

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

January 10, 2018

Windham Central Supervisory Union

Final Report

Site Visit: October 24, 2017

Submitted by Jesse Roy



Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Dover Elementary	99	PK-6
Jamaica Village School	53	PK-6
Leland and Gray	307	7-12
Marlboro Elementary	75	K-8
NewBrook Elementary	115	K-6
Townshend Elementary	79	PK-6
Wardsboro Elementary	44	PK-6
Windham Elementary	16	PK-6

Windham Central Supervisory Union (WCSU) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on October 24, 2017.

During the afternoon of the IFR training, the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by WCSU. 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 WCSU 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
Amy Fowler	Deputy Secretary	Agency of Education
Donna Stafford	Education Quality Manager	Agency of Education
Ernie Wheeler	Special Education Monitoring Coordinator	Agency of Education
John Nelson	Systems Developer	Agency of Education
Kevin Doering	Education Quality Coordinator	Agency of Education
Jesse Roy	Education Quality Coordinator	Agency of Education
Ron Ryan	Program Manager for Licensing	Agency of Education
Luisa Millington	Curriculum Director	Battenkill Valley SU
Rebecca Fillon	Principal	Windham Southwest SU
Christine Kurucz	Teacher	Windham Southwest SU
Micah Hayre	Principal	Windham Southwest SU
Tracey Gamache	Teacher	Windham Southwest SU
Christopher Maguire	Assistant Principal	Southwest Vermont SU
Adam Carmichael	Teacher	Southwest Vermont SU
Karen Wasilenko	Interventionist	Southwest Vermont SU
Karen Theoret	Special Education Teacher	Southwest Vermont SU
Pat Conway	Math Coach	Southwest Vermont SU
Jeff Johnson	Principal	Southwest Vermont SU
Lauren Howley	Teacher	Bennington-Rutland SU
Kate Wright	Special Education Teacher	Bennington-Rutland SU
Brenda LoPresti	Teacher	Bennington-Rutland SU
Susan Gibeault	Teacher	Bennington-Rutland SU
Caitlin Cavagnino	Special Education Director	Bennington-Rutland SU

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. The coordination of a standards-aligned math and ELA curriculum is a focus of the WCSU continuous improvement plan and is supported by professional development.
2. Artifacts and observations demonstrate SU-wide alignment of the science curriculum to the NGSS.
3. The coordination of curriculum and instruction between grade-level teachers is supported through WCSU-wide professional learning community meetings (GLAMs) held several times each year.

Instructional Practices

1. Differentiated and small-group instruction was observed in many WCSU classrooms.
2. Observations, school staff, and student reports indicate that not all WCSU teachers integrate technology into everyday teaching and learning, despite high numbers of devices.
3. Some staff and parents report that autonomy in curriculum and instruction is a strength of their schools, while others expressed a desire for more consistency and accountability.

Local Assessment System

1. Artifacts indicate, and some stakeholders report, that WCSU is developing a local comprehensive assessment system, though degrees of implementation vary.
2. Some WCSU staff reported frequent use of formative assessments to guide instruction, and some professional development around formative assessment has occurred.
3. Per staff reports, the format, regularity, and goals of data-team and EST meetings differed between WCSU schools.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Artifacts and stakeholder reports reveal ongoing WCSU efforts to promote understanding of Proficiency-Based Learning and Grading, including through community information nights and professional development.
2. Observations and interviews demonstrate some early implementation of proficiency-based learning practices.
3. WCSU artifacts demonstrate the development of a standards-based report card at the elementary level. Observations and reports indicate very early stages of implementation.

Commendations

1. WCSU has begun to implement a coherent local assessment system for early literacy and mathematics.
2. WCSU has prioritized opportunities for collaboration between schools, supporting SU-wide efforts towards increased coordination of curriculum and instruction.
3. Teachers in several schools demonstrated strengths in differentiating instruction, including for multi-grade classrooms.

Recommendations

1. WCSU should continue to build on early efforts towards curriculum coordination, supporting equitable and rigorous opportunities for all students.
2. WCSU should continue work to develop understanding of proficiency-based learning and grading among all stakeholders and should bolster efforts to universalize implementation.

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. There is growing understanding of Personalized Learning Plans at the high school, supported by the efforts of a PLP and Flexible Pathways coordinator.
2. Student-led goal setting in grades K-6 occurs at a number of WCSU schools.

Flexible Pathways

1. WCSU high school students have Flexible Pathways options such as dual enrollment, AP coursework, international travel and a variety of extracurricular options.
2. Some elementary stakeholders in WCSU express that small school sizes enable flexibility in instruction, curriculum, and grouping to meet individual student needs.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Most WCSU elementary schools host after-school programs and extracurricular activities, though these offerings vary between locations.
2. There were disparities observed and reported in the breadth of course offerings and enrichment opportunities available to WCSU elementary students during the school day.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Middle and high school provides a morning discovery/flex block where students receive repeated or remediated instruction, enrichment opportunities or can pursue a personal academic interest.
2. Students in classrooms at various WCSU sites had choices in what they were studying and how they demonstrated learning.
3. There is evidence of student-led conferences at some WCSU schools.

Commendations:

1. Collectively, WCSU schools provide a wide variety of academic options and extracurricular opportunities for students of all ages.
2. WCSU schools work to meet the individual needs of students through PLPs, student-led goal setting, opportunities for self-directed learning and flexible approaches to instruction.

Recommendations

1. WCSU should consider assessing the equity of course offerings and enrichment activities available to elementary students.
2. WCSU should consider identifying and disseminating best practices in individualized and student-directed learning across the SU.

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. All WCSU schools have adopted Aimsweb as a benchmarking and progress monitoring tool.
2. WCSU staff report varying degrees of appreciation for the usefulness of a data-driven approach, and understanding and implementation of MTSS varies across the SU.
3. WCSU and building leaders are working to promote a culture where differentiated instruction is seen as largely the responsibility of classroom teachers.

Social/ Emotional Health

1. An emphasis on students' social and emotional well-being is evident across schools, though approaches to providing this support vary. Buildings are implementing various universal programs with varying degrees of fidelity.
2. Some stakeholders in WCSU schools report concerns with the consistency with which poor behavior is addressed.

Physical Well-Being

1. Safety planning and regular safety drills are reported across WCSU schools.
2. Most WCSU stakeholders describe their schools as safe and respectful.

Physical Environment

1. A number of WCSU schools feature upgrades for energy efficiency and renewability.
2. Buildings maintenance is handled by individual WCSU schools and a wide range of building conditions were observed.

Commendations

1. An emphasis on student emotional and social well-being is evident across WCSU schools.
2. WCSU and school leaders are aligned in their belief that data-driven instructional decision-making is an essential component of supporting all students.

Recommendations

1. WCSU should continue efforts to promote staff understanding of expectations for, and the value of, a data-driven multi-tiered system of supports.
2. WCSU should consider assessing the fidelity with which each school is implementing a Tier 1 program for social and emotional learning.

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. WCSU staff report that principals have monthly meetings and an annual retreat to support their growth as leaders and to promote consistency in school goals and practices.
2. Staff interviewees noted that WCSU professional development has recently focused on implementing the new common assessment system, while other PD needs are determined school-by-school.
3. Artifacts and staff reports indicate that WCSU has a new staff-mentoring program in place.

Staff Evaluations

1. Staff across WCSU described wide variation in the consistency with which the current evaluation system is implemented and shared a wide range of opinions on the usefulness of being evaluated.
2. Stakeholders report that work is underway to develop a new system of teacher and administrator evaluation and coaching.

Leadership

1. Staff reported that new WCSU principals are assigned mentors to support them in their first year.
2. Parents, students, and teachers expressed generally positive opinions of the work of building leaders in responding to their needs.
3. Interviewees described the relationship between WCSU central office and principals as being complicated by the direct oversight of principals by local school boards.

Staffing

1. Observed classroom student to staff ratios are generally below 7:1. Some parents and staff expressed feeling that this level of staffing is necessary and valuable.
2. Staff interviewees noted that there is no shared master agreement between districts, so working conditions vary across WCSU.

Commendations

1. Most WCSU parents, teachers, and building leaders view the current central office administration favorably and support the direction that the school system is headed in.
2. The work and approach of building leaders are appreciated across WCSU.

Recommendations

1. WCSU should explore options to formalize working conditions across buildings, including staffing ratios, the availability of professional development opportunities, and the consistency with which evaluations are conducted.

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:

Communication

1. WCSU staff report recent efforts by central office staff to increase SU-level communication.
2. By staff and parent reports, school communication practices vary widely in format and regularity between WCSU buildings.

Continuous Improvement

1. Most school Continuous Improvement Plans have goals that are aligned to those in the WCSU plan.
2. School Continuous Improvement Plans vary in completeness, with some including more references to data, consideration for individual school needs and specificity in goals than others.

Financial Alignment

1. Local boards allow for flexibility in budgeting and spending, but some stakeholders report a lack of equity in resources and coherence in priorities between WCSU schools.
2. WCSU staff members report inequities and confusion concerning the availability of personal professional development funds.
3. Observed levels of maintenance and facilities updates varied between buildings, though WCSU is considering employing a facilities manager to centralize efforts and free principals from this aspect of building oversight.

Student Data System

1. WCSU administrators report plans to adopt an SU-wide data system.

Commendations

1. Alignment in Continuous Improvement goals and efforts to centralize some services represents a move towards increased efficiency and equity in WCSU.
2. WCSU central office staff has prioritized communication as part of steps towards building more coherence between schools.

Recommendations

1. WCSU should invest in an SU-wide student data system, facilitating data-driven decision-making at the classroom, school, and SU level.
2. WCSU should consider assessing communication practices at the school level as a step towards ensuring a shared understanding of practices and initiatives.