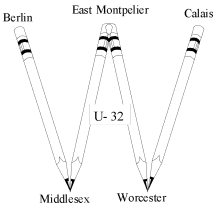
Washington Central Unified Union School District

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
5.20.26
6:15-9:15 PM
(In-Person & Virtual)

Present: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate, Flor Diaz Smith, Daniel Keeney, Chris McVeigh, Patrick Whelley, Ursula Stanley, Elizabeth Brown, Zach Sullivan, Diane Nichols-Fleming, Julia Hewitt, Marty McMahon, Michelle Ksepka, Andrew Boye, Jen Miller-Arsenault, Julia Pritchard, Deborah Bloom, Ainsley Burroughts, Alicia Lyford, Alison Byrnes, Allison Fayle, Celia Guggemos, Christine Fitch, David Delcore, Dell Waterhouse, Emi Harlow, Gillian Fuqua, Giuliana Jensen, Grant Flood, Greg Bove, Griffin Ludwig, Hannah Brown, Honi Bean Barrett, Jarrod Weiss, Jenna Howard, Jill, Julie M, Lisa LaPlante, Maia Stone, Matt, Michael Sherwin, ORCA, PJ McKinstry, Ross Lieblappen, Tiffany Cubbon, Timothy Tharp, Noah & Vanessa Weinstein, Adam Rosn, April Davis, Beth Stern, J Bohn, Jesse, Karoline May, Melissa Wheeler, Phoebe Stone, RND, Sonya Rhodes, Veronica Fair, Caitlin Howansky, John Lund, K.F., Lucia McCallum, Lisa Hanna, Katy Marshall, Beckah Mandell, Kathleen Bookchin, Heather Flood, Kate, Linda Gray, Teal Church, Jesse, Natasha, Pat Biggam, Kristen Freeman, Tammy Pecor, Sarah Rund,

1. **<u>Call To Order:</u> Diane Nichols-Fleming called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.**

2. **<u>Welcome:</u>** Diane Nichols-Fleming noted that the board has received communication from David Lowther that he will need to step down from the board effective immediately. She expressed appreciation.
   - **2.1. Adjustments to The Agenda:** Zach Sullivan noted that we will need to discuss a VSBA resolution, as we had indicated at the previous board meeting. Diane Nichols-Fleming also noted that there are three hires tonight; this is an update from the original board packet that had been shared. The Rumney/ Doty memo will be moved to a discussion item to allow for more time for discussion rather than administrator's report. **Julia Hewitt moved to accept this amendment to the agenda. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion carried unanimously.**
   - **2.2. Reception of Guests**

2.3. Public Comments- Q&A: Deborah Bloom read a public comment. As a resident of Worcester, she spoke about the importance of consistency and that the proposal on tonight's agenda allows for long term planning and consistency. She will submit her statement in writing. Katy Marshall, Middlesex, asked the board to pause the decision making and to carefully vet it with the community. Beckah Mandell spoke about the loss that she felt when we merged (e.g. loss of programming). She feels that this proposal addresses some of those losses. She spoke about the possible changes from the legislature and asked for everyone to push for equity for all of the children. Kathleen Bookchin stated that she feels she is back in the Calais gym in 2024. She stated that this model is the most shared and the most equitable. She supports moving forward with this model. Heather Flood stated that she is not in favor of sending her child to Doty; she does not feel there is much to offer her fifth grade student at Doty. Sarah Rund asked questions, particularly around students receiving special education services. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated that we are creating a FAQ document. Kate stated that this reconfiguration proposal fundamentally restructures the elementary model and that the timeline is rushed and did not honor Article 15. She also spoke about open meeting law regarding Executive Session and concerns with the board. She spoke about the need for transparency and public trust. Linda Gray asked how was this decision made, and when. She has not heard the board discuss this. She has concerns about open meeting law and misuse of Executive Session. Teal Church expressed concerns that the board makes such decisions without any public input. She asked what is the reason for creating such upheaval. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that according to our Articles of Agreement, we are not allowed to close a school but we are allowed to make decisions around moving students and grade levels. Teal spoke about the impact on children. Jesse, Middlesex resident, expressed concerns, many of them being pragmatic and financial. This proposal seems like an illogical waste of time for resources. He stated that, being at both community forums, there is no clear plan in place for doing this. He expressed concerns around making these decisions in the dark. He feels that this plan has been created as a bandaid. Concerns around lack of planning, lack of services, not meeting the needs of children. Natasha, Middlesex resident, had shared written correspondence. This reconfiguration involves fundamental changes; she believes that a board level discussion is warranted and this did not happen. She stated that this board is not governing *with* the community, it is governing *over* it. Grant Flood stated that this feels like COVID19 all over again. There is no plan in place. He spoke about administrative staff, nursing staff, special education services, and transportation. He stated that he feels that the community's questions are not being answered. Pat Biggam, East Montpelier commented on the policy change. He stated that there is a dispute about what is the best interest of the students. The process in which this was

implemented was wrong and undemocratic, and under Article 15 in the Articles of Agreement, the district is supposed to allow for timely input from the community. He shared that Article 15 was added because community members wanted to have some say in the matters. He requested that the board put this decision on hold and go through a thorough process. Kristen Freeman, Middlesex parent, spoke about the impact that this last minute change will have on the family. She stated that for children this causes loss and uncertainty. She stated that families should be involved in this discussion. She spoke about the challenges that this rising fifth grade staff from Rumney has already faced. Timothy, Middlesex parent, stated that this is a whiplash decision and is creating emotional damage to his children. Two classes of pre-puberty, COVID19 children being moved from their "safe place." Hannah Brown urged the board to remain committed to this new configuration. Worcester is a vibrant community and Doty is a wonderful school. Kathleen Bookchin spoke about what Doty offers and spoke in support of this shared plan.

3. **<u>Reports:</u>**
   - **3.1. Superintendent Report/Central Office Leadership Team (COLT) Report:** Superintendent Dellinger-Pate had provided a written report. He had included class enrollment for 2026-2027. Chris McVeigh asked for some clarification around enrollment and staff configuration. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate shared some of the legislative happenings, including the "threshold" for spending. He spoke about declining enrollment causing an increase in per pupil spending. Chris McVeigh asked whether the changes in medicaid funding will result in an increase in revenue. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we are not sure at this time but we do not expect a significant change in medicaid funding.
   - **3.2. Rumney/Doty Memo (moved to Board Operations)**
   - **3.3. Principal Report:** Diane Nichols-Fleming invited feedback or questions from board members regarding the Principal Report. Last student day is June 17 (half day); teachers: June 18th is In Service. Ursula Stanley stated that the board usually receives a memo to this effect and that the board approves it; this usually happens at the time that the calendar is provided to the board. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate will follow up.
   - **3.4. Student Report (none present tonight)**
   - **3.5. Community Schools Report:** Diane Nichols-Fleming asked whether there is a timeline on the exploration of school based health offerings as noted in the report. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that this exploration is just now underway and there is no timeline in mind yet.
   - **3.6. Humanity and Justice Coalition Report:** Natasha Eckart had provided a written report to Diane Nichols-Fleming who read this aloud to the board. Student co-chairs have been established for the coalition. Additionally, the work of Shelley Vermilya

was noted and appreciated. Flor Diaz Smith suggested that the board invite Shelley Vermilya to the June board meeting.

3.7. Central Vermont Career Center Report: Diane Nichols-Fleming read aloud Andrew's report to the board, particularly around the potential of building a satellite campus on the U32 grounds. Chris McVeigh asked whether there have been discussions in the past about U32 as a possible site, and is there information to share as the plan moves forward. He asked whether there should be some preliminary discussion from the perspective of U32, letting them know what would work for us, rather than simply responding to their proposals. Daniel Keeney agreed that it would make sense to have preliminary discussions and he was envisioning a future when U32 is considered expanding its footprint on the site. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate spoke about student enrollment. Zach Sullivan spoke about the "chatter" about larger regional high schools and he does not think it is unreasonable to think about a future when this building is at capacity. Flor Diaz Smith stated that if we think about our core values, how can we partner to provide for all of the students?

3.8. VSBA Report: Flor Diaz Smith had provided a VSBA report.

4. **<u>Board Operations:</u>**

4.1. **Communication Committee Update:** Diane Nichols-Fleming provided a brief update about the Communication Committee.

4.2. **Resolution:** Zach Sullivan spoke about the impact of early college enrollment. He spoke about the possibility of limiting or eliminating the early college program and advancing options for students to receive college credits (e.g. dual enrollment) while not "hollowing out" the senior class. He reviewed the drafted resolution. He asked for feedback from the board, as he would ask for the board to take action at the next board meeting. Marty McMahon expressed that early college can be a great opportunity but that dual enrollment and advanced placement courses can be options as well. If this option is not going to continue, how do we meet the needs of students and encourage them to stay here and make their senior year meaningful. Ursula Stanley asked whether there is an option to ask for a study about AP courses, dual enrollment, collect data from the entire state and then write a future resolution. Patrick Whelley asked can we unilaterally opt out of early college? (yes) Do all of the colleges that our students go to allow for transferring credits to others? Lisa LaPlante stated that things are changing all the time but that many colleges will not accept credits under certain conditions (for example if a high school teacher teaches it, regardless of whether they are considered adjunct faculty). She supports the idea of a statewide study to see what the impact is, and to make a more informed decision. Patrick Whelley stated that he is sensitive to removing opportunities for students, even if students do not get credit, there may be other values. He also noted that in our case there is a gender gap in students who participate. Daniel Keeney suggested that we keep an active voice in the resolution. Ursula Stanley suggested, in light of this conversation, she would like to expand the study to include all flexible pathways and to consider equitability/ removing barriers for students to experience these opportunities. Daniel Keeney asked Lisa LaPlante to communicate directly

with the committee so that they can continue to fine tune a resolution that the board will support.

4.3. Rumney/ Doty Memo: Superintendent Dellinger-Pate invited questions or comments from board members. Marty McMahon suggested that this report seems like there is a "full stop" and he asked what was the process to arrive here. Chris McVeigh stated that he had attended a forum and he is hopeful that the logistics of the impact on families and their ability to get to work will be considered. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that he is hearing a theme of concerns around: Transportation, supervision of students before and after school, community connections programs for extended day opportunities. These logistics will be explained in the FAQ document. Zach Sullivan asked about the transportation logistics and about the idea that each school will be considered a "cluster stop." Ursula Stanley stated that we need to answer the questions from parents about IEPs and special services. Steven Dellinger-Pate stated that whatever services are in a student's IEP will be provided. He explained that this scenario will have special educators providing services to specific grade levels and will allow for more specialization. Patrick Whelley stated that what he likes about the plan is the fact that we are looking at consistency for a few years. We keep hearing from families that this is important to them. He asked about planning for students' feeling of belonging in their buildings. He has concern with the answer that this is something that we will work on over the summer. Can there be a concerted effort to have a group of people to work on the "belonging" factor for students who will be facing big changes. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that staff members who will be moving have additional days built into their contracts. He shared the vision that this will be two schools, two communities, one learning environment. In some cases the adults that the students will see in both locations are the same (e.g. nurse, art teacher). Teachers will also be together during Wednesday PD time, alternating between schools, so there are more opportunities for grade-alike sharing. Elizabeth Brown asked about shared leadership across two schools - what is the plan for supervision when the administrator is not on one of the campuses. When can families be provided more information? Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we already have a mechanism for Principal Designees. However, the level of detail of a daily plan for a shared administrator between two schools will probably not be available until later this summer. Elizabeth Brown spoke regarding transition. This is a very tight timeline. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that some of the time together at the end of this school year will be spent on working toward this transition. Ursula Stanley asked whether there will be an opportunity for teachers to consider assessment data together. Chris McVeigh stated that we should clarify - we have heard an ask that this process be paused. He also spoke about the feedback we have heard about lack of trust and faith in the process. He would want the board to pledge that for future grade movement, a decision will not be made before community input has been considered. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that this is a decision that is conferred on administration. If the board would like to change that, then a policy would address that. More discussion followed around Article 15. Zach Sullivan stated that, of the options we have and the constraints we are under, this seems like the best option for the students. He worries that under the current configuration and enrollment, the

district is fundamentally unstable and he does not think it is wise to make a pledge that this won't happen. Daniel Keeney spoke about the philosophical question of the line between decisions made by administrators and decisions made by the board. Throughout the configuration conversations we have iterated and reiterated that grade configuration between school buildings is going to happen. Flor Diaz Smith spoke about the role of the board. We have spent the last three years creating very specific criteria. Yes this feels last minute but we are in a situation that has created this last minute urgency. She spoke about equity. Ensure that all of our students have access to support and the learning environment to succeed. She stated that what we are doing right now is aligned with our responsibilities as board members. We have to think holistically about what is best for all of our students. Ursula Stanley acknowledged that this news was delivered very late in the year and felt sudden, as this configuration had not been shared until this date. She asked Superintendent Dellinger-Pate to share the timeline that led to this. He spoke about the evolution of the plan after the community vote. He stated that the idea of teaching principal at Doty, following the announcement of retirement, was not going to be feasible. This model is the best to create grade level instruction, a cohort of students, and supervision/evaluation of staff. He reminded the board that we are still in negotiations with teachers and support staff. Every opportunity that we have had to reduce staff as possible, e.g. by attrition, has been taken advantage of. Ursula Stanley stated that this plan provides classroom size stability and classroom configuration stability. All of the data that led to this decision is data that has been shared and considered. She supports this because it provides some stability over the course of at least a few years. Elizabeth Brown stated that she does feel that this plan was responsive to the situation that we found ourselves in, and to do our best for all of the students in our district. We need to stabilize our district, and this can be the beginning of some creative solutions. She indicated that this was not a reactive response, but a very thoughtful solution. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate indicated that the reason this vision does not go beyond three years is that we have no idea what education in Vermont is going to look like in three years, based on the legislative activity at the moment. Patrick Whelley stated that having a stable plan for three years will allow us to predict future changes more thoughtfully and to have more time to spend on the long term planning. Daniel Keeney asked for school counselor staffing level under this configuration. 1.8 FTE between the schools, Rumney and Doty. Daniel Keeney stated that the opportunity, for example as discussed re: special education, to have more specialized and smaller grade level case loads, is a positive consideration. Chris McVeigh stated that involving the community in "getting to yes" is important. He believes that inviting the community into the discussion earlier would have been preferable. Diane Nichols-Fleming reiterated from the board, based on the discussion tonight, she is not hearing the board ask the administration to pause this plan. Ursula Stanley stated that she would recommend the board supporting the administration's decision; that is not the decision of the board to make. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate reminded the board that there is no such action on the agenda for tonight.

5. **Finance Committee:**

5.1. **Authorize Superintendent to award FY 27 Contracts: Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize the Superintendent to award contracts for propane, #2 fuel oil, wood chips and wood pellets on behalf of Washington Central Unified Union School District (WCUUSD) for Fiscal Year 2026-27. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.**

5.2. **Accept Annual Financial Management Questionnaire - Flor Diaz Smith moved to accept the annual financial management questionnaire prepared by the Business Administrator and included in the Board packet. Seconded by Zach Sullivan, this motion carried unanimously.**

5.3. **Authorize Superintendent to Sign Contracts and Accept Grants for WCUUSD for FY 27 - Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize the appointed Superintendent to sign all contracts and accept grants on behalf of Washington Central Unified Union School District effective throughout FY 2026 - 2027. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka, this motion carried unanimously.**

5.4. **Blanket Authorization for Board Warrants / Check Orders for FY 27 - Flor Diaz Smith moved to authorize the Blanket Authorization for Board Warrants (included in packet) effective throughout FY 2026-27. Seconded by Daniel Keeney, this motion carried unanimously.**

5.5. **Review Capital Improvement Project Plan and Multi-year Budget - Flor Diaz Smithmoved to approve the revised Multi-year Capital Improvement Plan, Budget and Timeline and authorize the use of capital reserve funds, not to exceed $50,000, to complete the necessary scope and budget and develop bid documents for the FY 2027-28 approved capital improvement projects totaling $496,878. Seconded by Ursula Stanley.** Discussion: Daniel Keeney asked for clarification around use of fund balance over the course of years. Susanne Gann spoke about prioritizing projects. Ursula Stanley asked, when considering amounts to put into the capital fund, are we thinking beyond this multi-year plan? Susanne Gann stated that we are always looking at future years. **This motion carried unanimously.**

6. **<u>Policy Committee:</u>**

6.1. Renew C48: Foreign Exchange Students: Chris McVeigh stated that this policy as it currently is written works, so this is a renewal. This is a first reading for the board. Patrick Whelley asked how this policy compares to others; does ours exclude any students, based on its current verbiage. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate will follow up. Daniel Keeney expressed concern around the specificity of this policy; it feels very "in the weeds" for the board. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that we have used this policy in the past.

6.2. Rescind C20: Student Conduct & Discipline: Chris McVeigh explained that the board has approved C15 at a past meeting and needs to rescind this one, which C15 replaces.**Patrick Whelley moved to rescind Policy C20. Seconded by Elizabeth Brown, this motion carried unanimously.**

6.3. Renew B8: Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students: Chris McVeigh introduced this policy. This is a first reading for the board. Flor Diaz Smith stated that this policy is inconsistent with Act 72 and will need to be updated at some point.

7. **Ed Quality Committee:**
   7.1. **2026 Student Learning Outcomes:** Ursula Stanley had provided a summary document to the board. Daniel Keeney asked what is the date of the meeting where this information was presented, and is the meeting recorded so that people are able to watch? (December 2025 there is a video recording; Feb 2026 there is not a recording) He also asked Jen Miller Arsenault whether she feels there are needs of which the board should be aware, to affect student outcomes based on data. She spoke about ongoing professional development around: Executive Functioning, UDL, Restorative Practice, Responsive Classroom. Marty McMahon asked whether ECO is offered and funded equitably across the district. Superintendent Dellinger-Pate stated that the way it is done is not the same across all of the schools. This is something that we currently do not have aligned and are working toward. Some discussion followed around juniors taking the science assessment during the same time period when some are taking AP exams. Ursula Stanley asked the board to consider: are students learning and thriving and what do you see to support that? Zach Sullivan - closing of gaps in social emotional learning over the grades. Ursula Stanley asked board members whether the format of this report is accessible and helpful to making informed decisions as a board. Patrick Whelley suggested, on charts, showing a number of students for each bar. Daniel Keeney stated that, at the board level, whether the digestion of slides is not the best use of our time? He stated that the narration in the report reads very well and is informative. Marty McMahon indicated that he found the charts to be helpful. Zach Sullivan suggested sharing fewer graphs, but having those that are shared present a great deal of information. Ursula Stanley stated that the committee had discussed future reports with a different format: executive summary (how are we doing? What are we doing?) at the beginning, and to create a 2 page summary document.

8. **Negotiations:** Diane Nichols-Fleming shared: Teachers: Reviewed and signed safety language TA. Proposed procedural changes for donated sick leave; will continue conversations through LMC. Request for draft of language around stipend and per diem pay. ESP: discussed potential TAs to be signed next time and began wage and schedule conversation.

9. **Personnel :**

9.1. Approve New Teachers, Resignations, Leave of Absence, and Changes in FTE: Zach Sullivan moved to approve the following hires: Jarrod Weiss – U-32 Assistant Principal; Karoline May – Principal Doty/Rumney; Bonnie Gadapee – U-32 Community & Work-Based Learning Coordinator. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka. Zach Sullivan agreed to withdraw the motion, with Michelle Ksepka in agreement. Zach Sullivan moved to approve the following hire: Jarrod Weiss, U32 Assistant Principal. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka. Marty McMahon that he has heard the superintendent say that we are reducing staff using attrition when possible and he does not see the impetus for needing this position and for this reason he will not support this action. Some discussion followed about the RISE position remaining vacant. **A vote was called; this motion carried with one vote of "nay." Zach Sullivan moved to approve the following hires: Karoline May – Principal Doty/Rumney; Bonnie Gadapee – U-32 Community & Work-Based Learning Coordinator. Seconded by Michelle Ksepka. This motion carried unanimously. Zach Sullivan moved to accept the resignation of Steven Ushakov – U-32 Classroom Teacher (Math). Seconded by Ursula Stanley, with appreciation for his work. This motion carried unanimously.**

10. **Consent Agenda:**

10.1. Approve Minutes of 4.15.26 (pg. 89) and 5.6.26 (pg. 96): Patrick Whelley moved to approve the minutes of April 15 and May 6, 2026. Seconded by Chris McVeigh. Correction of spelling: "Mele" should be "Mayla" - this motion carried with noted edit.

10.2. Board Orders: Chris McVeigh moved to approve the board orders in the total amount of $1,148,283.83. Seconded by Elizabeth Brown; this motion carried unanimously.

11. **Future Agenda Items:**

- Board vacancies
- Elizabeth Brown asked how do we determine what order to address future agenda items? Diane Nichols-Fleming shared that the Steering Committee does that planning. She shared that the Steering Committee reviews reports to the board and aligns with the Work Plan to create agendas.
- Definitive process for when we are moving students between buildings and how we include the community in discussing that process/coming to a decision.

12. **<u>Board Reflections:</u>** Diane Nichols-Fleming stated that she has heard board input that they would like to have a more condensed time frame for board meetings. She used a timer for herself tonight with that in mind but she felt that the discussion for tonight's meeting needed to have the time that was allotted, and that it had been useful.

13. **<u>Public Comments:</u>** Tammy Pecor stated that she does not approve of the plan for configuration that was presented. She feels it is like a picture, half-painted. She does not think the children should be asked to leave their schools. It should not be an option. All of it adds stress to the families. Dell Waterhouse stated working on appreciating some of the possibilities that will come with this new configuration. She spoke about the tradition of Doty's all school play which ended during COVID19; she also spoke of the active Historical Association in Worcester and she spoke about the possibility of collaborating with the Middlesex Historical Association. She hopes the communities will come to appreciate the wonderful vibrant community of Worcester. Sarah Rund asked the board to not move forward with this proposal. She reiterated concerns and expressed that the board has a legal and moral obligation to support transition especially for students with IEPs. She spoke about damage to community relationships due to how this process was handled. She asked for the research that has supported this change. Another community member stated that this is a reactive plan which has turned into an emergency because it was made into one. Another community spoke about the concept of "equity." What is equitable about moving two classes and having other classes having no impact. She spoke about "consistency" - this is not a consistent plan, this is a "roll the dice and see what happens" situation.

14. **<u>Proposed Executive Session: Student Residency Request:</u> Dan Keeney moved at 9:35 to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing a student residency request, and to include the superintendent. Seconded by Elizabeth Brown, this motion carried unanimously. The board left Executive Session by unanimous consensus at 9:55. Daniel Keeney moved that the board accept the administration's recommendation regarding the student resident exemption request. Seconded by Patrick Whelley, this motion passed by voice vote.**

15. **<u>Proposed Executive Session: Superintendent Evaluation Goals:</u> At 9:56, Daniel Keeney moved to enter Executive Session for the purposes of considering Superintendent Evaluation Goals, and to include the superintendent. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously. The board left Executive Session at 10:07 by unanimous consensus. Daniel Keeney moved to accept the Superintendent Evaluation Goals. Seconded by Ursula Stanley, this motion carried unanimously.** Superintendent Dellinger-Pate noted that these goals will now be posted publicly.

16. <u>Adjourn:</u> The board adjourned at 10:08 p.m. Motion by Ursula Stanley, seconded by Zach Sullivan, carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary
and Daniel Keeney, Board Clerk