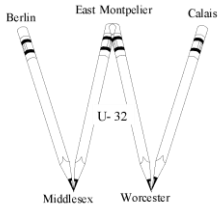
Washington Central Unified Union School District

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 Meeting
2.18.26
6:15-9:15 PM
(In-Person & Virtual)
U-32
1130 Gallison Hill Rd
Montpelier, VT

Present: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate, Flor Diaz Smith, Daniel Keeney, Chris McVeigh, Patrick Whelley, Ursula Stanley, Mckalyn Leclerc, Elizabeth Brown, Michelle Ksepka, Zach Sullivan, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Amelia Contrada, Julia Hewitt, Natasha Eckart, Kealy Sloan

Administrators: Susanne Gann, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Gillian Fuqua, Amy Molina, Celia Guggemos, Jarrod Weiss, Karoline May, Alicia Lyford, Becca Tatistcheff, Julia Pritchard

Others: Blakely Gillmore, Michael Sherwin, Nicole Ferrier, Nicholle Schaeffer, Rory Woodard, Samantha Jackson, Stephane Kaplan, Susie, Veronica Fair, Victoria Capitanelli, William Wright, Laura Ashikaga, Laura Giamusso, Lila Richardson, Lisa Hanna, Marilyn Martin, Mark Brown, Mary McMahon, Mary Rogstad, Matt Pelkey, Meg, Megan McLane, Erin, Erin Galligan-Baldwin, Hannah, Honi Bean Barrett, J Bohn, Jenna Howard, John, Kara Rosenberg, Karen Lieberman, Kathleen, Kayla, Cindy Gardner-Morse, Danielle Mackay, David Delcore, David Hannigan, Dawn Dumas, Deborah Bloom, Dell Waterhouse, Dena Brown, Denise Wheeler, Elise O'Brien, Ellen Knoedler, Emi Harlow, Allison Fayle, Amy, April Davis, Bekah Mandell, Beth Stern, Blanche, Brigitte, Brittany Perry, Caitlin Howansky, Carrie Fitz, Cat Fair, Christine Hertz Hausman, Nick Allen, Stephanie, John Moton, Sophia Emigh, Erica Zimmerman, Sonja Andrews, Alison Soccodato, Matt Davide, David Kirk, Katy Chabo, Callie Weller, Anna Matheson, Julie Mckinstry, Barry Bernstein, Melissa Tuller, Heather Clark-Warner, Sandra Cameron. Several other members of the public attended in person

1. Call To Order: Flor Diaz Smith called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

2. **Welcome**

2.1.Adjustments to The Agenda: Flor Diaz Smith noted that we will be going into Executive Session earlier in the meeting to accommodate Sandra Cameron, who is facilitating the superintendent evaluation process.
She noted that for Board Operations, item 5.1, will include:

- Memo
- Email from community member
- Debrief/ Next Steps.

Ursula Stanley moved to accept the changes to the agenda. Seconded by Amelia Contrada. Discussion: Julia Hewitt suggested to amend the agenda to discuss preschool reconfiguration. Flor Diaz Smith stated that the memo is intended for discussion tonight and will address those concerns. **This motion carried unanimously.**

2.2 **Reception of Guests:** Flor Diaz Smith recognized board members whose terms are ending, Amelia Contrada and Mckalyn Leclerc.
She thanked Melissa Tuller, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, who is taking on a new role in the district.
She acknowledged that February is School Board Appreciation month. She thanked school board members for their service.
She thanked the administrators and especially Superintendent Dellinger-Pate for the continued work in support of our students and communities.
Flor Diaz Smith thanked the board, administration and community for their work over the past years and she noted that she will not be seeking re-election as board chair.

2.3 **Public Comments: Time strictly enforced, see note:** Matt Davide, Band Director at U-32, thanked the administrators for listening to the feedback about band ensemble offerings. He also advocated for continuing general music instruction.

David Kirk, Music instructor, spoke in favor of saving elementary school music programs/ positions.

Noah Weinstein advocated for preserving a math instructor position at Doty School in order to provide equitable instruction to all students.

Katy Chabo spoke in advocacy for preserving music programs at all of the elementary schools.

Bekah Mandell and her two children spoke in favor of preserving music programs at the elementary schools. Bekah spoke about the equity factor of offering music to all elementary students.

Maya, parent, spoke in favor of the music programs and also asked the board to continue to work on creating a sustainable model of education for all.

Nick Allen (VMEA) spoke in favor of preserving music programs.

Ted, Calais parent, expressed outrage and confusion about moving preschool students from Calais to East Montpelier.

Stephanie - and her daughter, an elementary student - spoke in favor of preserving the music programs at the elementary schools. Parent expressed worries about keeping the current music instructors, with proposed reductions in force.

Lauralee Curavoo expressed concern about the current funding system and she believes it is not equitable or sustainable.

John Moton (VMEA) spoke in support of preserving the music program at WCUUSD. He stated that WCUUSD has an incredible music staff.

Callie Weller spoke about the Calais preschool program's proposed move to East Montpelier in the fall. She hopes the board/ administration will reconsider this proposal, given that we have the enrollment and the space at Calais.

Sophia Emigh read minutes from the December board meeting. She expressed concern about moving the Calais preschool program.

East Montpelier parent spoke in favor of preserving arts education in elementary grades.

Erica Zimmerman thanked the board as well as the community who is providing feedback tonight, and to the state legislators. She asked the board to consider, looking into the future, and take the opportunity to create a vision for how we want to rebuild a school system under the parameters and the opportunities that we have. She stated that we need to step above the nitty gritty and envision into the future.

Anna Matheson stated that the idea of moving preschool from Calais has been discussed at great length. She stated that it was clear that preschool would be moved if

the enrollment numbers were there, and that this conversation should not be happening right now.
Ross Andrews spoke about the importance of music education. He spoke about his personal experience and how music education changed his life; he expressed dismay over reductions in positions. He suggested a committee to create a five year strategic plan around managing declining enrollment.

Community member from Calais suggested that the board consider moving preschool students from East Montpelier to Calais instead.

Kathleen Bookchin expressed concern about the math interventionist position at Doty. She also stated that no preschool or kindergarten student should be on a bus traveling to another district.

Caitlin Howansky expressed that Doty needs adequate staffing for math and literacy.

3 Board Learning: Board Self Evaluation

Flor Diaz Smith reminded the board that as we conclude this year, we should be preparing for our board self-evaluation. She will be sending a memo to this effect.

4 **Reports**

4.1. Superintendent/Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) Report:

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate had provided a written report. He introduced his new Executive Assistant, Sashly Felix.

Becca Taitistcheff spoke about U-32 students' work together with Humanity and Justice Coalition, and about the work of the Student Council this year.

Alicia Lyford spoke about Literacy Camp this winter.

Jarrod Weiss spoke about the 100 day celebration at Calais School.

Karoline May spoke about supervision/evaluation; specifically, informal observations through the lens of UDL.

Celia Guggemos spoke about some of the events at Berlin that brought families to the school.

Zach Sullivan asked whether we could hear some information about whether there is an uptick in community member volunteering in the schools.

Gillian Fuqua spoke about some of the recent expressions of interest at Doty School.
Julia Hewitt stated that she is hearing people ask for a list of posted positions for possible volunteers, as well as a place to share their own specific talents that they would like to share.

4.2. Student Report: Natasha Eckart spoke and expressed pride about U-32 students at Model UN in Boston.

4.3. Principal Report: Principals had shared out, above.

4.4. Central Vermont Career Center Report: Patrick Whelley shared that over 300 students visited Central Vermont Career Center for shadow week. As the career center continues to take in new applications, it continues to explore creative ways to increase instructional space.

4.5. Community School Report:

4.6. VSBA Report: Flor Diaz Smith provided an update from VSBA. She spoke about the desire to secure quality, affordable health care. She stated that health care is a large cost driver for school budgets.
Natash Eckart stated that she does not want her name on this letter from the board.

Daniel Keeney celebrated the events at Berlin and he asked how these events are staffed.

Celia Guggamos stated that these are staffed by volunteers; she noted that there are some donations, for example, for food and prizes. She stated that some of the modeling around planning is from some of the Community School work of Beck.

5. Board Operations:

5.1. Vote Debrief and Next Steps: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate had shared a memo dated February 17, 2026: *Update on Contingent Budget Development.*
Mckalyn Leclerc asked that 100% of 5th and 6th grade students will have band or chorus? Yes
There was a question about teacher staffing at Doty - Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the teachers may opt to departmentalize more at Doty.
Zach Sullivan asked about Title 1 positions versus interventionist positions - Superintendent Dellinger-Pate clarified.
Chris McVeigh asked what is the difference between what is being proposed in the music program for the coming year and what is the cost, to consider replenishing them?

Superintendent Dellinger-Pate explained that the staffing is related to the number of classrooms. Grades 5 and 6 will be offered band or chorus but not general music. Chris McVeigh asked what would be the cost to replenish the general music position.

Gillian Fuqua spoke about some of the changes in classroom configuration at Doty School under this five school model.

Principals spoke about the fact that all elementary buildings will now have multi-age classrooms in this five elementary school model.

Daniel Keeney stated that the Ed Quality Committee earlier today had considered information about an articulated curriculum for science, and he noted that the way to implement this curriculum is in single grade classrooms.

Daniel Keeney asked whether there will be incremental work toward increasing preschool hours in our schools. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that with the current funding from the legislature, there will be no expansion. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated that before and after school care will be available at the preschool sites. Families incur some cost in before and after school care options. (There is a sliding fee scale)

Patrick Whelley asked for some clarification around weighted per pupil allocation of resources. He spoke in response to the community feedback regarding music programs - is there a possibility of looking for grants to continue these programs in a creative way.

Julia Hewitt asked whether we can see documentation about how centralized expenses were carefully analyzed, specifically, expenses that are not staffing/ student-facing. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the goal is to have documentation by the end of the week to provide more detail to the budget.

Chris McVeigh stated that if the leadership team feels that we do not have the resources needed at this time then he would like to consider reallocating money, for example from capital fund. He asked, if there are 8 Pre-K students at East Montpelier and 8 Pre-K students at Calais, then why was the decision made to move Calais students to East Montpelier. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we currently have a full program at East Montpelier and a full program at Berlin.

Alicia Lyford spoke about the preschool program at East Montpelier. The students will have greater access to nurse services and allied arts.

Alicia Lyford stated that administrators stay silent at board meetings when in fact they would like to correct misinformation, for example, during public comment.

Elizabeth Brown asked if we are still considering working with CVCC on preschool programming. Alicia Lyford stated that these discussions are still underway, and this is still the hope.

Elizabeth Brown asked, regarding special education, do special educators travel between school buildings according to need. Julia Pritchard stated that we are currently considering that, based on student need in each building. Currently, OT, SLP and school psychologist are shared so we are accustomed to that practice.

Flor Diaz Smith spoke about a request from the public that we read aloud email correspondence. Patrick Whelley asked what is our policy around this? Flor Diaz Smith stated that correspondence is read by the board but we do not have a practice of reading aloud email correspondence. She suggested reading the questions that arose in the email exchange in question. Zach Sullivan stated that the board spends a great deal of time receiving public comment but we also need to leave the time during the meeting to get the board's work completed. Daniel Keeney stated that since we assured the person via email that we would read it, then we are required to read it. Elizabeth Brown suggested that we as a board discuss what this looks like in the future; however in this case she agrees with Daniel Keeney that the agreement was that this email would be read aloud. Flor Diaz Smith read aloud the email exchange. Upon completion, Zach Sullivan brought up that this read aloud took over eight minutes of public comment time. He spoke about several other times during board meetings when one side is granted more speaking time than another and this is not appropriate/ fair/ equitable. Flor Diaz Smith stated that she had discussed this with counsel and this had been added to the agenda by board consensus as a discussion item, separate from public comment. Amelia Contrada stated that she thinks it was the right thing to do to read it aloud since that had been promised; however she agreed with Zach's sentiment about the need to find an equitable way to allow for public input. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that we are currently struggling with communicating, and that this is an example of that struggle to establish trusting communication in an equitable way with our community.

5.2. Planning for Annual Meeting: Patrick Whelley stated that we need to begin as soon as possible communicating with our communities. He stated that the Communications Committee has discussed how important it is to create the message, vet it by the appropriate entities, and share it with our communities as soon as possible. He referred to a pamphlet that had been shared by a community member, as an exemplar. Flor Diaz Smith reviewed what the plan was to share

information is. The Steering Committee will be posting weekly from now until Town Meeting Day. Patrick Whelley asked, is there a scenario where the budget fails and we come back to develop a new budget in a higher amount. The answer is no. He stated that it will be important to get this message out. "Voting 'no' means less of everything." Ursula Stanley stated that VSBA made a webinar available today that is relevant to this topic. Emphasis on telling the story and using graphics and the question of how we are going to use this money to meet our students' needs.

5.3. Accept FY 25 Audit Report: Ursula Stanley moved to accept the audited financial statements for the Washington Central Unified Union School District for the year ended June 30, 2025 from RHR Smith & Company. Seconded by Daniel Keeney. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that this is an audit that had ZERO findings/issues and he gave credit to Susanne Gann and her team. Flor Diaz Smith noted that the Finance Committee had met and reviewed this document. Daniel Keeney clarified that we have an audit conducted annually. Ursula Stanley stated that this is a very large body of work and she commended Susanne Gann and her team. **This motion carried unanimously.**

5.4. Ed Quality Post Secondary Outcomes Monitoring Report: Ursula Stanley reviewed this report which had been included in the board packet. She provided some of the highlights from the report.

Patrick Whelley responded that this report was fabulous and he thanked Ursula for her work on this.

Mckalyn Leclerc thanked Ursula for the report; she asked whether it is worth offering early college, given that this creates a scenario where students are not attending U-32. Steven Dellinger-Pate indicated that this is an offering by the state; our students have the option. She encourages us to continue to invest in things like dual enrollment and other ways to entice students to stay at U-32.

Daniel Keeney stated that there is a lot of anecdotal evidence at this time and that this is a broken program (early college), and should be discussed as a board. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that there is some interest in the legislature to address this.

Zach Sullivan spoke about some differences in gender data around early college participation and dual enrollment, etc.

Ursula Stanley stated that we are going to continue to look through the lens of equity, and consider trends.

Patrick Whelley wonders whether students are asking for opportunities in this realm that we are not offering. Ursula Stanley stated that she has heard students ask for more rigorous options. She noted that the dual enrollment statistics class had 31 students enrolled.

Patrick Whelley asked whether our grading system is a barrier for our students. Jen Miller-Arsenault stated that these concerns have been around for years, since we began proficiency based graduation requirements. The admissions offices at colleges understand this system and we continue to clarify this system.

Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that colleges look at the rigor of the program, overall.

6. **Policy Committee**
   - **6.1. First Readings:** Steven Dellinger-Pate introduced these three policies for first reading. These policies will move to second reading.
     - **6.1.1.** E20 Community Use of School Facilities
     - **6.1.2.** E21 Distribution of Non-School-Sponsored Literature in Schools
     - **6.1.3.** Cell Phone Policy

7. **Negotiations Committee Update:** Diane Nichols-Fleming provided the following summaries: Teachers: We reached an agreement on 7.5 (TA language), and began discussion around the system of donated sick time. We are requesting more information around the donated sick leave system, to inform next steps. ESP: We continued work on seniority, looked at language and vocabulary, and payment schedule. Talked about lunch and planning breaks.

8. **Personnel:**
   - **8.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Daniel Keeney moved to approve Request from Georgia Cody, U-32 Classroom Teacher, for an extended leave of absence for the 26-27 academic year. The request meets the requirements outlined in the Teachers Agreement. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.**

9. Consent Agenda:

9.1. Approve Minutes of 2.4.26: **Diane Nichols-Fleming moved to approve the minutes of February 4, 2026. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.**

9.2. Board Orders: Daniel Keeney moved to approve the board orders dated 1-20 to 1-21-26 and 1-22 to 2-18-26 in the amount of $666,976. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.

10. Future Agenda Items

10.1. U-32 Schedule: Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that students are currently reviewing and providing feedback to this schedule.

10.2. Twinfield Meeting: (Informal Conversation) (March 18th 5 p.m. here at U-32) Daniel Keeney asked whether we will reach out again to continue conversations with the Montpelier district given the latest development.

11. Board Reflections:

Patrick Whelley stated that he will stepping off the Career Center Board and would like board members to keep this in mind during board reorganization. Mckalyn Leclerc thanked the board for their difficult work and thanked the community for their impassioned involvement. She stated that she hopes that we can continue to move forward and work together as one district to provide what is best for all of our students. Amelia Contrada expressed appreciation for knowing the board members and their true concern for students and dedication to public education. She urged everyone to keep perspective and to remember that in the current environment we should keep our eye on our common purpose.

12. Public Comments: Time limit strictly enforced, see note:

A parent from East Montpelier stated that the three school model was the solution to many of the issues that were expressed tonight. Families who voted "no" are upset about lack of programming for their students. Families who voted "yes" are feeling robbed of a better opportunity for our students.

A community member stated that she intends to vote in favor of the budget; however she stated that there is a trust issue between the community and the board. Once you lose trust, it is hard to get it back. She stated that music and math go together. If we want to improve our math scores, music is one way to do that.

A community member stated, regarding the overall consensus that we are here to provide equity, each town has a different set of concerns; he spoke of Act 46 forcing mergers. He stated that the way to move forward is to recognize that we are five separate towns.

A Calais community member stated that we are going to be looking at a third straight year of considering closing Calais Elementary. He does not believe the board is being proactive enough in sharing information. Share the pros and the cons and be transparent. He stated that many people are not aware of what their votes meant. He stated that we need to talk to Montpelier and get ahead of it. Do it now.

A Calais community member thanked the board and administration for the work; he noted that the quality of questions from both the community and the board are considerate. He spoke about some petitions that have been received by the board. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the board will be discussing this during Executive Session.

A community member stated that people have different perspectives. He stated that the board has been so solid in their determination around three schools that they were not hearing the community. He stated that they are going to have a hard time passing the budget.

A Calais resident stated that he registered his child for preschool after the vote and that he does not know where to go from here given the memo regarding preschool; he is concerned for his son's education at this time.

Sonja Andrews stated that the people voted overwhelmingly to keep the small schools open and to keep their smallest residents close to home.

Lisa Hanna asked that the board work hard to sell this budget. We need to convince our communities that it is important to pass this budget. She asked the board to pay close attention to math instruction. She does not feel reassured about adequate math instruction for students at Doty after tonight's discussion.

Kathleen Bookchin expressed concern around math instruction at Doty. She feels we should have a math interventionist and music instruction at Doty. She stated regarding consolidation, when we have declining enrollment, why would we not merge our high school with a larger neighboring high school, keep preschools and a rigorous middle school building and have elementary, e.g. K-4 in other buildings.

Jennifer Bliss spoke about concerns with bus transportation for some of the youngest students. (long commutes) She suggested that the board not make decisions about moving preschool students until after enrollment is complete.

Cindy Gardner-Morse stated that moving preschoolers from Calais to East Montpelier right after the vote is not creating a good feeling for those families. She stated that there needs to be a closer look at how to share the money equitably if the board wants the budget to pass.

Lauralea Curavoo spoke about true transparency, not a narrative-driven transparency. She stated that honesty is a problem. The information needs to be shared in an unbiased way and with as much detail as possible. She asked why we do not share amongst all of the schools programs such as Artist in Residence.

Julia Hewitt read an anonymous statement expressing concern about the loss of preschool program in the Calais building, and asking for details and information about this decision making.

13. **Proposed Executive Session: Student Residency Requests: At 10:26, Patrick Whelley moved to go into Executive Session and to include our Superintendent, to discuss student residency requests. Seconded by Diane Nichols-Fleming, this motion carried unanimously. At 10:53, Ursula Stanley moved to come out of Executive Session. Seconded by Mckalyn Leclerc, and accepted unanimously. Diane Nichols-Fleming moved, based on existing criteria, the board accepts the superintendent's recommendation around student residency requests. Seconded by Daniel Keeney.** Discussion: Flor Diaz Smith read aloud the criteria. Zach Sullivan stated that the board received enough residency requests that it would have destabilized the school. Flor Diaz Smith indicated that the board accepts the superintendent's recommendation to not accept the residency requests. **This motion carried unanimously.**

14. **Proposed Executive Session: Superintendent Evaluation: At 7:26, Ursula Stanley moved to go into Executive Session, to include the board and Sandra Cameron from VSBA. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously. At 7:52, Mckalyn Leclerc moved to come out of Executive Session. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried unanimously. No action.**

15. **Adjourn: The board adjourned at 10:58 p.m. in a motion made by Ursula Stanley and seconded by Zach Sullivan.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary