

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

December 20, 2017

Battenkill Valley Supervisory Union

Final Report

Site Visit: November 21, 2017

Submitted by Jesse Roy



Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Fisher Elementary School	219	PK-5
Arlington Memorial Middle and High School	211	6-12

Battenkill Valley Supervisory Union (BVSU) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on November 21, 2017.

During the afternoon of the IFR training, the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by BVSU. During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum/Grants Manager, Business Manager, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other BVSU 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
Laura Boudreau	Principal / Curriculum Director	Southwest Vermont SU
Rebecca Carey	Speech and Language Pathologist	Southwest Vermont SU
Carrie Dix	Early Education Coordinator	Windham Central SU
Trish Appel	Teacher	Windham Southwest SU
Kevin Doering	Education Quality Coordinator	Agency of Education
Jesse Roy	Education Quality 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. There is a full-time Curriculum Coordinator and evidence of common curricular resources used in elementary classrooms, including Eureka Math, Reading Street, Amplify, and Foundations.
2. Scheduling in BVSU supports a variety of predictable opportunities for collaboration at the elementary and middle/ high school.

Instructional Practices

1. Parents, students, and teachers shared that the community works together to meet the individual needs of the students, including through daily periods devoted to re-teaching and enrichment.
2. The pairing of students for collaborative work was observed in a number of classrooms.
3. A culture of pride in academic excellence was apparent in student and staff interviews and in the adornment of school halls.

Local Assessment System

1. Staff acknowledges that they are currently building their assessment schedule. They have committed to using Dibels Plus and Fountas and Pinnell three times a year at the elementary level, and the middle school and high school are exploring possible benchmark tools.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Per artifacts and stakeholder reports, BVSU is actively working to establish proficiency-based learning and a standards-based grading system.
2. There is evidence that the proficiency-based graduation requirements are being developed, and teachers are creating tools to assess those requirements.

Commendations

1. BVSU is in the ongoing process of developing proficiency-based learning, grading, and graduation practices.
2. BVSU prioritizes collaboration and opportunities for student choice and enrichment through its scheduling practices.
3. BVSU has coordinated curricular materials across elementary classrooms.

Recommendations

1. BVSU should continue to develop its local assessment system to support decision-making in instructional practices and in determining student needs.

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. BVSU has implemented PLPs, PK-12, exceeding state expectations. Interviews with various stakeholders indicate that plans are frequently updated and utilized throughout the school year, and that they are drafted with input from all parties.
2. The implementation of Personalized Learning Plans is facilitated by a full breadth of courses offered.

Flexible Pathways

1. BVSU utilizes community resources and staff talents and interests to create opportunities for flexible pathways inside and outside of the school.
2. Student and staff report a number of dual enrollment for credit options, CTE, virtual learning, and internships.
3. Students and parents report that courses and content are flexible and differentiated to reflect students' levels of proficiency.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. A wide range of courses are offered at the high school, and students report that classes are offered regardless of number of students who enroll.
2. Per reports and observations, a wide range of unified arts options are made available to student in upper grades, with facilities and resources designated for specific courses.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Student voice and choice is enhanced by the use of PLPs and a wide range of course options.
2. A flex block scheduled four days a week allows students to pursue high-interest enrichment opportunities or to take part in re-teaching as needed.
3. Stakeholders attribute flexibility in instruction to small school size and strong teacher knowledge of students.

Commendations

1. BVSU has implemented PLPs across grade levels, and these plans are regularly updated and utilized in instruction.
2. BVSU makes a wide variety of course offerings, enrichment opportunities, remediation, and flexible pathways options available to all students.

Recommendations

1. As BVSU continues to become more standards-aligned in curriculum and grading, they should be mindful that the expectations of unique course and flex block opportunities reflect these shifts towards increased rigor.

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. BVSU has a multi-tiered system of support team in each building, though staff interviews give indication that these teams function as educational support teams.
2. Per staff interviews, there are indications of a need to establish clear entry and exit criteria for tiered interventions and to address the misunderstanding that Tier 3 support is synonymous with, or a pathway to, special education.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Evidence of early implementation of PBIS is observed at one school, and while no comprehensive universal level SEL initiative is noted at others, a strong sense of clear, shared expectations for behavior is reported and observed across BVSU.
2. There is a culture of acceptance and community expressed strongly by stakeholders at all schools.

Physical Well-Being

1. With an RN and LPN in SU, all students receive yearly screenings for hearing and vision, beginning at age three, as well as obesity monitoring.
2. Staff and parents report that 10-12 law enforcement officers live in close proximity to school and are actively involved in the school community, promoting comfort among students and reducing anxiety.

Physical Environment

1. Student work samples are featured prominently throughout building spaces.
2. BVSU schools have designated spaces and materials for a variety of science, technology and unified arts offerings.

Commendations

1. BVSU schools prioritize the social-emotional well-being, physical health and the individual needs of every student, as evidenced by observations, professional development priorities, and the reports of many stakeholders.
2. BVSU schools feature a litany of resources to support the eventual adoption of tiered instruction, as well as staff motivated to provide it.

Recommendations

1. BVSU leadership and staff should continue to develop an understanding of the structures and processes of data-driven MTSS.
2. While BVSU schools actively foster social-emotional well-being, steps to formalize supports and measures, including through an MTSS approach, will help to ensure that all students have their needs met.

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. BVSU has a three-year contract with the Great Schools Partnership to develop their proficiency-based grading system.
2. BVSU supports individual staff members in pursuing professional development based on needs or interests, and provides time for staff to share new learning with colleagues.
3. Staff report professional development activities largely concerned with supporting the whole-child, including PBiS, trauma-informed practices, Mindfulness and Restorative Justice training.

Staff Evaluation

1. Both school and administrative staff report a need for more development of staff evaluations, including formal methods for observations.

Leadership

1. Staff reports a number of opportunities for teacher leadership roles, including those that are stipend-supported.
2. Parents at one school report that administrators consider the unique strengths and styles of staff members when determining student placements. At another school, staff strengths and interests are incorporated into course offerings.

Staffing

1. Per artifacts, interviews and observations, BVSU schools feature high levels of staffing to support individual learning needs and to allow for the provision of unique offerings.
2. Administrators report that recruiting candidates for some positions can be challenging, though they have had some success recently. Artifacts indicate a shortage of special education teachers and a reliance on long-term substitutes.
3. Staff and leadership are largely viewed as, and view each other as, supportive, collaborative and invested in the success of every student.

Commendations

1. BVSU provides a range of professional development opportunities to staff, both coordinated across schools and individualized to staff member needs and interests.
2. Within and across groups of stakeholders, the BVSU community benefits from an intimate knowledge of each other's strengths and needs.

Recommendations

1. BVSU should continue to develop a formal, predictable process for evaluations, to support teacher and administrator growth and accountability.

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. Improvement planning artifacts demonstrate an absence of documented data use in the identification of improvement needs.
2. BVSU's continuous improvement plan does not feature specific, measurable goals.

Student Data System

1. BVSU features a parent portal with assignments, grades and student information that is popular with parents and staff.

Financial Alignment

1. Administrative staff reports a 15:1 classroom staff-to-student ratio that has been consistent for a number of years.
2. Parent's report that the community is supportive of the work of their schools and that budgets are passed easily.

Communication

1. Parents express easy access to staff, both in-person and digitally.
2. Teaching staff express an emphasis on vertical communication to promote coordination of instruction and student support, both within and between schools.
3. All stakeholders describe the benefits of a small, close-knit school community in determining and meeting student and family needs.

Commendations

1. BVSU is characterized by strong internal and external communication.
2. BVSU had adopted a universal digital student data system.

Recommendations

1. BVSU should continue to develop a collaborative, data-driven approach to identifying SU and school improvement needs and crafting specific, measurable goals.
2. While BVSU provides students with an admirable amount of supports, resources and unique learning opportunities, it should continue to pursue options for greater financial efficiency and sustainability.