

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**  
**Peterborough, New Hampshire**

**CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD**

**School Board District**

**Reconfiguration/Consolidation Data Work Session**

**SAU BOARD ROOM**

**NO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**Wednesday, November 15, 2023**

**9:00 a.m.**

**MINUTES**

**BOARD**

Tom Burgess, Richard Dunning,  
Alan Edelkind, Dan Harper,  
Michael Hoyt, Greg Kriebel,  
Janine Lesser, Erin Pils-Martin,  
Liz Swan

**ADMINISTRATION**

Dr. Kimberly Saunders, Supt.  
Dr. Ann Forrest, Asst. Supt.  
Brian Cisneros, B.A.  
Cari Christian-Coates, Student Serv.  
Ben Moenter, Special Ed.  
Tim Grossi, Facilities  
Mark Schaub, Tech.  
Adam Caragher, GBS  
Tim Conway, SMS  
Rachel Hill, FES  
Shawne Hilliard, GES  
Heather McKillop, CVHS  
Nicole Pease, DCS  
Larry Pimental, PES  
Jessica Vezina, HES

**9:00**            **Welcome – Assembly & Coffee**  
**Dick Dunning called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.**

Dr. Tatia Prieto, Prismatic Services, said that input today will allow those present to engage with a chunk of the data that has been gathered as a result of the effort to consider consolidation/reconfiguration.

**9:10**            **Opening Remarks – Alan Edelkind**

Alan Edelkind thanked everyone for taking the time out to attend this meeting. Thanks to Tatia Prieto, Prismatic Services, for hosting the meeting.

This project began in 2022 to look at the physical and educational environment. It was determined that an outside organization was needed to further this process. Ten companies were sent information for consideration of conducting this work. The Request for Proposal (RFP) is a detailed document that lays out the goals and requirements as well as timelines. Two likely candidates were selected for interview upon receipt of the Request for Quote (RFQ). Prismatic Services was selected. They hit the ground running. Prismatic has spent quality time acquiring and analyzing the data, conducting interviews, hosting focus groups with students, staff, selectmen, and the public.

The review of the data collected will take place today.

**9:30**            **Review of Project Objectives, Team, and Tasks – Tatia Prieto**

Dr. Tatia Prieto shared the project objectives:

- Evaluate the consolidation of district schools.

- Consider educational, safety, financial, social, organizations control, community and the future of the district impacts
- Neutrality
- Community involvement
- Specific recommendations
- Viable conclusion to the questions related to what is best for ConVal students and for taxpayers

The Prismatic team, made up of eleven members, and their background was shared.

#### **9:45 Overview Background Data, Introduce Placemat Activities – Tatia Prieto**

The timeline was shared and it was noted that Prismatic is on time to complete work in December.

Background data; 248 staff inputs, 88 participants in interviews and focus groups, 58 different site visits throughout the ConVal schools.

Background data from peers included Berlin, Fall Mountain, Gilford, Kearsarge, Litchfield, Monadnock Regional, Windham, and ConVal. Enrollments are similar and are considered rural-fringe locale type.

Placemat activity rules were shared. Groups will review the data on placemats, discuss with those sitting at the same table, record your thoughts, and then Prismatic will compile.

What is being asked of, for those present, was shared in terms of the activities.

The eight groups reviewed data collected and then responded to a series of questions using that data.

#### **10:00 Background Data Placemat**

Tatia Prieto asked groups to share out anything as a result of the observations:

- nothing on the sheet that was surprising to him because it has been looked at. Concerned about test results; never the major concern of parents. Of more concern are the climate within the school.
- Looking at salaries for teachers was significant. Was surprised at closeness of Year 1 salaries.
- Least cost per student had highest pass rate.
- Larger swing in our socio-economics when comparing some of our schools; e.g. Hancock to Bennington
- Students are capable of the Windham results; it is going to take more resources to get them there.
- Challenge with standardized testing is that the result often does not match what the parent has been told by teachers about their student.
- Inverse correlation between class size and proficiency. Data does not confirm that small class size translates to better performance.
- Over the last three years there has been a significant effort to condense the salary scales; ConVal's scale goes through 18 while other districts may not.
- 76% of the school district budget is salaries and benefits. Important to note that ConVal outsources facilities and other salaries that would be included in the budget in other school districts.

#### **10:25 Break**

#### **10:30 Overview of Constituent Input – Tatia Prieto**

Constituent input was received; 201 by student online survey, 51 high/middle school students participated in focus groups; 1,555 responses from community members, 405 additional; 470 attended meetings across the district.

Tatia Prieto reported gathering sufficient input.

Every comment that any community member ever made has been recorded. Student input was shared as well. Appendix A, B, C, and D were presented.

#### **10:40 Constituent Input Data Placemat**

Thoughts?:

- 84% of high school students think that the high school is doing a good job preparing them for life beyond high school was noted.

- Refreshing to see that people love their elementary schools and become less satisfied as children age. 50% at middle school and 60% at high school feel that there is something missing and they are wanting something more.
- Large number of people who chose to never close a school as a first or second top choice.
- smaller schools report the interest in never closing because they might likely be impacted.
- 56% feel that the current configuration is not a good use of taxpayer money
- staff input that elementary schools believe that academic performance is equal. However, allocations are believed not to be fairly allocated.

### **11:05 Overview of Beliefs and Research Data – Tatia Prieto**

Beliefs assessed in surveys and heard in town meetings:

- property values in this town are higher because there is a school located in it - 39%
- students in really small classes (less than 10) are more likely to learn than students with 20-25

Beliefs -

- “they will come” (this is not supported by data) Global population is slated to decline. A birth replacement rate of 2.1% is necessary to remain stable.. (Nationally, growth rate is projected to grow at 1/3 the rate previously. Growth comes from immigration and not birth. NH is in the top five whitest states. (Locally, population growth in the 2020 census was 18,900 and actual is 984.) NESDEC projects an average of 14 students per grade growth.
- property values benefit from an elementary in town
- smaller is better
- multi-age classrooms are bad
- we are not missing any opportunities at the middle or high school level.
- our students have the same opportunities as peer districts

### **11:15 Beliefs and Research Data Placemat**

The belief that the presence of an elementary school impacts property values. The presence of a school is more about access to having a good school. There is no evidence to having a school impacting property value. The Town of Sharon does not have a school in their town. Looking at growth or non-growth for the Town of Sharon reflected no evidence. Research does not support that but the belief that it does exist.

Hard beliefs:

- How do we feel about “they will come”? ConVal is dealing with fairly small numbers of students.
- How did Lionheart impact ConVal? Approximately 40 students who formerly attended ConVal schools attend Lionheart. Some students who homeschool or attend other schools never attended ConVal schools. Young families cannot afford to move here because of housing. Our preschool numbers are the strongest in the district. There are fewer affordable preschool opportunities. This district has a good reputation for serving special education students. Families have confirmed moving here for those services. There is plenty of research that shows that smaller class sizes are better. One has to look at the definition of smaller e.g. < 20? The difference between 15 and 20 students is often looked at. Double digits in a classroom is looked at, not 5, 7, or 8 students. Research does not look at 5 students vs. 15 students. Questions were asked of students about how it feels to be in small schools. Some felt it was fine but not all students felt part of the small class. Kids often do not do well if they are not part of the “in” group. Multi-age classrooms were touched on. It often happens at the last minute and the teacher may not be prepared. Research does not say that there is anything wrong with multi-age classrooms. Multi-age is a philosophical approach to teaching; making the decision due to your philosophy. ConVal does multi-grade; putting two grades together because of enrollment numbers. Discussion took place about perceptions of multi-grade.

### **11:45 Final Remarks – Tatia Prieto**

Tatia Prieto thanked everyone for coming today.

### **11:50 Final Remarks – Richard Dunning**

Dick Dunning said that it is critical to get the information that is gathered out to everyone. Clearly understanding the decisions that need to be made is important.

The School Board has made no decisions. Decisions will be made based on data collected, what is best for kids, and what is best for taxpayers.

Dick thanked everyone for coming today.

The meeting concluded at 12:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok