

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

April 14, 2020

Orleans Central Supervisory Union
Final Report
Site Visit: February 4, 2020

Compiled by:

The Orleans Central SU IFR Visiting Team

Submitted by:

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Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Albany Community	95	K-8
Barton Graded School	160	K-8
Brownington Central	115	K-8
Glover Community	100	K-8
Irasburg Village	130	K-8
Lake Region UHSD	375	9-12
Orleans Elementary	110	K-8

The Orleans Central Supervisory Union (OCSU) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on February 4, 2020.

Prior to the visit, the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by OCSU. During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Director of Instructional Services, Business Manager, Director of Special Services, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, administrators and in several cases, their assistants. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other OCSU 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
Lisa Lessard	Reading Specialist	Kingdom East SU
Emily Greaves	Coach	Caledonia Central SU
Toni Marra	Education Quality	Agency of Education
Jill Bell	Elementary Interventionist	Caledonia Central SU
Greg Young	Integration Coordinator	Agency of Education
Ashley Miles	Teacher	Kingdom East SU
Kevin Doering (lead)	Education Quality	Agency of Education
Ashley Gray	Principal	Caledonia Central SU
Anita Mayhew	Asst Principal	North Country SU
Deborah Ormsbee	Independent Schools Coordinator	Agency of Education
Nicole Corbett	Principal	North Country SU
Amy Lanoue	Special Educator	North Country SU
Anne Bordonaro	Divisions Director of Federal and Education Support Programs	Agency of Education
Glenn Hankinson	Business Manager	North Country SU
BillyJo Roberts	Teacher	Kingdom East SU
April Brown	Interventionist	St. Johnsbury SD
Jenn Dale	Education Quality	Agency of Education
Patricia Hunt	Elementary Interventionist	North Country SU
Elaine Collins	Principal	North Country SU
Pat Fitzsimmons	Proficiency-BL Program Manager	Agency of Education
Jodi Elliott	Curriculum Director	St. Johnsbury SD
Matt McLean	MS Math Teacher	St. Johnsbury SD
Dawanna Chase	Teacher	Kingdom East 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. OCSU is working to create an aligned curriculum through curricular maps and unit calendars. This work is in progress and some areas or schools are further along than others. There are teams in place that use the Professional Learning Communities model to continuously work on the curriculum, with representation from all schools in OCSU. A strong sense of teacher leaders and Professional Learning Communities as the foundation of this work was present in the evidence.
2. Some educators see adopted programs as tools and incorporate other resources to meet the needs of students.
3. Coordination with the curriculum throughout the schools was less evident in the area of science and global citizenship than in other areas such as language arts and math.

Local Assessment System

1. According to interview evidence, some staff and parents feel the report card does not clearly reflect student learning.
2. Across schools, there was a variety of both summative and formative assessments utilized. The assessments were used for diagnostic and benchmarking purposes. According to the evidence collected, the local assessment plan is not being used consistently across the SU.

Instructional Practices

1. "I can" statements, learning targets, and transferable skills are posted in most classrooms.
2. Teachers expressed they have support via professional development resources, as well as training in a wide variety of instructional strategies to meet student's needs.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. OCSU is taking an intentional approach to Proficiency Based Learning by developing banded K-12 proficiencies and indicators, communicating with parents, and scaling rollout to address student and parent understanding in Proficiency Based Learning.
2. There is a range of understanding by parents and students regarding proficiency-based grading.
3. OCSU has K-12 cross-curricular proficiencies and indicators in place; grade level learning scales are currently being developed.

4. In an effort to improve consistency of implementing Proficiency Based Learning, professional learning communities are focusing on this topic

Commendations

1. Support & resources are in place for all staff and students to move forward and continue developing the system for academic proficiency. Students and staff feel they have a voice in the decision making process.
2. An aligned curriculum is in place K-12, there are teams in place to continue this work with voices from all schools, and the work is ongoing and valued by staff.
3. OCSU has K-12 cross-curricular proficiencies and indicators in place; grade level learning scales are currently being developed.

Recommendations

1. OCSU has put many things in motion that need time to develop and mature, and should work to communicate progress, successes, and challenges to stakeholders along the way.
2. It is recommended that OCSU pursue further curriculum coordination across its schools. The curriculum alignment is in different places between the schools and the schools could use time to work together to align their system and learn from each others' experiences and expertise.

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. Interview evidence indicates students are given the opportunity to build on their strengths, develop learning situations and follow their interests through the use of Personalized Learning Plans.
2. During interviews we learned that students document their portfolios using Power School.

Flexible Pathways

1. Per artifacts reviewed and supported by interview evidence, there are multiple pathways for students to experience learning and meet their individual needs, both in and out of school.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Parent interviews revealed that students who are advanced are not challenged enough.
2. During some of the parent interviews, several stated they believe that behaviors take precedence over academics; stating that academics are not the priority in some of the schools visited.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Students reported opportunities to learn about what interests them inside and outside of school.
2. Per artifact review, there are opportunities for students to take ownership of their own learning.

Commendations

1. Per evidence reviewed, there are multiple learning pathways available for students.
2. Through interviews, students stated that they are given the opportunity to build on their strengths, and follow their interests through the use of Personalized Learning Plans.

Recommendations

1. The SU should research and address as necessary parent perceptions that academics are purportedly not being addressed in some of the schools sufficiently, and that there is a shortage of academic challenges for some of its 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. All schools reviewed are implementing a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) at some level, and different buildings provided interview evidence suggesting that a school's approach was locally differentiated.
2. Education Support Teams has been a focus of work throughout the SU, and is in place at all schools.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Staff and administrative interview evidence indicates growing needs when working with students with trauma, having outside of school environment troubles, or those challenged in other ways and requesting the need for additional resources
2. Some parents and students reported incidents of bullying, and that although they believed the school was handling it professionally, it was still an issue in some schools.

Physical Well-Being

1. There is a strong emphasis on physical well-being and being active. For example, implementing longer recess, focus on getting outside to ski, and healthy snacks, to name a few.
2. Although many students and parents stated they feel safe at their particular school, there was additional interview evidence to suggest that this was not the case across all of the schools in the SU.

Physical Environment

1. From observations, there is evidence of flexible seating options for students in different grade levels as well as the opportunity in several schools visited for physical breaks during or after classes.
2. Students and parents stated that space is an issue at some schools, specifically pointing to gym size in a few instances.

Commendations

1. OCSU has put focus on the Educational Support Team process, it is in place at all schools, and is supported by OCSU leadership.
2. There is an emphasis on physical well-being in and out of the classroom.

Recommendations

1. OCSU should review interior spaces inside its buildings, focusing on the gym for any school(s) where staff/student/parent input indicates a concern.
2. OCSU is encouraged to increase awareness around bullying and continue to ensure the policies and practices surrounding bullying are implemented consistently across all schools.

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 reported that professional development is inconsistent between schools within the supervisory union. Although the Central Office provides and encourages instructional staff and other professionals to participate, it is often teacher centered, and not always aligned with SU goals and objectives. Staff indicated that some schools have more opportunities than other schools.
2. Several support staff indicated that they believed they were receiving inadequate professional development opportunities. Paras stated that tuition reimbursement is not adequate and in some cases they have to wait two years before being allowed to access support.
3. There are numerous Professional Learning Community opportunities offered for staff at grade level, within content areas for Middle/High School levels, and in individual schools. Professional Learning Communities include opportunities for mentoring for new teachers, coaching for seasoned veterans, and collaborative work between and among peers and schools throughout the SU.

Staff Evaluation

1. All teachers participate in a process called Teacher Evaluation Plan (TEP) where they choose three goals, collect evidence throughout the school year, and reflect on their goals. At the end of the school year their TEPs are collected by the SU.

Leadership

1. Professional development planning appears to emphasize teachers' analysis of their own practice and identification of their personal learning objectives. There does not appear to be an equivalent focus on alignment with district-wide professional learning objectives or professional evaluation findings according to the evidence.
2. Support for enacting teachers' professional learning objectives appears to vary by building.

Staffing

1. Multiple schools reported that it has been difficult to fill positions with qualified staff. There was evidence that the applicant pool is small when advertising for open positions. Because of this shortage, teachers are often taking on multiple roles to help support student needs or positions in multiple schools.

2. At multiple schools parents and students shared that staff were dedicated and willing to help students. They felt comfortable communicating with teachers and felt comfortable asking questions.

Commendations

1. There appear to be strong personal and professional coaching and mentoring supports in place (both formal and informal) to support new teachers, which is very important since turnover was expressed as a constant challenge.
2. OCSU utilizes The Teacher Evaluation Plan, where evidence and reflections are recorded with the data collected SU wide.
3. Interview evidence testifies to significant feedback indicating teacher and staff dedication and support for their students.

Recommendations

1. OCSU is encouraged to review and expand professional learning opportunities for support staff in order to improve instructional practices to better serve all students, but in particular at risk students with a variety of significant needs.
2. OCSU should consider examining current professional learning practices to ensure and improve consistency in support for teachers' professional learning across the SU.

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. Interview evidence indicates that some staff and building administrators struggle with what they characterize as a disconnect between State CIP requirements and their perceived reality of the severity of their student's social and emotional needs. For example, visitors heard that the forms simply cannot capture the scope of the problem.
2. Despite the state's requirement of having parents involved in the Continuous Improvement Plan process, there is mixed evidence on the ability of schools to integrate parents in this process.

Student Data System

1. Proficiency-based learning is a requirement at the secondary level and is reported as a shift by some stakeholders.
2. Staff reported that Rubicon is used for curriculum mapping at some of the schools interviewed.
3. PowerSchool is utilized for academic and behavioral data, however since evidence was not collected at every school on this subject, an SU wide finding cannot be made on this.

Financial Alignment

1. Artifact and interview evidence indicate what stakeholders believe is a sufficient level of academic support resources, however the same interviewees reported a specific need for more social-emotional learning and resources(i.e. trauma-informed support, behavior supports).
2. As evidenced by the hiring of a facilities director position and interviews with administrators and teachers, there is a collaborative effort in the SU to align and equalize resources among its schools.

Communication

1. Evidence suggests that there are multiple forms of communication used (i.e. Friday folders, newsletters, emails, presentations, meetings, social media, phone calls) to communicate with stakeholders.
2. There is data to show that there is a wide range of opportunities for common planning time and collaboration across the SU, ranging from very little to significant amounts of weekly time.

Commendations

1. Across OCSU, there are strong indications of academic support in place to meet student needs.
2. There is a collaborative effort in the SU to align and equalize resources among its schools, particularly addressed at the school board level, to provide equity of resources across all schools.

Recommendations

1. OCSU is encouraged to examine the potential need for additional social-emotional support and resources for students and teachers across the SU.
2. OCSU should consider reviewing its Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) process to increase parent input, as well as providing the Agency with suggested improvements to more adequately account for their concerns regarding increasing student trauma provided to the visiting team during the IFR.