

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 Retreat 8.6.25 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM Four Corners Schoolhouse East Montpelier, Vermont

Present: Daniel Keeney, Ursula Stanley, Patrick Whelley, Natasha Eckart, Kealy Sloan, Flor Diaz Smith, Mckalyn Leclerc, Amelia Contrada, Superintendent Steven Dellinger-Pate

1. Call to Order

1.1. Welcome and Introductions: **Flor Diaz Smith welcomed board members and called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.** Board members introduced themselves and watched a brief video to prepare for the day's work.

2. Board Learning

2.1. EQS Presentation (Education Quality Standards): Natasha Eckart shared a presentation around Education Quality Standards. Some board discussion followed around staff professional development, via the final slide: What can the School Board do? The board would like broader data to consider as part of the conversation around education quality. Mckalyn Leclerc asked to get updates from the Humanity and Justice Committee in board packets. Board members broke into small groups to discuss a slide: *Essential Work of School Boards/ Potential Action Items for Boards*.

Some sharing from small group:

Amelia: Using data to inform closing the achievement gap

Kealy: Need for more regular updates related to policy as part of superintendent/ board partnership

Natasha: monitoring progress - what do we want for outcomes.

Amelia suggested crafting a social justice statement. Shelley V's first work group had created a statement - should we revisit this? Steven Dellinger-Pate invited board members to let him know if there are areas where they would like to revisit or dive deeper, to include in the "Board Learning" work plan.

2.2. DQS: Governance Standards in DQS (District Quality Standards): Flor Diaz Smith presented a slide deck. Board members considered our level of proficiency according to the list of 113.1 Board Governance Priorities, 113.2 Governance Protocols, 113.3 Governance Processes. Kealy Sloan suggested more explicitly spelling out some of the bulleted items so that we can self-reflect & evaluate more accurately.

3. Lunch

4. Working as a Board and with our Superintendent:

4.1. How do we create conditions for the success of our work?

4.2. Update WCUUSD Board Norms: Steven Dellinger-Pate presented a draft work plan and used it to facilitate discussion with the board. First topic he suggested for focus in the coming year: student attendance/ chronic absenteeism. 20% of students in middle/ high school meet the definition of chronic absenteeism. Some discussion around tending to priorities, giving time that is deserved, and figuring out what is urgent. Discussion followed around community input, around board work/ priorities at board meetings. Balance between engaging our community, emotionality, transparency, and working efficiently as a board. Discussion around open meeting law - because we do not have separate discussions, “pre-meetings,” etc. - we work out all of these things in public, before the public eye. Natasha: Two meetings per month during which we have a great deal of work to complete. Can we be more deliberate in creating a culture during our meetings where it is fine when not all 15 of us are on the same page immediately? Storming, norming, performing, and process. Steven Dellinger-Pate reminded board members that he is available to them as individual board members. Patrick Whelley suggested a norm that the board address the topic up for debate and refrain from personal attacks. Address the question/ topic/ opinion at hand instead of each other. Ursula: Need to find a way to firmly but respectfully enforce the norm for public comment at board meetings. It becomes a cumulative effect where the board is neglecting work that is part of the much deliberated work plan, when public comment is extended and takes a great deal of time at the board meeting. The difference between agreed upon parameters for debate and board consensus about the issue. Discussion about public comment as opposed to Q&A session, or discussion (coffee with superintendent). We need to be clear about parameters and then stick with it. Natasha: The importance of being consistent with time limits and then moving on. Also appreciated having additional opportunities for public comment after a presentation or at other times during the meeting. Amelia Contrada: Can we find a way to make public input more equitable? Using FPF or some type of survey, etc.? Flor Diaz Smith updated the Board Norms document as the board discussed. Some discussion about allowing for processing time. E.g. on the first Wednesday present information and on the next meeting, take action around the information. Creating a known and consistent process for decision-making. Diane N-F had asked for the COLT report at the first board meeting of the month so there is time to process. Ursula suggested a sort of protocol for considering COLT report. Steering committee can help to determine what items are discussion/ action and what are simply informational. Daniel: Was our debate proportional to the work that we have in front of us? (Regarding board reflection at the end of board meetings). Natasha suggested that board members take turns setting the tone by affirming norms before difficult deliberations etc.

Some discussion around board members keeping one another accountable to the agreed upon norms.

5. Board Work

5.1. Reaffirm Board Goals

5.2. Update WCUUSD Board Work plan 2025-2026: Discussion about year-round budget planning - how often to report on the budget at board meetings when there are no substantive changes.

Natasha: Is there a way to insert a space for student groups/ student voice updates in the COLT report? How are we communicating to all student groups that if they are invited to come to the board to present. In addition, HJC report within the COLT report.

Daniel Keeney would like to invite parent groups; also invite to host community dinner on board meeting nights.

Natasha: Would it be possible to have a section with COLT around EQS so that administrators can speak to this. Report from early childhood education task force. Way of investing attention/ time/ resources into Community Connections (advisory group?)

Ongoing learning about Act 73

5.3. Committee Work and the implications of our work: Some discussion about what days and times committee meetings will take place. This will be left for the committees to decide.

5.4. Legislative Update: Act 73, VSBA has appointed two members to the redistricting task force. Flor Diaz Smith provided an update on legislative work around this act. Flor Diaz Smith and Superintendent Dellinger-Pate proposed the idea of sharing a newsletter with our community, with the facts to date. Act 73 has passed, but the following is still in flux: redistricting and wards. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that we still do not know many facts about this. What are we supposed to say as board members? The Act has passed, but the specifics have not. Flor Diaz Smith: A summary document with just the facts that we know to date. Our board has not formulated a response/ a position at this point. Natasha: Is there conversation at the VSA level about what the process is going to be for superintendents to come together? Have other organizations looked at what processes we are going to start implementing to address the impact of Act 73. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that if nothing else comes of this, the superintendents are having important conversations about how to share services and resources. Kealy Sloan would like to know how these changes are affecting our current discussions about configuration. Steven Dellinger-Pate: Our focus over the next three years needs to be consistency. How to maintain consistent practice over that time, knowing that the budget is going to be tough.

6. Closure

6.1. Reflection “Understanding our Why” Activity

6.2. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary