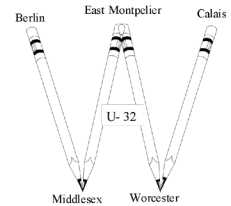


Washington Central Unified Union School District

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

September 3, 2025

U-32

930 Gallison Hill Rd

Montpelier, VT

In-Person/Virtual

6:15-7:00 PM

Present: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate, Flor Diaz Smith, Daisy Scarzello, Daniel Keeney, Chris McVeigh, Jeannie Phillips, Becca Tatistcheff, Patrick Whelley, Anna Matheson, Marilyn Martin, Deborah Bloom, Zach Sullivan, Amelia Contrada, Gillian Fuqua, Ursula Stanley, Kealy Sloan, Natasha Eckart, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Mckalyn Leclerc, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Lisa McCarthy, Alison Fayle, Ari Preston, Beckah Mandel, David Delcore, David Lawrence, Ela Chapin, Michael Sherwin, Veronica Fair, Elizabeth Brown, Alicia Lyford, Ellen Knoedler, Elliot Burg

1. **Call to Order:** Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. She noted that tonight is a combined board and Configuration Committee meeting so that both entities could consider the report.
2. **Configuration Committee Meeting**
 - 2.1. **Presentation: Discussion and Questions**
 - 2.1.1. **An Informal Study Report “Governance Considerations for a Merger between Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools and Washington Central Unified Union School District:** Tracy Wrend presented the document; she noted that this is considered an informal, preliminary study. The document had provided a history of merger studies between the two districts. Tracy Wrend invited initial reactions from board members and configuration committee members.

What is one thing that stands out in the report?

Gillian Fuqua: Broadly, the needs and strengths of the two districts are complementary.

Anna Matheson: When we think about merging these districts, we talk about high schools and this does not really address the issue of elementary schools, which we as a committee have been interested in.

Amelia Contrada: Appreciated the idea of efficiency and improving student outcomes. Appreciates that there is a broad number of directions that we can consider.

Zach Sullivan: Looking at the list of all the things we are trying to do - how many they are but also how similar they are across the two districts. There are some things on the list that they are having a hard time getting enough students to continue to offer.

Mckalyn Leclerc: Both districts have declining enrollments, Montpelier has greater facility issues lately, with a timeline that is unknown and vague; some of these issues need some immediate attention. Agrees that we are not talking much about elementary schools in this document. None of the samples or structures are similar to our current board structure.

Diane Nichols-Fleming: We have been exploring this for a very long time, regardless of Act 73. When exploring this - past or present - it is because there are certain things that make sense as far as size, population. The devil is in the details - ripples re: expenses and how to support learners for the best outcomes.

Natasha Eckart: Appreciates the amount of detail and information in the report - at this time she will pass; there is too much information to process in this moment.

Patrick Whelley: struck by the numbers - struck by the logic of the conversation; the numbers are very close with both districts.

Daniel Keeney: A lot of the comparison of learning opportunities confirms the similarity of the two districts - two sides of the same coin; shared commitment, feels like a great foundation on which to build a single district. The elementary and middle schools in both districts have much more variance in size, etc.

Debra Bloom: How do we reconcile this with the conversations we are having about our middle schools? Is there a place to combine the thinking? There are cultural differences between the districts (e.g. budgeting, grant funding, pedagogy etc.)

Kealy Sloan: Reading this and having the numbers makes, the union seem more tangible and possible; she appreciates that this study exists, that we are gathering and sharing this information.

Chris McVeigh: The detail in this report is substantive and helpful; does not get to the cultural aspects. This is a good first step. Next step is to consider whether we can bridge the gaps that we have - we have not been able to do this in past years in spite of attempts.

Ursula Stanley: Appreciates the depths to highlight all of the aspects that should be considered. Facility, capacity, programming, enrollment, etc. This shows us how much additional information is needed.

Daisy Scarzello: The uncertainty regarding time, all the details that would unravel as we go; not knowing what would happen if we are “too slow” - the cost of time in terms of money and in terms of student experience.

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate: The similarities jumped out at him - and then the question regarding culture - how different are we?

Flor Diaz Smith: Appreciates having this comparison - makes her even more curious to see deeper levels of similarities/ differences.

Tracy Wrend asked: Thoughts about areas where you have questions and/ or one possible next step to learn more.

Mckalyn Leclerc: Next step: important to chat with community and see where they stand and what questions they have, and to meet with Montpelier (boards?) - begin that conversation.

Diane Nichols-Fleming: Wonders about having a conversation about “what are the barriers?”

Natasha Eckart: Conversations between educators in both districts - where is the overlap/ barriers especially regarding the topic of culture.

Patrick Whelley: Would like to hear from the communities what are their questions/ concerns once the report is more widely available.

Daniel Keeney: Question about moving forward in more concrete ways - conversations and the district being affirmative about making conversations between counterparts in each district, on every level, and providing a description about what combining might look like.

Debra Bloom: Community engagement, central office from both districts, frame the engagement on “now” - what is happening now, not what was happening years and decades ago - we are now in a very different time.

Kealy Sloan: Community engagement, cross-pollination across staff, having a clear framing on “why this, why now,” given the current legislation. The cost of inaction in years past was low; the cost now is potentially very high. It will be important to talk about that.

Chris McVeigh: would like to see steps to reach out to Barre and Twinfield; have them in on the ground floor - will be helpful in terms of welcoming and overall culture - having that “reach out” in the beginning.

Ursula Stanley: Would like to see more information on educational outcomes; how they are delivering their educational models - how many students show up? Is it still viable? Would appreciate getting input from other neighboring districts; we are not enough with just Montpelier

Daisy Scarzello: What is our cost of inaction at this time? Agrees that we should be looking at, e.g., Barre, now, not later.

Gillian Fuqua: Next step- naming differences between perception and reality (e.g. re: culture). Understanding that we may be using different language to talk about the same thing. Leaning on our educators and professional staff to get together and do the work.

Anna Matheson: Transportation and equity seem to be topics that continue to come up. What positions would be lost in a merger? How many? How will those decisions be made? Frontloading that information will go a long way to have conversations that are more fruitful. Also noting that Roxbury would be asked to move for a third time. Will be important to engage them up front.

Amelia Contrada: Comparison of learning opportunities - likes the idea of engaging teachers, getting feedback about what are their priorities - what do you want to hold onto without compromise; what are you willing to compromise? Importance to include Barre and Twinfield early in the conversation.

Zach Sullivan: Worth thinking about what can we do, starting now, to ease a transition - that would be positive/neutral, should things fall apart but would help smooth things as/ if we go forward (e.g. the combined effort musical) - sports? Clubs? Other things to ensure less of a “social shock” should we merge schools. Are we on the same timelines with respect to contract negotiations etc.?

Anna Matheson: Another question - how much money will this actually save?

Tracy Wrend asked for big takeaways from Steven Dellinger-Pate and Flor Diaz Smith.

Steven: Appreciate the complexity; we have more to learn - how do we engage our students, our staff, our communities, as part of this conversation?

Flor: We care about moving forward in concrete ways - also the importance of reaching out to Barre and Twinfield. Also, a comprehensive way to outreach/ engage collaborators.

Flor: September 17 - a planning meeting with Montpelier between board chairs and superintendents. Tracy Wrend thanked the committee for the opportunity to learn more.

2.1.2. Next Steps

2.1.3. Review our Timeline

3. **Public Comments:** No public comments at this time.

4. **Adjourn: Kealy Sloan moved; Chris McVeigh seconded -adjourn at 7:28 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Grace, Committee Recording Secretary