

1 **MAPLE RUN UNIFIED BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

2 **October 2, 2019 6:00 Central Office 28 Catherine St., St. Albans, VT**

3 **MINUTES**

4 **Present for a Quorum:** Jeff Morrill, Susan Magnan, Jack McCarthy, Joanna Jerose, Sally Lindberg, Steven  
5 LaRosa, Al Corey, Alisha Sawyer, Nina Hunsicker.

6 **Unable to Attend:** Nilda Gonnella-French

7 **Administrators:** Kevin Dirth, Superintendent; Melanie Boyle, Early Education Director; Stacie Rouleau,  
8 SACS Assistant Principal, Joan Cavallo, SACS Principal; Chris Mosca, BFA Principal; Leeann Wright, NWTC  
9 Director; Sean O’Dell, Fairfield Principal, Alexis Hoyt, Behavior Support and Student Engagement; Mona  
10 Berry, Curriculum Director; Heather Fitzgibbons, BFA Assistant Principal; Sara Kattam, BFA Assistant  
11 Principal; Bill Kimball, Assistant Superintendent; Angela Stebbins, SATEC Principal; Lisa Durocher, NWTC  
12 Assistant Director; Jason Therrien, SATEC Assistant Principal.

13 **Others:** Preston Randall, see list

14 1. **Call to Order** – Jeff Morrill called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

15 2. **Agenda Review** –

16 **Al Corey made a motion to approve the agenda; second by Sally Lindberg. The motion passed**  
17 **unanimously.**

18 3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

19 4. **Visitors** – Liz Gamache asked how we ended up where we are now with this level of confusion  
20 over transcripts. There is a lot at stake, and we don’t know the impact of errors being made.  
21 South Burlington website regarding a grading system was referenced. Three years in and she is  
22 concerned that we have been asked to do too much in too little time. The release of the  
23 transcripts this fall brought about confusion and stress. The last three years have been  
24 inconsistent. Power School Unified Classroom is the third platform used in four years. There is a  
25 lack of communication. The BFA website has a proficiency-based learning handbook that  
26 compared Proficiency Based Grading (PBG) with a Global Positioning System (GPS). We haven’t  
27 had a clear navigation path. The lack of letter grading system where the bandwidth of a B is wide  
28 is troublesome. Transcripts are better but are still confusing and inaccurate. Transferrable skills  
29 page isn’t consistent with academic achievements page. Accuracy of some of the marks is still a  
30 problem. Power School shows a 4 but the transcript shows a 3. How fair can awards be figured on  
31 inaccurate information? There have been breeches of trust because of lack of communication.  
32 Students are being told all you need is to get a 3 without being told what getting more than a 3  
33 could mean. For Seniors there is urgency. To fix this and move forward, we need small forums for  
34 parents and students soon. We will also need to prepare our students to return to a traditional  
35 grading system at college. For this year’s Seniors, please consider providing support to students to  
36 be able to include their own resume with their college application. Longer term needs a process  
37 review, by an independent third party. Invite feedback, consider a dual system. This is a student,  
38 family, and community issue. Linda Hungerford - her daughter’s transcript is not accurate. After a  
39 lot of research, she feels like we didn’t get it right. 1. Pass your academic class according to local  
40 policy. 2. Show transferrable skills and be proficient in those classes. Some other schools have  
41 done dual systems. Our students can’t pass without a 3, making the range 3 to 4. This has done a  
42 complete injustice to the students, families and community. This is not acceptable – we need to  
43 do a deep dive. Awards are wrong because the transcripts are wrong. It is the top kids are  
44 suffering because of it. High honors and honors at BFA have changed to social skills as opposed to  
45 academics. Alex Haag, a student, reinforced some points from a student perspective. He spoke to  
46 significant figures (learned in calculus) making the numbers inaccurate. He proposed a solution:

47 since all the kids will be between 3 or 4 when they graduate. A way to set aside students who  
48 reach higher, institute class rank with weighted average to help high achieving students. College  
49 prep X 1 - Honors X1.1 - AP classes X 1.2. Class rank would allow students to know where they  
50 are. Mary Pickener - with two students, she is a huge fan of proficiency learning. Her concerns are  
51 about the implementation. In the state there has been some very positive implementation  
52 working through parents, students and community. BFA held meetings and said basically we're  
53 doing well, but we're not taking any questions. We ended up building the plane as we were flying.  
54 No teachers do it the same, no teachers truly understand. When offered solutions she was told  
55 don't worry it will work out. Gillian Ireland addressed her son's situation where all along she  
56 thought he was doing fantastic, he even made high honors, but because of the 3s he didn't qualify  
57 for some programs. She wondered why she is just finding out he really isn't doing well now. The  
58 role-out failed. Parents were told it doesn't matter, but oh, it does matter. She questions if there  
59 is even a fix for him. Deanne Haag says students trying to strive for their best self, this system is  
60 like telling the varsity football team that there is no varsity team, everyone will be on the same  
61 level. She sees this as an emergency. There have been some great ideas, but we need forums to  
62 talk through them. But we need them now. Alex has an interview next week, rescheduled because  
63 the transcript wasn't available. She wants them to see how terrific he is, but this transcript, which  
64 is better but is inaccurate, won't provide them an accurate picture. Susan Magnan stated that we  
65 don't have a Grade Point Average (GPA), we have a proficiency score point average. It is  
66 mislabeled on the transcripts.

67 Preston Randall reviewed the school profile which explains the Proficiency scores.

68 Mike Connor isn't a fan of proficiency-based learning. If the score was 1 to 5 it would match up  
69 better. He referred to the BFA website and how the handbook addresses the Proficiency-Based  
70 Graduation Requirements (PBGRs). Calculations don't include the transferrable skills. The scale  
71 has been compressed to a 1-point scale, the lower students are brought up and the top students  
72 are being compressed. Teachers aren't telling students that they can do more to bring a 3 up.  
73 They are just assuming they are proficient and move on. The process to get where we are was not  
74 a good one. Alex Haag responded to the award pins, which were not calculated correctly. He had  
75 hoped to do the rank calculation himself, but inconsistencies made that impossible. There were  
76 some students who didn't get award pins that should have, and some who were given a pin who  
77 didn't qualify.

78 Another parent explained there is an issue with the IT transference from power school to  
79 transcripts. The power school data is not being monitored for accuracy. There are 5 proficiencies,  
80 but teachers are only addressing 2 or 3. Some students showed as absent for 200 plus days. Ted  
81 Gamache stated that power school is an application that is confusing, and he is good with  
82 technology. Also, communication is lacking. His son was in danger of not passing and the parents  
83 were unaware of it. Robert Gamache, a student, said that the school really dropped the ball and  
84 he doesn't see a reason to try. He'll get the same grade as someone doing much less. He is not the  
85 only one who has expressed feeling this way.

86 Chris Mosca thanked everyone for sharing, it was good conversation and he plans to have more.  
87 He feels profoundly responsible. He gave his assurance that the decisions that were made were  
88 made with the best intentions and the best information available. This issue is on the front  
89 burner. He thanked them for their patience and ideas. He was asked what the next action would  
90 be. Mr. Mosca said he wrote ideas down and is looking at dates for forums, some ideas are  
91 conflicted and that needs to be flushed out. He will set dates for forums to keep communication  
92 open. Preston Randall agreed with Mr. Mosca and added that they will be sure the staff  
93 understands the issues. He knows that college admissions are high anxiety under normal  
94 circumstances, so he wants to be sure we show clearly who the students are. There is a college  
95 application event coming up, he liked the idea of resume writing assistance, and will have a  
96 resume writing training. The plan between today and November 1<sup>st</sup> includes College application

97 assistance, resume writing training, what's on the transcript and what the student feels is missing.  
 98 How will the plan be communicated? Looking forward once early admissions are straightened out  
 99 there will be a plan to continue. Bill Kimball explained that he is working on this issue and has  
 100 experience from his previous position. They will be auditing Power school and if necessary,  
 101 auditing the teacher grade books. Communication must be improved. The short-term fix for  
 102 seniors is to ensure that all the information on the transcripts is accurate. The entire district will  
 103 have a proficiency plan. Nina Hunsicker pointed out that the teachers were not fully on the same  
 104 page. Joanne Jerosé noted that the awards ceremony maybe should be postponed until it is clear  
 105 that grades are accurate.

106 Jack McCarthy stated that he is angry about this position we are in because it is an unfunded  
 107 mandate from the state. He applauded the community that were in attendance for being so  
 108 professional on such a passionate issue. As a Board member he is very concerned, but he is  
 109 thankful and respectful of the community we have, and he knows we can come together to figure  
 110 this out.

111 Al Corey shared that he has been under two systems: grade system and proficiency system.  
 112 Preston Randall has the fortitude to work towards a solution. He also commended the students  
 113 who attended and spoke to this.

114 One parent stated that there are another 150 families of the graduating class who should have  
 115 the opportunity to be involved. This is not easy stuff to understand. It was asked what it will do to  
 116 the choice schools? If they choose not to come to BFA because of this mess, we will lose funding.  
 117 Is this a legal issue, could we get a class action lawsuit against BFA?

118 Sally Lindberg requested that the Board have more information about this issue moving forward.  
 119 She would like committees again like the BFA Board had so they could have a better handle on  
 120 issues like this.

121 Susan Magnan said that she has been working one-on-one to get this right for a while now, and  
 122 she is still finding errors. How about equity, all of the other students whose parents are not able  
 123 to be as actively involved?

124 Steven LaRosa asked Preston Randall if he had the resources to do what needed to be done.  
 125 Preston answered yes, for his pieces. Then Chis Mosca was asked the same question, and Mr.  
 126 Mosca said he believed so, Central Office has made themselves available.

127 Jeff Morrill thanked everyone for coming and for their input. He was asked what we can expect.  
 128 Bill Kimball said that there will be an update on Friday from Chris Mosca and that it will go  
 129 through Connect 5 as an email.

130

## 131 **5. Consent Agenda**

- 132 **A.** Approval of Minutes September 18, 2019
- 133 **B.** Media Packet
- 134 **C.** Financial Statement
- 135 **D.** Staff Changes

136 **The consent agenda was adopted.**

## 137 **6. Old Business**

- 138 **A.** Transcript Update – Prior to Visitors speaking, Chris Mosca and Preston Randall updated  
 139 the Board on where the transcripts stand. They handed out a FAQ and the school profile  
 140 that was discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Mosca also stated that he sent home a  
 141 message to parents concerning transcripts.
- 142 **B.** Negotiation Teams – Jeff Morrill stated that Nilda Gonnella-French, Jeff Morrill and Nina  
 143 Hunsicker would be on Professional Staff negotiations team. Jack McCarthy, Alisha Sawyer  
 144 and Al Corey will be on the Support Staff negotiations team. Meetings will be scheduled  
 145 on Monday and Wednesday nights.

146 **7. New Business**

- 147 **A.** Behavior Support & Student Engagement Title changed to Student Support Director was  
148 reported by Kevin Dirth. It's the same job with a more concise title.
- 149 **B.** Early Retirement Applicants – Bill Kimball reported that we have 12 requests for early  
150 retirement. The Board can accept all or do a lottery for eight. The financials indicate that  
151 the district would likely see close to break even the first year followed by savings as lower  
152 salaries replace the long-time employees' salaries.

153

154 **Al Corey made a motion to approve all 12 of the applications; second by Jack McCarthy.**

155 Discussion included that it is tax-payer money and we need to be aware of spending  
156 taxpayer money. This would be an opportunity to bringing in younger teachers. Teachers  
157 started with a very low income. The first year would likely break even or a little either  
158 way. The second year would be a larger savings, and that should be considered for  
159 taxpayer money as well.

160 **The motion passed 7 to 1. Sally Lindberg voted nay.**

- 161 **C.** VSBA Annual Meeting - Jeff Morrill stated that if someone attended they could cast a vote  
162 for the entire Board. Jack McCarthy volunteered to attend.

163 **Susan Magnan made a motion to appoint Jack McCarthy as delegate to attend for the Board; second  
164 by Al Corey. The motion passed unanimously.**

165 **8. Other Business**

- 166 **D.** Warrants

167 **Al Corey made a motion to approve the warrants; second by Jack McCarthy. The motion passed  
168 unanimously.**

- 169 **E.** Superintendent's Report - Kevin Dirth thanked Alisha Sawyer for joining Rotary. He  
170 displayed a helmet that was presented by the those who worked on the pavilion at Collins  
171 Perley to all of the major donors. Dr. Dirth urged folks to read the newsletter and he  
172 thanked Dino Pastouris for his work on it.

173 Board members shared frustration that they had not heard of the BFA Transcript issue  
174 before the community came to Board meetings. Susan Magnan told of an instance when  
175 her 22-year-old niece had to meet with older men on a building project and had to tell  
176 them that a roof had to be fixed. The men started saying reasons why it was, how it was  
177 and how it wasn't their fault. Her niece said it doesn't matter at this point how we got  
178 here, we just need to focus on getting it fixed. Ms. Magnan said that's where she feels we  
179 are now.

- 180 **F.** Central Office Administrator Reports

- 181 • Bill Kimball – working at BFA he has been appreciative of the staff there and their  
182 willingness to help solve problems. The BFA building project is a very complex  
183 project. They are getting bids back for the Clerk of the Works. At Fairfield they  
184 have worked on a few alternates. He is thankful for the new HR staff because he  
185 relies heavily on them.
- 186 • Melanie Boyle – Students have settled in and are finding quickly where services  
187 are needed. A conversation with a district physical therapist revealed that a  
188 therapeutic bicycle has been donated to one of our families allowing the child to  
189 fully participate in many more activities.
- 190 • Mona Berry – Data teams have had progress during the collaboration time. They  
191 are finishing up diagnostic assessments in reading and math. The first Maple Run  
192 instructional coaches meeting is next week.
- 193 • Alexis Hoyt – Collaborating with all the administrators building a behavioral  
194 system. They are looking at the big picture and providing more inhouse resources.
- 195 • Martha Gagner – Working on getting the business office fully staffed. Also

196 working on the eFinance transition which was mandated by the legislature. The  
197 first parallel payroll is scheduled for October 15. The conversation has just started  
198 about next year’s budgeting.

199 **G.** Board Announcements – BFA won Power Puff and raised a lot of money, despite the rain.

200 **8. Agenda Items for Future Meeting** – Transcript update, Technology Audit, Board Retreat is on the  
201 9<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 to 9:00

202 **9. Potential Executive Session**

203 **10. Adjourn**

204 **The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.**

205  
206 Respectfully submitted,  
207 Brenda Comstock  
208

