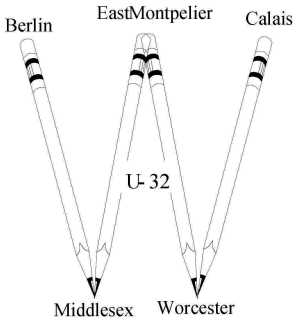
Approaches to Study Configuration

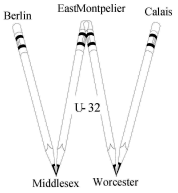
Merging Vision with Structure



WCUUSD Board Meeting
August 23, 2023

WASHINGTON CENTRAL UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
BERLIN - CALAIS - EAST MONTPELIER - MIDDLESEX - WORCESTER - U32

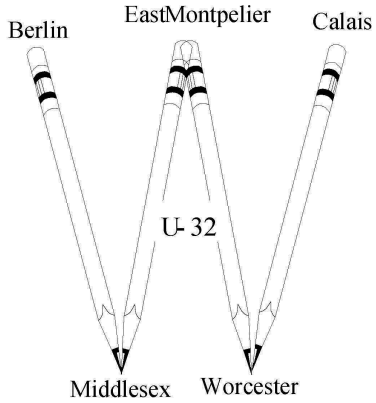
GOALS FOR TONIGHT



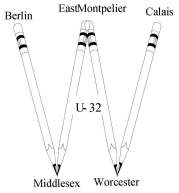
- Connect the work of configuration with strategic planning
- Overview approaches to studying configuration
- Outline key community engagement strategies
- Identify timeline and study method

Strategic Planning

Vision & Core Beliefs



STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE



Washington Central Timeline

PHASE 1
Laying the Groundwork

March 2023- June 2023

Designing for community engagement
Facilitating community conversations
Drafting a vision and core beliefs
Soliciting feedback

PHASE 2
Setting Goals

July 2023- September 2023

Finalizing a vision and core beliefs
Facilitating focus groups
Drafting strategic goals
Soliciting feedback

PHASE 3
Moving Toward Action

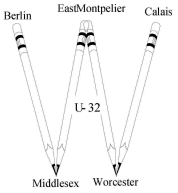
October 2023 - November 2023

Finalizing strategic goals
Facilitating work groups
Drafting action steps
Soliciting feedback

PHASE 4
Sharing the Strategic Plan

November 2023- January 2024

Finalizing actions steps
Soliciting feedback
Sharing the final plan



Community Engagement

1 *How do we engage the community about our implementation options?*

Configuration Study

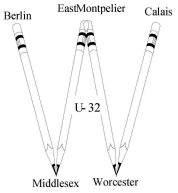
How should we organize ourselves to implement the vision? 2



Vision & Core Beliefs

1 What do we want for our Washington Central students?

A reminder…



WCUUSD Mission:

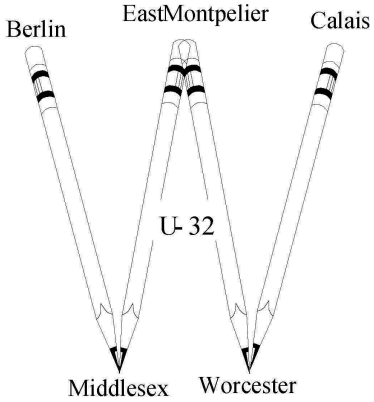
WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.

Our Identified Priorities:

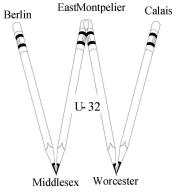
- Academic Achievement
- Safe & Healthy Schools
- Humanity & Justice

Configuration Study

Essential Elements



VERMONT LEARNING



What have other systems learned as they engaged in the work?

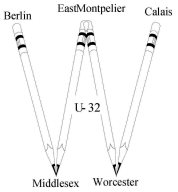
Successes

- Board-led processes have most success
- Clear goals, clear data, transparent process and a concrete timeline
- Strong support from administration, but Board leads the work
- Clear community engagement
- Consultants can be helpful as neutral facilitators

Pitfalls

- Communication & engagement is key
- Challenges occur when the process is unclear and the Board did not lead the engagement
- Some communities are resistant to consultants (within the community vs. outsider)

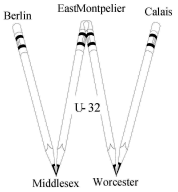
A VERMONT EXAMPLE



Case Study: A rural, multi-town unified school district studied the configuration of their smallest elementary schools over two years. The Board charged a subcommittee, strongly supported by the Superintendent and administration, to study the current realities of their system. Central to their situation were aging infrastructure, declining enrollment, and concerns about quality of services available to students in the smallest schools. The Board leaned heavily on the administration to identify the data and study the configurations, but broadly "owned" the decision. The result for this Board was reconfiguration - middle school students were moved to a single building to create a standalone middle school, and one of the smallest elementary school was reconfigured to house PreK in partnership with a community organization. Two years in, the community is largely positive about the change.

- A collaborative process, but the Board must make the key decisions
- "What won the Board over to make the decision was the research"

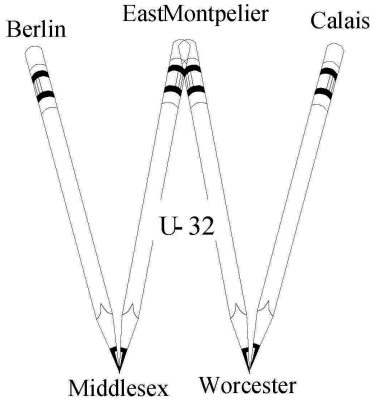
CRITICAL STUDY ELEMENTS



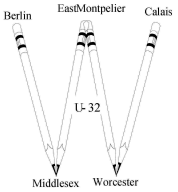
- Grounding in Vision & Core Beliefs
- Analysis of the system
  - Enrollment (historic, current, projected) - cite source
  - Quality of student experiences (e.g., student outcomes; world language; access to counseling/nursing; arts; class size/EQS) and associated costs to provide these at different scales
  - Facilities (age, maintenance costs, etc)
  - Cost analysis (per pupil costs; EQS)
- Configuration options & pro/con analysis (including revised costs associated with each model)
- Communication & engagement planning

Board Approaches

How will the Board undertake this work?



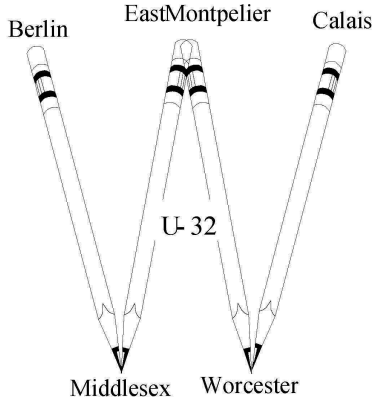
STUDY OPTIONS



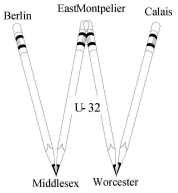
- Board charges a committee (existing or ad hoc) to conduct the study
  - Such subcommittees need:
    - Superintendent & administrative involvement
    - Clear charge & **timeline**
    - Active Board participation
- Full Board charges administration to bring back a recommendation
- Consultant
- What else?

Community Engagement

Planning & Anticipating



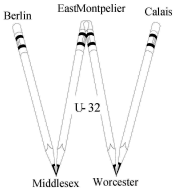
STRATEGIC PLANNING INSIGHTS



What have we learned so far from strategic planning & other recent events?

- Community engagement is **hard**, especially at more abstract times (e.g., Hopes & Dreams)
- **People come out** when a subject is important to them (mascots, budget) - ***configuration will be one of those times!***
- The Board has to be able to engage the community while still preserving its ability to make a sound decision based on all of the available information

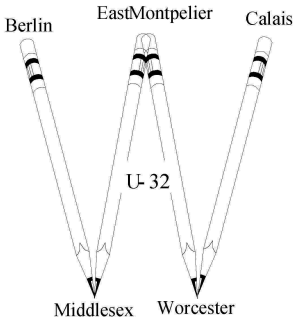
BOARD LEARNING



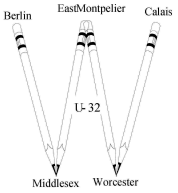
What does the Board need to know in order to do this well?

- Equitable Community Engagement (Board Learning at 8/8 retreat)
- What else?

Questions?

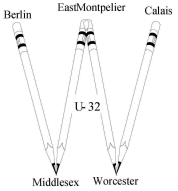


POSSIBLE TIMELINE- *Finance Committee Recommendation*



- September - December: Conduct the study
  - November budget presentation to include status report to inform budget discussions
  - Presentation in December
- January-February: Board reaction/discussion/engagement planning
- March-May: Community Engagement
- June: Action

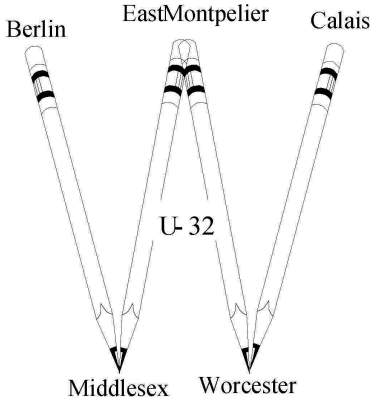
STUDY OPTIONS - *Finance Committee Recommendation*



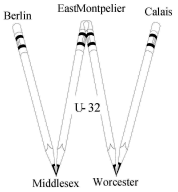
- Board charge a committee to conduct the study
  - Considerations:
    - Finance Committee? Steering Committee? Ad Hoc?
    - Clear Superintendent & administrative involvement
    - Clear charge & **timeline**
- Committee Presents full study to Board. All discussion, decision making and engagement planning is done by the full Board
- Consultant/facilitator for community engagement?

Committee Organization

Meeting #1 - September 20, 2023

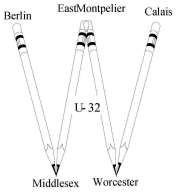


Timeline Overview (from August meeting)



- September - December: Conduct the study
  - November budget presentation to include status report to inform budget discussions
  - Presentation in December
- January-February: Board reaction/discussion/engagement planning
- March-May: Community Engagement
- June: Action

Detailed Timeline & Deliverables



- September 20th: Affirm timeline, appoint members, etc
- October 18th: Review data
- November 15th: Brainstorming of configuration options
- **December 6th: Full Board presentation of study**
- December 20th: Committee debriefs Board discussion & prepares workplan for second half of the year
- February 7th & April 3rd: Held for Community Engagement
- June: Action