



School Board News -- December 2021

As we draw closer to the end of the calendar year, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of our educators and administrators to carry out the ACSD's mission into a third COVID-focused academic year. The heart, grit, and resilience of the professionals who show up everyday to guide and teach our youth are unsurpassed, and for that I am truly grateful. Please consider taking a moment to thank an educator in our community -- whether with a note, an email, or even a quick "thank you" the next time you see them in the grocery store line. Their work is so important to our collective success, and our acknowledgement means a lot.

This year the Board has been largely focused on supporting the District's efforts with COVID recovery planning, navigating the uncharted waters of Ripton's efforts to withdraw from the District, and filling key leadership positions as educators prepared for another year of pandemic-impacted instruction. Adding to the challenges are significant uncertainties around how the State will restructure its education funding formula, and the impact of proposed changes to pupil weighting factors on the ACSD's long-term financial outlook. We are grateful for Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding in the short term, and are keeping a close eye on the State's progress toward a final funding formula. In the meantime, the Board continues to focus on its essential work, and I am pleased to share some of its recent accomplishments:

- Thanks to the work of the Policy and Governance Committee, the Board has adopted several policies around personnel recruitment and background checks, the use of security cameras in schools, ensuring access to education and services for homeless students, and raising flags on school grounds, among other topics. The complete list of ACSD Policies and Procedures can be found [here](#).
- On October 11, 2021, the Board voted to raise the Black Lives Matter flag on the high school government flagpole until the end of the school year, in solidarity with the MUHS Student Coalition on Human Rights. A video of the flag-raising can be viewed [here](#).
- The Negotiations Committee successfully negotiated a 3-year contract for ACSD teachers; the ACSD/ACEA agreement was ratified by the full Board on October 25, 2021.
- The Communications and Engagement Committee has updated and reorganized several pages of the [Board's website](#), and has drafted a plan to streamline and improve routine communications with the ACSD community.
- The Finance Committee has welcomed ACSD's new Business Manager, Logan Price, and is working with the administration on a budget for the next fiscal year that will maintain current programs and address staffing needs at MUMS and elsewhere.
- The Facilities Committee has resumed its work on the Facilities Master Plan -- an update from the committee follows.

Be well,
Mary Cullinane, Chairperson, ACSD Board



Update From the ACSD Board Facilities Committee:

Dear Community,

As you know, the ACSD Board paused its Facilities Master Planning (FMP) process in January 2021 in light of operational challenges caused by the pandemic and the strain it was placing on ACSD. With significant student needs requiring all available resources, it made sense to focus our energies as a community on those needs.

Much has happened during this calendar year. The COVID variant continues to impact our learning environment, the timeline for Ripton's withdrawal from the District has been extended, and the State of Vermont has paused the spending threshold. The State has yet to finalize its pupil weighting study and proposed changes to its education funding system -- all of which underscore the uncertainty clouding the Board's planning efforts. As the Facilities Committee resumes its work to identify the best long-term educational footprint for the District, we want to update the community on how these factors will influence the final plan.

Status of the FMP

The investigative work of the FMP has been exhaustive, and is summarized in "[Our Facilities Master Plan Journey](#)" on the ACSD website. The Facilities Committee has analyzed information on the District's demographic and enrollment forecasts, the capacity and condition of facilities, community feedback, and a host of other variables. In addition to concerns about the long-term sustainability of our current educational footprint, the FMP process has identified a number of equity issues between some of our schools that require further investigation.

The Board has examined potential options through the lenses of student success, equity, and financial responsibility. **However, given current uncertainty around the State's new education funding formula and how updated pupil weighting factors will impact the ACSD's budget, we do not have enough clarity around the District's financial forecast to support any specific recommendations regarding the exact configuration of elementary schools at this time.** As a result, the final FMP will not be as prescriptive as some may have anticipated. But the equity concerns identified during the FMP process will be probed further in the upcoming Strategic Plan for Equity. Addressing those issues will be an integral part of designing the District's instructional footprint.

Moving Forward

The Facilities Committee is currently working to complete the FMP and examine the final elements in the process, including identification of facility investment priorities, solidifying a vision for sustainability, and outlining some guiding principles for bonding. The Committee anticipates completion of the plan by the end of 2021, and will issue a final FMP Report shortly thereafter.

The final report will provide a summary of the Board's findings from data compiled and analyzed during the FMP process. It will outline the Board's values and priorities regarding student equity, guiding principles for a model school, sustainability and energy efficiency, and responsible investment in shared resources to provide the programming and services that all ACSD students deserve. The FMP will serve as a supporting document for implementing the District's Strategic Plan for Equity, so that when circumstances clarify the ACSD's financial forecast, the Board can use the plan to guide efficient decision making about its resources.



As always, the Board welcomes the community’s involvement in this important process, and invites both written feedback through [email](#) and public comments during our Board and Committee meetings. Dates and agendas for upcoming meetings can be found below.

Sincerely,
ACSD Facilities Committee

Upcoming Meetings

Board and Committee meeting dates, materials, and virtual links can be found on the Board and Committee Meetings page on our website at www.acsdvt.org/schoolboard.

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| December 13, 2021 | 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. | ASCD Board Meeting |
| December 15, 2021 | Noon - 1:00 p.m. | Facilities Committee Meeting |
| December 15, 2021 | 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. | Policy and Governance Committee Meeting |
| December 17, 2021 | Noon - 1:00 p.m. | Communications & Engagement Committee Meeting |
| December 20, 2021 | 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. | ACSD Board Meeting |