

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

April 27, 2019

**Burlington School District
Final Report
Site Visit: March 19, 2019**

Compiled by the Burlington SD Visiting Team

Submitted by Josh Souliere



Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Burlington High School	935	9-12
C.P.Smith Elementary	409	K-5
Champlain Elementary	315	K-5
Edmunds Elementary	303	K-5
Edmunds Middle School	416	6-8
Hunt Middle School	409	6-8
Integrated Arts Academy	294	PK-5
J.J. Flynn Elementary	342	PK-5
Sustainability Academy	183	K-5

Burlington SD participated in the Vermont Agency of Education’s Integrated Field Review (IFR) on March 19, 2019.

During the afternoon of the IFR training, the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by Burlington SD. During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Technology, Business Manager, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other Burlington SD learning environments through observations and facilities tours led by students.

The Visiting Team gathered data regarding the implementation of Education Quality Standards across the system related to Academic Proficiency, Personalization, Safe Healthy Schools, High Quality Staffing, and Investment Priorities.

Visiting Team

Name	Role	Organization
Bob Travers	CTE Director	Essex Westford SD
Kristin Romick	Out Placement Coordinator	South Burlington SD
Danielle Simons-Cheney	Science Teacher	Colchester SD
Kevin Doering	Education QA Coordinator	VT Agency of Education
Colleen Birner	Spanish Teacher	Essex Westford SD
Danielle Novotny	Elementary Classroom Teacher	Essex Westford SD
Sandra Baker	Middle Grades Teacher	Essex Westford SD
Juliet King	Instructional Coach	Franklin West SU
Jensen Welch	Math Teacher/Proficiency Support	Franklin West SU
Cindy Tan	Grade 4 Classroom Teacher	South Burlington
Jeremy Flax	Grade ½ Classroom Teacher	Grand Isle SU
Beth Cobb	Superintendent	Essex Westford SD
Angelique Fairbrother	Digital Learning Specialist	Franklin West SU
Juliet King	Instructional Coach	Franklin West SU
Karen Lehning	Math Teacher	Franklin West SU
Megan Grube	Director of Curriculum	Grand Isle SU
Lauren Thomas	Principal	Grand Isle SU
Elise LeComte	Middle School Teacher	Grand Isle SU
Jessica Ochs	Music Teacher	Grand Isle
Mark Triffilio	Principal	South Burlington SD
Elizabeth Siddle	ELA Teacher	South Burlington SD
Cynthia Tan	Elementary Teacher	South Burlington SD
Mark Gagne	Middle School Special Educator	Colchester SD
Jessica Frank	STEM Teacher	Colchester SD
Tonya Rutkowski	SSIP/Special Ed Monitoring Coord.	VT Agency of Education
Sigrid Olson	Personalized Learning Coordinator	VT Agency of Education
Peter Drescher	Director of Educational Technology	VT Agency of Education
Josh Souliere	Assistant Director of EQR	VT Agency of Education
Lori Dolezal	Education Quality Manager	VT Agency of Education

Academic Proficiency

The Vermont Education Quality Standards prioritize a coordinated curriculum in all subjects for each Supervisory Union/District that is aligned to the standards adopted by the State, instruction in all subjects and the transferable skills, a local assessment system for determining student achievement, multi-tiered systems of support for learners in meeting those standards and participation in the State assessment system.

Findings:

Curriculum Coordination

1. Burlington SD has a designed curriculum; however, evidence indicates there are inconsistencies with implementation across schools within the district.
2. The district is committed to Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and has created time for weekly PLCs to occur in most schools.

Instructional Practices

1. Observation and interview evidence indicates that the use of learning targets/objectives varies from classroom to classroom and school to school.
2. Observations reveal that most schools have access to innovative technology and many teachers integrate technology into their instruction.
3. Interview evidence indicates there are multiple academic interventions; however, some report that they are unclear about how students access them and some are implemented inconsistently across the district.

Local Assessment System

1. Evidence indicates teachers are familiar with the local assessment plan for the district.
2. Evidence reveals that educators are collecting data regularly and holding related discussions.
3. Evidence indicates work towards implementation of a consistent district-wide proficiency based model and parents report they are being informed of proficiency related work.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Interview data indicate an inconsistency in the development and implementation of proficiency based learning across the district.
2. The district has a Proficiency Based Learning Coordinator who is working on the development of a proficiency-based learning model, and providing support to schools across the district.

Commendations

1. Interviewees noted that the district PLC structure is a support for collaboration around curriculum and data.
2. Interviewees report a focus and commitment to their local assessment plan, and data-driven instruction.

Recommendations

1. In order to ensure all students reach proficiency, it is recommended that Burlington SD continue to develop a consistent and equitable intervention system.
2. It is recommended that Burlington SD, leverage the PLC structure and district curriculum map to continue the implementation of the proficiency-based curriculum across the schools.

Personalization

The Vermont Education Quality Standards prioritize development of personalization through the creation and use of Personalized Learning Plans, flexible pathways to graduation, Career and Technical Education and instructional strategies that personalize learning for students.

Findings:

Personalized Learning Plans

1. Reports indicate that students in grades 6-12 have an active Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) utilizing the same platform; teachers and students consistently refer to PLP implementation, however some students report not having much involvement in their PLP development.
2. There is a part-time PLP Coordinator who works with PLP committees at some of the schools to ensure there is consistent messaging and implementation of personalized learning in relation to the high school graduation standards.

Flexible Pathways

1. Students have some opportunities for flexible pathways at the high school, but a systemic plan is not yet in place for universal student access to flexible pathways.
2. Multiple stakeholders report the need for improved communications related to the connection between PLPs and Flexible Pathways.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Parents believe that enrichment opportunities at the elementary and middle level, for students who excel, could be expanded.
2. There are inconsistencies between schools in unified arts course offerings.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Students at some schools, and at multiple grade levels, were able to engage in “passion projects” at some point during the year.
2. Restorative practices are being implemented district wide, and students report the process of having circles in classrooms provides an opportunity for them to have their voices heard.

Commendations

1. The district is committed to ongoing and meaningful professional development related to restorative practices. Teachers, parents, and students at most schools are informed and actively engaging in the process.
2. Students in grades 6-12 have an active PLP utilizing the same platform, and teachers and students consistently refer to PLP implementation.

Recommendations

1. Burlington SD should continue to utilize the Personalized Learning Plan Coordinator to guide the personalization work across the district, specifically ensuring all students required to have PLPs are actively engaged in the development process and implementation.
2. Burlington SD should explore developing a systemic plan ensuring universal student access to Flexible Pathways, and alignment of practices to PLPS.

Safe Healthy Schools

The Vermont Education Quality Standards prioritize the establishment of learning environments that promote the social and physical health of students, facilities that promote learning and security, support for preventing disciplinary infractions and responding appropriately when transgressions occur and engaging in inter-agency work to support students beyond the school day.

Findings:

Multi-tiered System of Supports

1. Though interviewees report needing more intervention time, tutoring and intervention are in place in most schools.
2. MTSS implementation and understanding varies across the schools and teachers report that for academics and behavior, the systems aren't meeting the needs of students.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Evidence reveals implementation of restorative practices, instruction on pro-social behaviors, and/or zones of regulation in all schools.
2. Guidance counselors, mental health practitioners, and student supports are available at all schools, though some report that more assistance is needed.

Physical Well-Being

1. Most students report feeling safe and accepted by peers and teachers.
2. Students have access to breakfast, lunch and snacks, and in some schools students have the opportunity to take food home.

Physical Environment

1. Observation evidence indicates an abundance of student work, communications and school expectations in building hallways.
2. Signage translated into multiple languages, and all gender bathrooms are evident in all buildings.
3. Observation and interview evidence indicates most classrooms have ample space for students, equipment, furniture, and meeting spaces.

Commendations

1. Students, parents and staff feel welcome, safe, and accepted by their school communities.
2. Diversity is appreciated, celebrated and proactively addressed in all schools.

Recommendations

1. Though promising practices are in place across all schools for academic and behavioral supports, aligning and streamlining the methods and approaches used across schools could improve the efficacy of interventions.
2. The district should commit to focus on common understandings, language and district-wide approaches to MTSS implementation.

High Quality Staffing

The Vermont Education Quality Standards prioritize the role of all school leaders in improving student learning and establish the expectation that school leaders will have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities in order to focus on improving student learning by ensuring that professional staff are appropriately licensed, a system of appropriate needs-based professional learning is available and aligned with staff evaluation and supervision policies, continuous improvement.

Findings:

Professional Development

1. Staff report strong desire for a coherent, comprehensive, long-term professional development plan that is relevant to the specific needs of school staff.
2. The district has begun initiation of the instructional coaching program and Professional Learning Communities; however, staff need to ensure that time is protected and that processes are better understood.

Staff Evaluation

1. Artifacts indicate that the district has a differentiated evaluation system that includes teacher goal setting, intensive and ongoing supervision, and colleague consultation; however, many staff report that evaluations are not happening with fidelity, consistency, and, in many cases, very infrequently.
2. Although the district has a policy in place for educator mentoring, teachers interviewed state it is not being enacted.

Leadership

1. Many staff report disconnects between district level leadership decision-making and the actual needs of staff in schools.
2. Teachers feel they have support from building-level leadership and they are able to provide input in the decision-making at the school level.

Staffing

1. Parents and students report that staff is committed to ensuring a positive climate and culture.
2. Staff report that there is insufficient staffing for special education, mental health and intervention needs; staffing is adequate for school psychology.
3. Teachers report they have an in-house substitute system that is accommodating their staffing needs and support for students.

Commendations

1. District staff are committed to providing safe, inclusive, accepting climates to foster positive learning experiences for students.
2. The district has prioritized the development of professional learning communities and an instructional coaching program.

Recommendations

1. BSD should explore ways to ensure that effective communication structures are in place and that district and school level staff have an opportunity to collaborate, provide meaningful input, and give feedback around priorities and focus areas.
2. BSD should work in collaboration with school administrators and staff to build a coherent, long-term professional development plan that is relevant to the specific curricular and instructional needs of school staff.

Investment Priorities

The Vermont Education Quality Standards require that Supervisory Unions carry out their work in accordance with the fundamentals of accounting procedures, provide the full range and breadth of resources, and facilities to support student learning while doing so at a funding level supported by the local community and conduct the business of schooling in accordance with laws that govern education.

Findings:

Continuous Improvement Planning

1. Although the district has a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), reports indicate that there is little input from schools in the development of it and that the current plan has not been well communicated with the faculty and staff at schools.
2. Some schools in the district have leadership teams that are responsible for developing the school-based CIPs, which contain goals related to either math or literacy, and safe and healthy schools.

Student Data System

1. All stakeholders in the district report that the rollout and implementation of PowerSchool has negatively impacted communication, access to data, and academic status.
2. There is evidence of data being used consistently across schools to determine needed academic interventions for students.

Financial Alignment

1. School leadership reports that the district is very good at providing equal resources across the district, but does not feel that distribution is necessarily equitable when considering specific needs of schools.
2. Teachers report strong desires to have voice in the decision-making around instructional materials and professional development.
3. Infrastructure improvements and maintenance practices vary significantly across the schools.

Communication

1. Communication from schools to parents (especially with New American families) is reported to be strong, and includes a variety of communication methods (e.g., phone calls, emails, newsletters, and communication via apps/software).
2. Interviewees report a desire for communication between central office and schools to be improved, including communication around initiatives and related unintended consequences.

Commendations

1. There is consistent use of data at the school level to determine interventions needed academically and behaviorally.
2. Individual schools make an effort to communicate frequently and effectively with all members of their learning community.

Recommendations

1. BSD should consider developing and implementing a transparent communication plan that includes ways to receive input and feedback, as well as provide consistent communication to schools and the community.
2. BSD should consider leveraging the effective use of data across the schools to reexamine their process for determining the equitable distribution of resources for academics, social-emotional, and environmental needs.