Materials for 3.2 Facilitated Discussion in the Community

Attached is a proposal from The Creative Discourse Group. I'd like to share some context about how this proposal came forward and why I believe it's worthy of the board's consideration.

Recently we have heard concerns about trust and communication between the board and members of our community. We have also heard a strong desire for the chance to discuss our collective needs around the future of our schools and the essentials for the instruction of our children.

As I considered how to best support these important conversations, I explored the possibility of enlisting the help of an external facilitator. Based on her work with the Commission on the Future of Public Education and her experience facilitating thoughtful community dialogue, Sue McCormack of The Creative Discourse Group came highly recommended.

As we begin this next phase of community engagement, we have immediate needs for the facilitation of our community meetings, as well as the possibility of continued support as our work evolves. The Creative Discourse Group has the skill level and the external view that would be beneficial for all at this time.

The attached proposal outlines two possible timelines, depending on the outcome of the vote on the proposed amendment to the Articles of Agreement. At Wednesday's meeting, the board will have the chance to discuss this proposal and decide whether this is the right approach for moving forward.

I apologize for not being able to provide these materials earlier, but the holiday and travel created some unavoidable delays. Thanks for taking the time to review the proposal before our meeting.

THE
CREATIVE DISCOURSE
GROUP

Community Engagement Support for Washington Central Unified School District

Dear Diane -

It was good to talk with you recently. As we discussed, WCUUSD is navigating several complex governance and community engagement challenges following a series of difficult decisions over the past several years. These experiences have contributed to strained relationships within the community while also creating an opportunity to strengthen trust through more authentic engagement.

We appreciate the Board's desire to begin engaging differently as it considers the recent petition to amend the Articles of Agreement and prepares for a special vote. We are pleased to submit this proposal to support both the district's immediate engagement needs and the Board's longer-term efforts to strengthen governance and community relationships.

Because the timing of the special meeting is still uncertain, we have outlined two possible approaches. Option A assumes the vote will occur on August 11, 2026. Option B assumes the vote will occur sometime in September.

Best, Sue & Nadia

THE **CREATIVE DISCOURSE** GROUP

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PROPOSED APPROACH

Purpose

- To help WCUUSD strengthen community trust by modeling authentic public engagement around the proposed amendment to WCUUSD's Articles of Agreement.
- To build the Board's capacity for effective governance and community engagement.

In our view, rebuilding trust requires creating opportunities for community members to understand the issues, hear differing perspectives, ask questions, and provide meaningful feedback. It also requires helping the Board strengthen its own engagement practices so community members have greater clarity about how decisions are made and how their voices can inform future decisions.

OPTION A

(Assumes a vote will occur on August 11, 2026)

Given the compressed timeline, we recommend focusing on a small number of high-impact activities that model authentic engagement while preparing the community for the upcoming vote.

Phase 1: Prior to the Vote

1. Preparation with Board members

One hour virtual meeting with Board members to

- Clarify the purpose and desired outcomes of the community conversation (see below)
- Review meeting design and facilitation approach
- Develop an outreach strategy to encourage broad participation
- Ensure clarity regarding what decisions are and are not being made

2. Community Conversation

Facilitate a structured two hour community dialogue that

- Provides a clear explanation of the proposed amendment and voting process
- Creates opportunities for residents to discuss potential implications, benefits and trade-offs in small groups
- Surfaces questions, concerns, and perspectives for Board consideration
- Invites participants to share ideas for strengthening trust and community engagement moving forward

Phase 2: Following the Vote

3. Board Retreat

Facilitate a half day Board retreat to:

- Reflect on lessons learned from the community conversation and vote
- Clarify Board roles and responsibilities
- Strengthen the Board's capacity for transparent decision-making and authentic community engagement
- Identify priorities and next steps as the district enters the upcoming budgeting process

OPTION B

(Assumes a vote will happen in September, 2026)

If the vote occurs later in the fall, the additional time provides an opportunity for the Board to clarify its goals and engagement approach before meeting with the broader community.

1. Board Retreat

Facilitate a half day retreat to:

- Clarify Board roles and responsibilities
- Strengthen the Board's capacity for transparent decision-making and authentic community engagement
- Establish goals for the community engagement process leading up to the vote

2. Community Conversation

Facilitate a structured two hour community dialogue that:

- Provides a clear explanation of the proposed amendment and voting process
- Creates opportunities for residents to discuss potential implications and trade-offs in small groups
- Surfaces questions, concerns, and perspectives for Board consideration
- Invites participants to share ideas for strengthening trust and community engagement moving forward

3. Community Survey

Develop and administer a brief community survey to:

- Gather feedback following the community conversation
- Better understand residents' hopes and priorities for future Board engagement
- Inform next steps following the vote

4. Board Debrief

Present survey findings and facilitate a ninety minute follow up discussion about:

- Key community themes
- Implications for future engagement
- Recommendations for strengthening Board-community relationships moving forward

PRICING

Cost for Option A: $5,800 (includes planning, facilitation, preparation, and follow-up)

Cost for Option B: $10,000 (includes planning, facilitation, survey development and analysis, preparation, and follow-up)

COMPANY INFORMATION

The Creative Discourse Group, LLC (TCDG), founded in 2021 and based in Burlington, Vermont, is a Black, LGBTQ+, woman-owned certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), co-founded by Dr. Nadia DuBose and Susan McCormack. Our team consists of 17 Associates with diverse identities, life experiences, and expertise in training, equity, diversity, inclusion, strategic planning, equitable community engagement, organizational change, and systems transformation. We lead both short-term projects and multi-year initiatives and possess the deep expertise to support equity-focused communication and engagement initiatives. TCDG offers a range of services, including strategic consultation, communication and engagement strategies, landscape analysis, equity assessments, executive coaching, and in-person or virtual training, workshops, and retreats.

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Dr. Nadia DuBose (she/her) | Co-Founder + Principal

Dr. Nadia A. DuBose is an equity-centered strategist, applied researcher, and educator whose work advances systems-level change through community-engaged inquiry and qualitative research. She holds a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership and Policy and specializes in methodologies that center lived experience as critical data for informing policy and practice. Her work challenges traditional notions of validity and expands how evidence is defined within decision-making processes. Click here for Nadia's CV.



Sue McCormack (she/her) | Co-Founder + Principal

Susan McCormack is a civic engagement and racial equity strategist with over 30 years of experience designing and facilitating inclusive, dialogue-based processes. She is the lead architect of TCDG's Equitable Community Engagement Framework, which supports equitable, transparent, and power-conscious public engagement across Vermont and beyond. Sue has worked with municipalities, coalitions, and state agencies to build authentic partnerships with communities historically excluded from decision-making. Her work is grounded in relational, reparative approaches that center shared power and accountability. Click here for Sue's resume.