitable outcomes. How are we paying attention to the factors that might be getting in the way of the equitable outcomes? E.g., engagement, relevance, access. She restated that the five pillars are aligned with our strategic planning already.

Daisy Scarzello encouraged, in the discovery phase, she spoke about pre-pandemic - things that were happening - project based learning, student engagement, etc - some of these things were underway. Remind people that the foundation is already here, pre-pandemic we were heading in these directions.

Next Steps and Closing

Updates:

Turtle Island: Steven Dellinger Pate stated that there will be a more comprehensive update to the board. They had contacted us, we have identified space at Doty, we are going to see what does the pairing of a public/ private entity look like. We are looking at opportunities for our communities as a whole. This is an example of such.

Upcoming Middle School Presentation

Public Comment

Daniel Keeney stated that there had been a comment that sending an email to the entire Configuration Committee had been difficult.

Kealy Sloan: Thinks that we need to be careful about how we define “Community Schools” especially as we are talking about configuration. She agrees with Shannon’s previous comment that this has potential to be confusing to people who are not privy to all of these discussions. How does a Community Schools philosophy inform our programming conversation?

Flor Diaz Smith - would be helpful as a board to really understand the principles and themes of Community Schools so that the board has a clear understanding of what it is and what it is not; how it ties together with our Strategic Planning and our core beliefs.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 5:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Grace, Committee Recording Secretary