

1 **Lake Region Union High School Board Meeting**
2 **Lake Region Union High School - Orleans, Vermont**
3 **Meeting Held on Google Meet**
4 **Monday, April 5, 2021**
5

6 **Board members in attendance:** Dave Blodgett, Michael Sanville, Jennifer Edlund, Gerry
7 Cahill, Michael Connor, Jason Racine, Jennifer McKenzie, Toni Eubanks, Linda Michniewicz,
8 and Tammy Wiggett

9 **Administrators/Faculty in attendance:** Andre Messier- Principal, Bev Davis- Superintendent,
10 Michael Moriarty- OCSU Director of Instructional Services, Penny Chamberlin- Future
11 Superintendent, beginning July 1, 2021

12 **Community Members in attendance:** Leanne Harple- *The Chronicle*, Ben Morley, Darlene
13 Young, Bryanne Marquis, Michael Prue, Anne Carroll, and David Solomon

14 **Call to Order:** David Blodgett, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:17.

15 **Additions/ Deletions:** Under New Business, h: a motion to approve a Technology
16 Decommission List

17 **Privilege of the floor:** Ben Morley addressed the board, and Michael Sanville requested that his
18 statement be included in the minutes. His statement, as provided, follows:

19 “Dear OCSU and Lake Region School Board,

20 “I would like to address the board as a concerned parent and community member. I have studied
21 Critical Social Justice Theory while getting my M.A. in Public Administration Management and
22 Crisis Intervention at Norwich University. I graduated in 2019, and wrote my thesis on offering
23 equity to communities using Vocational Rehabilitation Services. I help offer equity in the
24 community currently in my employment. My studies of Critical Social Justice Theory (CSJT)
25 have been objective, and I have even taken several trainings in Social Justice both outside and
26 inside my work environment to try to understand the underlying messages that it offers. These
27 are trainings such as: “White Fragility, Classism, Being White, Social Justice Trainings, many
28 LGBTQ and Trans men and women trainings” etc. On the surface, these trainings are attractive,
29 and I could see how any outsider who have not taken them would consider them to be
30 informative, necessary, and efficient in solving the many of the problems that communities face.
31 They all seek to offer more “Equity” in society. Be mindful that Equity is the opposite of
32 equality of opportunity, it is in fact equality of outcome, typically based on physical
33 characteristics or individual identification as a marginalized or victimized group. However,
34 through my experience the trainings and content are not what they seem, and they are so much
35 more than what everyone assumes. Colleges offer this theory for educators and others who study
36 humanities and liberal arts. A different theory is rooted in these trainings, and while they look as
37 though they are superficial and independent in their own message, they all deliver a similar
38 message because they push a specific ideology. Currently, the theory is being implemented in
39 schools, and these curriculum and trainings are becoming more mainstream. The State is
40 pressuring many organizations to adopt these trainings as a blanket solution for solving issues
41 with inequality and equity within communities and schools.

42 “Prior to becoming a counselor, I worked in prison as a Recreation Services Coordinator, and
43 witnessed firsthand what can happen when social environments focus too much on race and
44 superficial physical characteristics that individuals cannot change. In these environments an
45 individual must adapt and follow beliefs that their racial group encourages and demands of them
46 each day. This is an extremely toxic environment, and mainly for this reason. This is truly a
47 consequence of mental health issues and a failure to see individuals for their diversity of opinion
48 because power dynamics are threatened when there is a diversity of opinion as it relates to race
49 in a prison environment.

50 “Many advocacy groups have adopted critical theory and attempted to introduce it out of college
51 for employment. They instruct these groups and teach others to offer the trainings. However,
52 they are not trained in mental health or hold any licensure that qualifies them to work with
53 vulnerable groups. But, they do claim to be experts in these specific areas, and many
54 communities are not informed, nor do they investigate these topics or training before employing
55 them to solve issues with racism, sexism, and poverty.

56 “Many of the teachers at OCSU may have studied the books “White Fragility” by Robin
57 DeAngelo or “Critical Race Theory” by Richard Delgado as a part of their undergraduate studies
58 or graduate studies, or perhaps in their free time. I recently became aware that many teachers
59 have already taken part in trainings at OCSU in these areas to learn more about the theory last
60 summer. These trainings are essentially sensitivity trainings for Critical Theory, which has no
61 factual basis and can be associated with Neo-Marxist ideology and theory. They are opinion
62 novels, and mainly focus on philosophy and assumptions of why the various isms exist- (Racism,
63 sexism etc.) But its not just exploratory, the trainings demand that participants change their
64 views to start looking in a more racial lens on how they view the world and encourage everyone
65 to seek out racism and injustice to fight against systemic racism and the power dynamic between
66 a dominant group and dominated groups in society. The trainings encourage participants to share
67 their knowledge with others and impress upon other to identify with their white privilege in
68 society. Democracies are vulnerable to Critical theory because they are very open to criticism
69 and change to improve. But the trainings to not attempt to build on what we currently have in our
70 democracy, but to replace our current ideology with a new one, which emphasizes this power
71 struggle and highlights the harms and inequities of capitalistic economy, and democratic system
72 of governing.

73 “It is my belief however, that ethical trainings should be offered and on a basis of improving
74 mental health in our community for both students and parents. Trainings should work to unite
75 individuals based on their similarities rather than segregating them based on their differences.
76 Individuals may commit racist acts, but an individual’s actions cannot represent an entire
77 community. The community has responsibility to punish and correct certain crimes or horrific
78 acts through channels for everyone regardless of their differences from others. But a democratic
79 community cannot take responsibility for a harmful isolated incident, and neither the entire race
80 of that individual because we know that people are so much more than what their physical
81 characteristics represent.

82 “*The following needs to be discussed relating to Critical Social Justice Theories and Equity*
83 *trainings:*

- 84 • Critical Social Justice Theory (CSJT), is a dangers and divisive way to look at the world and solve
85 social issues, as it does not offer factual information, nor is it supported by empirical evidence that
86 suggests it's assumptions about society are true.
- 87 • CSJT trainings require participants to do 3 things:
- 88 1) Require the participant to assume white privilege, racial bias, and implicitness using
89 white fragility as a construct.
- 90 2) Requires minorities to adopt a victim mentality and assign prejudice to all whites, as
91 well as assume their place in the power dynamic as the dominated group, making them view
92 themselves as an inferior group in society.
- 93 3) Requires participants to adopt physical characteristics as the most important factors for
94 determining individuality in society.
- 95 • The CSJT trainings aim to make entire groups accountable for the actions of individuals in that group,
96 rather than assigning responsibility to the individual for acting unethically.
- 97 • The CSJT trainings encourages participants to view others in society through a racial lens primarily,
98 thus creating and broadening the term racism/racist. The theory creates this manifestation and then
99 offers solutions on how to prevent or solve racism using the power model. Allowing the activists and
100 facilitators to replace these "inequities" with solutions they are not qualified to provide.
- 101 • The theory does not attribute mental illness to acts of racism. Racism is instead viewed in the power
102 struggle model and introduced into all elements of society by training facilitators. Mental illness is not
103 even discussed as an issue or relating to racism or sexism in these theories.
- 104 • The trainings focus mainly on differences between people rather than similarities that can bring
105 them closer together.
- 106 • The trainings fail to incorporate history, significant civil rights laws, and the basic rights that make
107 Americans equal under both the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Civil Rights Act.
- 108 • The trainings limit freedom of speech and expression and advances the concepts of hat speech to
109 adopt an overgrowing number of words or phrases to be viewed as racist, prejudice, or politically
110 incorrect.
- 111 • The training allows the facilitator to speak about how each group thinks and acts for that group, and
112 segregates the groups based on race, gender, sex.
- 113 • The theory fails to offer equality of opportunity as a means for equity and advancement in society. It
114 also fails to acknowledge capitalism as an economic system that allows all races to advance their quality
115 of life in the United States.

116

117 “Please consider these characteristics associated with trainings and understand the threat of
118 indoctrinating our children and community at vulnerable ages with these trainings as a
119 primary resolution to improving equity and equality in our community. We do not need to
120 invite advocacy groups to speak about and train on these issues with our students. We can
121 offer more ethical trainings that does not focus on Marxist philosophy to improve equity and
122 equality of opportunity for our students through a power struggle dynamic.

123 Ben Morley”

124 **Approval of Consent Agenda Items:** Jason Racine moved to approve the following items: the
125 minutes of the March 22, 2021 board meeting, written reports, updated FY ’21 financial reports,
126 and payment of the bills. The motion was seconded by Jennifer McKenzie and approved by
127 unanimous vote.

128 **Old Business**

129 **Report from Lake Region Ad Hoc Equity Committee Meeting:** Linda Michniewicz, who was
130 elected Chair of the LR Equity Committee, reported that the committee held its first meeting
131 with ten participants, including six board members, two administrators, and two community
132 members. The agenda included a discussion of the Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying policy and
133 a brief discussion about the use of restorative practices. The committee was to meet again on
134 April 14th.

135 Jennifer Edlund added that the meeting was productive, and that one point that stood out to her
136 was that it is important for every student to feel connected to a trusted adult who can advocate
137 for them. She said the committee discussed suggestions for improving procedures around hazing,
138 harassment, and bullying. She also mentioned the importance of having these challenging
139 discussions without attacking one another, noting, “I think we need to find a way to allow
140 individuals to respond to comments that are personal attacks on their statements. For example, I
141 didn’t agree that all students felt anxiety about being called to the principal’s office and in
142 response to my statement, I was informed that the reason I did not have anxiety was due to my
143 white privilege. Although I immediately disagreed, I was not able to defend myself from this
144 attack due to the meeting format. I think it’s ironic that we were sitting there as a board,
145 discussing bullying, and yet as it played out right in front of us, nothing was done. This sort of
146 racism and blatant bullying cannot be allowed in our schools or in our meetings. We must be an
147 example to our community and find ways to communicate without name calling and making
148 assumptions about board members based on the color of their skin.”

149 Dave Blodgett mentioned that the overall goal of our equity work is to make sure all students
150 feel welcomed and not threatened at school. He mentioned that parents have reported that there
151 are problems related to equity and we have to take that seriously.

152 Mr. Messier mentioned that the next meeting would be held on April 14, and that he and Linda
153 Michniewicz would work together to create an agenda.

154 **Introduction:** At this point, Dave Blodgett introduced and welcomed Penny Chamberlin, who
155 was to become the OCSU Superintendent on July 1, 2021.

156 **Hiring a Non-member Clerk to Take Minutes:** Dave Blodgett reported that he had discussed
157 with Bev Davis and Heather Wright the possibility of hiring a non-board member clerk to take

158 minutes. He learned that this has been done in the past, and the typical pay had been \$25 per
159 meeting. Currently the elementary board and the OCSU board do not have non- board member
160 clerks. Gerry Cahill expressed that \$25 per meeting may not be enough to entice a suitable
161 candidate. Michael Sanville suggested that \$35 per meeting may be more appropriate. It was the
162 disposition of the board to look into this further.

163 **Building Projects:** A) Paving Project: Michael Sanville moved to authorize Mr. Messier to
164 move forward with the paving project as previously planned, with a spending limit of \$100,000.
165 It was seconded by Jennifer Edlund and approved unanimously.

166 B) Gym Floor Resurfacing: Mr. Messier shared the following quotes for the gym floor
167 resurfacing project:

- 168 1) \$27,455.00 (Danaher Floor Restoration, Inc from Clarendon,VT)
- 169 2) \$28,500.00 (New England Sports Floors from Lowell, MA)
- 170 3) \$32,500.00 (Danaher Custom Services, Essex, VT)

171 Michael Sanville moved to authorize Mr. Messier to select the quote of \$27,455 from Danaher
172 Floor Restoration. It was seconded by Michael Connor and approved unanimously.

173 C) Installation of Safety Glass in the Lobby: Mr. Messier share the following quotes for the
174 safety glass project:

- 175 1) \$21,859.00 (Portland Glass, Barre, VT)
- 176 2) \$55,295.00 (Granite State Glass, St. Johnsbury, VT)
- 177 3) \$26,608.00 (The Glass Connection, Inc, Milton, VT)

178 Michael Sanville moved to authorize Mr. Messier to select the quote of \$21,859 from Portland
179 Glass. It was seconded by Michael Connor and approved unanimously.

180 **New Business**

181 **Tuition for International Students:** Michael Connor moved to approve waiving tuition for up
182 to four (4) international students for the 21-22 school year. It was seconded by Jennifer
183 McKenzie and approved unanimously.

184 **Hiring 5 Interventionists:** Michael Connor moved to hire 5 interventionists, beginning in the
185 2021-2022 school year, using ESSER funds. It was seconded by Jennifer Edlund and approved
186 unanimously.

187 **Retirement:** Jennifer McKenzie moved to accept the retirement of Thomas Smith, Chemistry
188 teacher, effective June 30, 2021. It was seconded by Toni Eubanks and approved unanimously.

189 **Contract Issuance:** Michael Sanville moved to issue a 3-year contract for Principal Andre
190 Messier, with a 2.5% increase for the first year, and future increases to be determined. It was
191 seconded by Jennifer Edlund and approved unanimously.

192 **Contract Issuance:** Michael Sanville moved to issue a 3-year contract for Assistant Principal
193 Sharon Gonyaw, with a 2.5% increase for the first year, and future increases to be determined. It
194 was seconded by Jennifer Edlund and approved unanimously.

195 **Contract Issuance:** Michael Sanville moved to issue a 1-year 0.5 FTE contract for Guidance
196 Administrator Tim Chamberlin, with a 2.5% increase. It was seconded by Michael Connor and
197 approved unanimously, with Tammy Wiggett abstaining from the vote.

198 **Contract Issuance:** Michael Sanville moved to issue a 1-year contract to Administrative Office
199 Manager Tami Wesoja, with a 2.5% increase. It was seconded by Michael Connor and approved
200 unanimously.

201 **Technology Decommission List Approval:** Michael Connor moved to approve
202 decommissioning the list of expired technology as presented. It was seconded by Jennifer Edlund
203 and approved unanimously.

204 **Motion to Extend the Meeting:** Michael Sanville moved to extend the meeting by 30 minutes.
205 It was seconded by Michael Connor and approved unanimously.

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208 **Administrative Requests/ Reports**

209 **Winter Activity Report:** Mr. Messier reported that the Girls Varsity Basketball Team was
210 named Division III State Champions and had accomplished an undefeated season. Also, The
211 Lake Region FBLA Chapter was named Vermont's Outstanding Chapter. He mentioned that
212 spring sports were underway, with practices being held outdoors.

213 **Covid Impact on Operations:** Mr. Messier noted that end-of-year events like prom and
214 graduation were to be allowed and that further guidance was anticipated. He mentioned that
215 using the building and grounds as normal would be allowed over the summer. He mentioned that
216 guidance related to distancing had been reduced from 6 feet to 3 feet for all students.

217 **School Climate Survey:** Mr. Messier reported that the school climate survey had been
218 completed by approximately 280 students. The staff had begun to digest the data and planned to
219 look more deeply at the data at an upcoming staff meeting. He planned to provide some
220 information regarding the data at the next board meeting.

221 **Personnel Committee:** Mr. Messier reported that there were four candidates for the Chemistry
222 Teacher Position that would be interviewed the following Wednesday. He also mentioned the
223 need to advertise for a Boys Varsity Soccer Coach.

224 **Executive Session**

225 None

226 **Business of the Board**

227 **Career Center RAB Report:** None

228 **OCSU Board:** David Blodgett reported that the OCSU Board was to meet the following
229 Wednesday.

230 **Future Agenda Items**

- 231 • OCSU Equity Committee Report (added as a standing agenda item)
- 232 • School Culture
- 233 • Part-time Seasonal Employees Salary Approval
- 234 • Contracts for Athletic Directors

235 **Upcoming Meetings**

- 236 • Equity Ad Hoc Committee: Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 5:00 PM
- 237 • Full Board: Monday, April 26, 2021 at 6:15 PM
- 238 • Full Board: Monday, May 3, 2021 at 6:15 PM
- 239 • Full Board: Monday, May 17, 2021 at 6:15 PM

240 **Adjournment:** David Blodgett adjourned the meeting at 8:35.

241 Respectfully submitted,

242 Tammy Wiggett