

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

March 15, 2019

South Burlington School District
Draft Final Report
Site Visit: February 21, 2019

Compiled by the South Burlington School District Visiting
Team

Submitted by Liza Hartlyn



Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Chamberlin School	249	PK-5
Orchard School	371	PK-5
Rick Marcotte Central School	328	PK-5
Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School	542	6-8
South Burlington High School	940	9-12

South Burlington School District (SBSD) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on February 21, 2019.

During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum/Grants Manager, Director of Ed Support Systems, Business Manager, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other SBSB 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
Jen Randall	Special Educator	Champlain Valley SD
Joseph Resteghini	Principal	Grand Isle SU
Betsy Allen	K-8 Math Coach	Essex Westford ECUUSD
Loretta Grant	Middle School Teacher	Essex Westford ECUUSD
Virginia Yandell	Teacher	Essex Westford ECUUSD
Kristen Johnson	Middle School Teacher	Essex Westford ECUUSD
Gayle Botelho	High School Teacher	Burlington SD
Bonnie Johnson-Aten	District Principal	Burlington SD
Arik Mortenson	PLP Coordinator	Essex Westford ECUUSD
Amy Minor	Superintendent	Colchester School District
Jocelyn Fletcher Scheuch	PBL Coach	Burlington SD
Amy Murphy	SPED Monitoring Specialist	Agency of Education
Josh Souliere	Assistant Director of EQA	Agency of Education
Sigrid Olson	Personalized Learning Coordinator	Agency of Education
Martha Deiss	PBL Global Citizenship	Agency of Education
Peter Drescher	State Director of Education Tech	Agency of Education
Donna Stafford	EQA Manager	Agency of Education
Liza Hartlyn	EQA Coordinator	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. Some students and parents report wishing there was more consistent academic rigor/challenge across grade levels in the high school.
2. Parents report being pleased with a recent curriculum night that was presented to them and claim it was very informative.
3. Evidence indicates that the district has a defined and well communicated curriculum which is implemented across grade levels.

Instructional Practices

1. Observations and interviews reveal a commitment to making technology accessible to students; the use of technology during instruction was observed.
2. Both observations and interviews indicate that teachers support and are practicing choice-based projects and classroom activities.
3. The lack of homework in elementary school is met with mixed feelings by parents, teachers, and students.

Local Assessment System

1. Teachers and school leaders collect a variety of local assessment data throughout the year.
2. Evidence indicates a lack of consistent, systemized approaches to data collection, presentation, and analysis.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Evidence reveals that scales used across schools and grade levels are inconsistent; some schools are using 1-4 scales, some are using 1-3 scales, and some are using traditional grades only.
2. Parents, teachers and students report familiarity with Proficiency-based Learning (PBL) throughout the system; however, they also report inconsistency and confusion around the expectations and implementation of PBL at different grade levels.

Commendations

1. Observations and interviews indicate there is a commitment to students having access to technology, and the use of technology during instruction was observed.

2. Both observations and interviews indicate that teachers support and are practicing choice-based projects and classroom activities.

Recommendations

1. The district should consider a more systematized approach to data collection, analysis and presentation.
2. The district should consider aligning the proficiency scales being used throughout the district and developing more systematic communication among all stakeholders regarding the future of the South Burlington PBL system.

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. The district has established a Personalized Learning Planning (PLP) process at the high school level that emphasizes reflection and artifact collection.
2. Teachers and students report there is not a consistent progression of Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) use in grades 6-8, and the middle school PLPs look quite different from the high school PLPs.

Flexible Pathways

1. In high school, students have a number of learning options including career tech, career development center, Big Picture, exceptional senior year, and work experiences. Information about these programs is included on the school's advisory website.
2. There is a Big Picture Learning program at the high school, which is an opportunity for students to work on a passion project that meets graduation requirements.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. At the high school level, students have a variety of courses to choose from in the areas of Math, Science, English, Humanities, World Languages, Technology, Wellness, and the Arts.
2. Students have opportunities for hands-on learning using a variety of technology and media.

Student Voice and Choice

1. There are multiple opportunities for students to have choice in course selection, pathways, PLP goal-setting, passion projects, and project based learning.
2. Students participate in "passion projects", which are self-chosen projects of interest intended to increase engagement. The passion projects are present in multiple schools and at multiple grade levels.

Commendations

1. The district has developed a clear, documented process (including resources for teachers) around PLPs and the personalized learning planning process at the high school level.

2. Throughout the district, schools provide opportunities for personalizing learning to meet students' needs, such as offering a variety of courses, hands on learning opportunities, flexible pathways, etc.

Recommendations

1. The district should consider a more consistent PLP process and progression that begins, at least, in middle school to help students transition from middle school to high school and increase communication about the process to teachers and students.

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. Across the district, staff provide a variety of interventions.
2. The district is focusing on universal targeted inclusion practices for all students, by providing more professional development for teachers, developing and providing a list of universal instructional practices and accommodations for teachers to use in the classroom, and hiring more Special Education teachers to support students in the classroom. (e.g., inclusion, district provided resources about universal learning/accommodations, universal lesson to the class with individualized work time, and professional development).

Social/Emotional Health

1. South Burlington Healthy Schools has a 4-part focus on mentoring, wellness, mindfulness and diversity/equity/inclusion. There is a coordinator for Healthy Schools and invitation for involvement.
2. Evidence indicates that there are multiple opportunities for teachers to receive professional development to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in the district, however there is variability in access, depending on the role of personnel.
3. Parents indicate a need for increasing mental health supports in the district.

Physical Well-Being

1. Evidence documents the presence of school resource officers across district, and parents report their support and appreciation for their presence; however, students express concern and unease.
2. Parents and students indicate a need to update the playground equipment and maintenance to increase opportunities to be outside during the colder months.

Physical Environment

1. There are custodial and maintenance systems in place to respond to the day-to-day needs and maintenance to the district facilities.
2. There is an overall concern from parents, teachers, and students about the physical structure of buildings across the district, mainly the lack of space and overall age/upkeep of the aging buildings and lack of clarity about long-term facilities planning (e.g., making improvements and updates).

Commendations

1. The district has systems in place to support and include all students in the classroom.
2. The district has made it a priority to focus on wellness, inclusion, diversity, equity, and mindfulness.

Recommendations

1. SBSB should clarify to parents, students, and staff the purpose and role of the School Resource Officer.
2. The district should consider providing more support for teachers in the areas of mental health, and examine the perceived inequities around mental health professional development opportunities.

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. The faculty is invested in district-wide professional development that focuses on Restorative Practices, resiliency, and trauma informed schools.
2. Staff report insufficient, focused professional development for support staff, even though they have access to funds to pay for an outside class. Evidence indicates many internal professional development opportunities are not tailored to their needs.

Staff Evaluation

1. Support staff report that the evaluation system is inconsistent and unclear, they do not have an official evaluation system and have not been evaluated, or have rarely been evaluated.
2. The Danielson Model is used for teacher evaluations, but evidence indicates the evaluation system is currently being revised.

Leadership

1. Parents, staff, and students feel comfortable approaching their administrators and can communicate effectively with them.
2. A distributed leadership model is being used in some schools.
3. Support Staff indicate that they have been discouraged from attending staff meetings. They are unsure of the goals of administration and report not feeling valued.

Staffing

1. At the high school level, special educators are embedded in the classroom and the co-teaching model was observed.
2. There is very little turnover in the district and most staff report feeling valued; however, support staff report feeling undervalued and left out of meetings and necessary communications.

Commendations

1. Faculty and families feel positive about their schools. It is evident that they value relationships and it is modeled on all levels.
2. Systems support grade level collaboration and distributive leadership within the district. Teachers feel supported in trying new learning strategies and techniques.

Recommendations

1. The district should create opportunities for support staff to be included and feel valued, such as including support staff in staff meetings and professional development tailored to their needs.
2. The district should consider developing a communication plan for rolling out the revised teacher evaluation system that clarifies the supervision and evaluation process for faculty and support 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. District personnel have been involved in master planning and visioning since 2004. This work includes collecting feedback from all stakeholders, and exploring ideas for improving learning spaces across the district.
2. The district is engaged in a continuous improvement planning process, which includes significant investment in the following areas: technology, instructional coaches, and professional development in the area of social emotional supports for students.

Student Data System

1. Staff and teacher interviews reveal that the transition to PowerSchool has brought new challenges and a need for consistent professional development and communication to further support the transition.
2. Classroom teachers report that they would benefit from a data system that would provide them with more frequent student performance data to inform and drive instruction.

Financial Alignment

1. All stakeholders report that they have the resources needed to provide a high quality educational experience.
2. There is evidence that finances have been targeted to address and support areas outlined in the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Communication

1. Student work is frequently displayed and valued by the community.
2. Parents report that teachers communicate regularly. Parents and teachers both report that they feel comfortable approaching administration and that the communication coming from the schools is frequent, of high quality, and well received.
3. Teachers and students indicate a lack of consistency and clarity in information that is reported to families in which English is not the native language.

Commendations

1. It is evident that staff have the resources needed to provide a high quality educational experience.
2. Parents and teachers express that they experience consistent and open communication with each other and with leadership in schools.

Recommendations

1. The district should consider reexamining the inclusive communication plans and policies for families in which English is not the native language to increase opportunities for school involvement.
2. The district should consider focusing on professional development that aligns more closely with fostering consistent use of data systems across the district, both to allow for the practical application of using the data system and the interpretation of the data to inform instruction.