Cabot School Sustainability Committee

Approved minutes of October 22, 2025 Meeting Cabot School Library

In attendance: Amy Richardson, Johanna Thibault, Melissa Pratt, Shannon Jenkins, Stef Burtt, Steve Owens and Chris Tormey

Meeting began at 4:04 PM

1. **Draft Minutes** of the committee's October 1 meeting were reviewed and approved.

2. **This afternoon's meeting agenda** was reviewed.

3. **Discussion:**

   A. **Planning for this year:**

Cabot School's new Interim Principal Steve Owens introduced himself to the Committee: he began his work in school administration after 25+ years as an elementary music teacher in Calais, VT, and his first job as Principal was at the Albany Community School in Orleans County, VT. He got to know our current CCSU Superintendent Matt Foster when they were both part of a principal-training program ("Waddington") funded by a UVM neurologist. A Calais resident, Steve worked with Cabot Elementary School teachers during the 1990's to develop a music program for classroom teachers to facilitate after the contract of the previous elementary-grades music teacher was not renewed. He has experience in working as an Interim Principal in schools with challenges; he is excited to support Cabot School students and staff this year in whatever ways are needed.

In an effort to introduce Steve to the Sustainability's Committee's current goal, ("Building value in the community for Cabot School"), Committee members reviewed their efforts during the past year to increase communication and understanding between the school and community. Committee members agreed that the 3 forums the group had planned and facilitated (which focused on project-based learning, the new Education Reform bill, and ways that Cabot School was succeeding and could improve

in developing essential skills/attributes in its students) were valuable in educating and gathering input from the public. Committee members felt that the increased communication and understanding of the school that both the forums and the committee's regular meetings had supported had been valuable in increasing both the community's support for the school and the school staff's understanding of community concerns.

Much of the remainder of the meeting focused on discussing past and ongoing challenges at the school with Steve as well as discussion of progress made in overcoming those challenges. Included were :

a. School's relationship to community: Dr. Blake's efforts as Principal last year helped a great deal in making the school more open/welcoming to families and the community at large. Forums facilitated by the Sustainability Committee as well as weekly newsletters generated by Dr. Blake with regular staff input helped make progress in this area.
b. School's system for dealing with student behavior issues: Some improvement last year in a system that was frustratingly unclear to both students and families for several previous years. Amy: Team of Cabot staff that attended a conference last summer (The Best Institute) came away with a draft plan of how to clarify the process for Cabot staff: working now to finalize this plan so all staff are on the same page. Additional discussion on work needed to allow students to be just as clear on actions/consequences progression. Discussion of the value of having uniform expectations across the campus: less chaos, and less student energy expended adjusting to different expectations/systems in different classrooms.
c. Curriculum and learning: General discussion of need for students to develop essential literacy and mathematics skills in addition to the benefits (choice, collaboration, self-direction, engagement) of rigorous project-based learning. Specifics: Elementary students are now focusing more on developing those literacy and math skills; the school has the benefit of several staff well-trained and experienced in PBL.
d. Outreach to the community: General discussion about the value of showcasing students' work to the community: better understanding

and appreciation of process and skills/learning gained, as well as potentially attracting new students to the school. Steve discussed his efforts in Albany to bring back students/families that had left the school. Stef mentioned the relatively large number of home-schooled students in Cabot; discussion of making home-school families aware of individual programs/courses at Cabot School that their students could take advantage of (band, art, science, etc.). Discussion of holding an open house/exhibition of learning for the community before Town Meeting Day this year. Melissa mentioned the value of continuing the "Harvest Meal" that Dr. Blake facilitated for students/staff/families in the gym last November just before Thanksgiving break; Steve will look into it.

4. Next meeting was set for Wednesday November 12 at 4:00 PM

Agenda: Get more specific on ways this year to build value in the community for Cabot School

5. Meeting adjourned at 5:40 PM

(Notes by Chris Tormey)

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