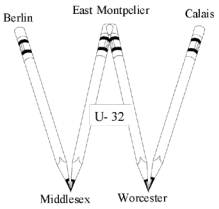
Washington Central Unified Union School District

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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WCUUSD
School Board Meeting
3.18.26
6:15-9:15 PM
(Virtual and In-Person)
U-32 Middle & High School Cafeteria
930 Gallison Hill Rd Montpelier, VT

Present: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate, Flor Diaz Smith, Daniel Keeney, Chris McVeigh, Patrick Whelley, Ursula Stanley, Elizabeth Brown, Zach Sullivan, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Julia Hewitt, Natasha Eckart, Dave Lowther, Marty McMahon, Andrew Boye, Karoline May, Michale Sherwin, Barry Bernstein, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Susanne Gann, Lisa Hanna, Allison Fayle, Alicia Lyford, Dell Waterhouse, Lisa Hanna, Marilyn Martin, Michael Sherwin, Anthony Hauser, Sonja Andrews, Danielle Mackay, April Davis, Maia Jones, Gillian Fuqua, Ainsley Burroughs, Lila Anderson, Jarrod Weiss, Marilyn Martin, Jillian, JP, Sonya Rhodes, Kathryn Saunders, Celia Guggemos, J Bohn, ORCA Media, Jenna Howard, Heidi Dimick, Honi Bean Barrett, Student Representatives: Elise O'Brien, Kathryn Saunders, Lei DeGroot

1. Call To Order:Diane Nichols-Fleming called the meeting to order at 6:19 p.m.
Diane Nichols-Fleming made a statement about the work of the board and the commitment to transparency and demonstrating the core values that have been created.

2. Welcome:

2.1. Adjustments to the Agenda: none

2.2. Reception of Guests

2.3. Public Comments: Diane Nichols-Fleming invited public comments. Kari Bradley thanked the board for its work and he encouraged the board to engage in discussion with our neighbors about the possibilities around a regional high school. He stated that only a board can lead that discussion. He offered his assistance in this work. Anthony Hauser spoke in support of keeping preschool at Calais. He spoke about the value of the younger students sharing the school space with students through grade six. He stated that Calais preschool has larger enrollment than East Montpelier preschool at this time. Natasha Eckart read a statement from seventh grade students at U32 in support of religious leave for staff.

3. Board Overview:

3.1. Board Orientation Handbook: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate had shared this resource with board members in advance. He presented a slide deck: *WCUUSD Board Orientation: Overview and Leadership Structures, March 2026.* He invited questions. Chris McVeigh asked, when the superintendent refers to the "Leadership Team" meetings, is he referring to COLT, as outlined here? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that, generally, yes; however there are times for example when only the elementary school principals are gathered.

4. Reports:

4.1. Superintendent Report: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate had provided a written report. He reviewed the principal hiring updates and noted that Gillian Fuqua is retiring at the end of this year, and that the plan is for hiring a Teaching Principal position at Doty. Patrick Whelley asked how a teaching principal position would work with respect to the negotiated contract. That is unknown at this time. Chris McVeigh suggested - can the position be split into two positions and therefore two positions offered. He asked, if a math teaching principal were not available, would it be considered to hire a part time principal and a part time math interventionist position. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that he has considered all of these scenarios. Daniel Keeney asked what are the weekly hour needs for both math instruction and for principal as it seems like these two together are more than a full time position. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that it is still early to say exactly what we want; he is talking with Gillian Fuqua about this and considering what staff and students need, and what format will work best. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she believed Doty used to have a teaching principal position; she wondered whether Roxbury School had a teaching principal position (they did not). Some discussion followed about student enrollment, including preschool enrollment. Ursula Stanley asked about some of the forms/ requirements for enrollment. Jen Arsenault-Miller spoke about enrollment, including projected Community Connections enrollment. Daniel Keeney asked if it is feasible to have a teacher teach preschool at East Montpelier for half a day and then Calais for half a day, with support from Community Connections. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the hours that are required for this (e.g. travel and duty free lunch break) are beyond those in the teaching contract. He also spoke about the challenges with staffing Community Connections with such a creative configuration. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the transportation information in his report is very preliminary at this time.

4.2. Principal Report: This report had been provided in advance. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate invited questions or comments. Flor Diaz Smith asked whether something can be shared about how we are addressing absenteeism. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate spoke briefly about chronic absenteeism and how we are trying to address this with Community Schools work. He stated that this will be something that the leadership team will be focusing on, and reporting more regularly to the board, e.g., reducing barriers to access - moving from compliance to connection, to address barriers. Flor Diaz Smith asked for more information on the use of Educlimber. Alicia Lyford shared the work that East Montpelier is doing to integrate student data with Educlimber. She shared that Ellen Dorsey is working with the staff on this initiative. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether there is a comparison with Educlimber to what had been used in the past. Alicia Lyford stated that Educlimber allows us to create forms within the platform. Marty McMahon asked whether absenteeism is increasing/decreasing over the past years. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that it is fairly stable at this time but that it is still high. There was a big increase upon returning to school after

COVID19. Daniel Keeney asked how we engage parents regarding chronic absenteeism. He asked whether this is something that the Climate Survey addresses. Patrick Whelley asked whether the definition of "chronic absenteeism" has changed. He stated that he believes there are some changes in practice about going to work "sick" or sending children to school "sick" and maybe it is time to redefine chronic absenteeism. Dave Lowther asked whether student learning outcomes are affected by chronic absenteeism. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that yes they are. He stated that we continue to explore barriers - and this is a larger conversation for a future board meeting; he noted that he would like to address this as part of his goal setting as well.

4.3. Student Report: The three student representatives shared student happenings, including sports events and Winooski Valley Music Festival.

4.4. Community Schools Report: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate shared some grant information that had recently been received; he will share with the board as planning gets underway. Marty McMahon asked what the amounts of the grants ($140K and $750K) and how are they managed/supervised. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the Community Schools Coordinator, among others, will be involved in the grant management. Some discussion followed around staffing for after school programs. The grants will allow funding for site coordinators and other adults for staffing the programs, and supporting U32 students who also staff the afterschool programs. U32 will be the recipient of the first grant; Berlin the recipient of the second grant. Chris McVeigh asked about sustainability for these grant funded initiatives. Lei DeGroot also asked about the sustainability of grant funded programs. Some discussion followed around the opportunity that this grant funding provides. Daniel Keeney spoke about the value of "Pilot Programs" such as this. He would like as a future agenda item, considering how the board can be more responsible in, and for, "enterprises" such as Community Connections. He spoke about his wish for a possible partnership with early childcare within the schools.

4.5. Humanity and Justice Coalition Report: Natasha Eckart shared that the coalition recently has considered positive feedback from professional development, and heard from teachers that they would like more resources. Some discussion about engaging student voice in the work of the coalition, e.g, creating student co-chairs.

4.6. Central Vermont Career Center Report: Andrew Boye stated that the next meeting is next Tuesday, and he will report to the board after. Flor Diaz Smith reported that the career center is continuing to explore solutions to space limitations, following the failed bond vote.

4.7. VSBA Report: Flor Diaz Smith had shared an update with the board. She shared some information about Act 73. She noted that the Vermont Superintendents Association had presented a proposal that is very thorough. She brought attention to the fact that PCB testing in Vermont has been halted. She also spoke about limiting education spending growth. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the bill related to spending threshold could have a huge effect on our budgeting.

5. Board Operations:

5.1. Budget Process Reflection: Steven Dellinger-Pate thanked Susanne Gann. He stated that this year we essentially created six budgets. He feels that we funded the schools in a way that was equitable to the needs of the students. Patrick Whelley shared feedback that it was difficult to know which budget draft was the most recent. He stated that it would be helpful when sharing information on the website, to make it very clear which is the most recent. Steven Dellinger-Pate asked, how can we inform and educate members of our

communities who want to understand at a deeper level. Marty McMahon stated that there were a lot of community members who worked very hard to make sure that the budget passed, especially in the towns that were facing a possible school closure. Zach Sullivan asked why we wouldn't put out a budget that showed how we would fund five schools in a way that we were really proud of. It felt like we had to choose. He wonders if it was the right decision to make it a priority to stay below the excess spending threshold. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she would like to help the community and the board better understand the work that has been put in since the budget passed as a five school model and to have a better understanding of what it looks like with multi-grade classrooms. That way we can be better informed when asking what are the needs going forward, have a better understanding of the instruction that is occurring now, and also understand the areas that are challenging because of our fiscal constraints. Flor Diaz Smith suggested using this opportunity to, this year more than ever, do a year round budget development and spend time with the community and with the board, defining our role as a board - what we do and what we don't do. At certain points in our budget planning we don't tend to listen to the experts in the room. How do we help everybody better understand our role? It would be great to spend some time in celebration of what we already do in our schools.

5.2. Communication and Community Engagement: Chris McVeigh spoke about public comment. He would like to discuss how we would like to see this structured and would like to set aside a good portion of time and engage in dialogue. He spoke about the difference between being spoken "at" and being spoken "with". He would like to see this as a future agenda item. Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that her hope is that opening dialogue at the first board meeting of the month will help to address this. Daniel Keeney suggested creating a one-page document: "ways the board might address your grievance…" So people can understand that what they are expecting might not be possible for us to deliver in that moment. Ursula Stanley would like to build in reflection on communication and community engagement to have an understanding of who we are hearing from, and who we are not hearing from, and what are the barriers. Dave Lowther suggested allowing for public comment during the meeting when the topic is addressed on the agenda. Flor Diaz Smith suggested considering more central office support related to board communication. Marty McMahon asked for clarification about Front Porch Forum postings. Diane Nichols-Fleming shared that the Steering Committee has one person from each town that posts to Front Porch Forum.

5.3. Board Learning: Diane Nichols-Fleming shared some board learning that she and Superintendent Dellinger-Pate have been planning. The May 6th board meeting will have some time set aside for that.

5.4. New board Mentors: Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether board members have had an opportunity to reach out to a mentor; she reminded them to do so.

5.5. Board Self-Evaluations: Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether board members had any questions or comments from the board self-evaluations that were shared. Ursula Stanley pointed out that the raw data shows 20 responses and there are only 15 board members. Diane Nichols-Fleming will follow up with Sashly.

5.6. PCB Class Action Lawsuit: Chris McVeigh suggested that we discuss this in Executive Session to discuss the details of the contract. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate explained this grievance briefly. Diane Nichols-Fleming asked for insight from the previous board chair as to how to address this. Flor Diaz Smith stated that because this is an action item on the

agenda it is appropriate to enter Executive Session if needed. Flor Diaz Smith noted that for this issue, if we discuss in public we put the board in harm's way**. For this reason, at 8:40, Flor Diaz Smith moved to into Executive Session and to include the Superintendent to discuss a contract issue. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously. Upon exiting Executive Session, Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize the superintendent to sign the contract, after clarification from legal counsel. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.**

6. Finance:

6.1. Award 2026 Combined Construction Project Contract: Ursula Stanley moved that the Board authorize a transfer of $573,821 from the general fund balance to the capital reserve fund for the completion of the 2026 Combined Construction Project. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. Ursula Stanley asked whether this cost increase is in line with others. Susanne Gann stated that the cost of things are going up exponentially at this time. Chris McVeigh stated that he has difficulty approving this if we are not considering a similar solution for math intervention at Doty. He stated that if we are not able to hire a math teaching principal at Doty then he will expect to come to the board and suggest a similar transfer of money to support math intervention at Doty. Lei DeGroot asked for some clarification about the possibility of putting off some of these projects. Susanne Gann responded to this issue. Flor Diaz Smith stated that this is good use of fund balance, and there is already some investment into this as part of the facilities plan; she noted that this does affect students directly. Ursula Stanley warned against the trend of putting things off/ deferring maintenance. Susanne Gann spoke about the capital improvement plan; she stated that we are going to have to carefully consider this, given the increases in costs. **This motion carried unanimously. Ursula Stanley moved that the Board award the contract for the project to E.F. Wall & Assoc. Inc. in an amount not to exceed $1,191,540. Seconded by Natasha Eckart. This motion carried with one abstention.**

7. Policy - Second Readings:

Chris McVeigh shared these policies, for second readings.

7.1. E20 Community Use of School Facilities: Zach Sullivan asked for clarification around "top priority" versus "first" in this policy in E20. He moved to amend the policy so Category 1 is first priority, category 2 is second priority, following with the numbers. Patrick Whelley seconded this amendment. This motion to amend carried unanimously. Chris McVeigh moved to adopt E20 as amended. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith, this motion carried unanimously.

7.2. E21 Distribution of Non-School-Sponsored Literature in Schools: Zach Sullivan moved to adopt this policy as presented. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. (This motion was not voted upon). Dave Lowther proposed amending the policy to include alignment with the H&JC. Natasha Eckart suggested verbiage that indicates "does not violate current policies." **Ursula Stanley moved to amend C8: to "that violates any of our district policies and resolutions." Seconded by Dave Lowther. (This motion was not voted upon)** Some discussion followed. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate reminded that this is non-school sponsored literature. He spoke about the requirement for equal access. Discussion followed around discriminating based on a person's viewpoint. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate suggested tabling this policy and checking with legal counsel. **Ursula Stanley moved to**

table this to a future meeting, pending legal counsel and bringing back to the Policy Committee. Seconded by Dave Lowther, this motion to table carried unanimously.

7.3. Cell Phone Policy: Chris McVeigh moved to adopt the Cell Phone Policy. Seconded by Flor Diaz Smith. Lei DeGroot asked whether this is aligned with the state requirements. It is. Ursula Stanley noted that if we don't adopt this, it becomes de facto on July 1st. She noted that the student counsel is currently working on procedure for this policy. **This motion carried unanimously.**

8. Negotiations:

Diane Nichols-Fleming reported that for teachers, we continued discussion about donated sick leave and began discussion about co-curricular salary schedule and stipends. For the joint meeting between teachers and ESP, we had a shared session and worked on shared issues around religious leave and safety.

9. Personnel:

9.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Flor Diaz Smith moved to approve the hiring of Emily Smith for U32 World Language Teacher. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously. Flor Diaz Smith moved to accept the resignation of Gillian Fuqua, with acknowledgement for all that Gillian has done especially over the past two years, Chris McVeigh seconded, and noted the grace she has shown under the task of managing a very difficult and trying situation, with openness and with students at the forefront. Superintendent Dellinger Pate expressed his appreciation for the great amount of joy that she brings to her role; she will be missed greatly**. This motion carried unanimously. Flor Diaz Smith moved to approve the hiring of Ann Chapman, long term substitute, U32 World Languages teacher. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.**

10. Consent Agenda:

10.1. Approve Minutes of 2.18.26 and 3.11.26: Patrick Whelley moved to approve the minutes from February 18 and March 11, 2026. Seconded by Natasha Eckart, this motion carried unanimously.

10.2. Board Orders: Ursula Stanley moved to approve the board orders dated February 13 2026 through March 18 2026, in the amount of $776,044.19. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.

11. Future Agenda Items:

- Superintendent Evaluation
- Voluntary Merger Possibilities and Conversations
- Exploring with community connections
- Revisiting public comments parameters
- Maximize resources across the district and extending to the district as a whole to meet student need, suggestion of a committee (Chris)
- Board self-evaluation

12. Board Reflections:

Zach Sullivan commended the seventh grade students for their advocacy and for how well they handled communication with the board. Flor Diaz Smith recognized the contributions that Kealy Sloan has made to the board. Marty McMahon appreciated the student representatives' participation tonight.

13. Public Comments: Time limit strictly enforced, see note
Julia Hewitt had received a request to read a letter from some Calais instructors, expressing concerns around preschool for Calais students and classroom configuration. She read this letter aloud.

14. Proposed Executive Session: Student Residency Requests:

At 9:38, Flor Diaz Smith moved to go into Executive Session, and to invite the superintendent, to discuss student residency requests. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously. At 9:53, David Lowther moved to come out of Executive Session. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried. Flor Diaz Smith moved to accept the recommendation of the superintendent for the residency request. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.

15. Adjourn:At 9:54, the board adjourned: motion by Chris McVeigh; seconded by Michelle Ksepka.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary