

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

December 20,
2019

Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union

Final Report

Site Visit: November 5, 2019

Compiled by:

The Orleans Southwest IFR Visiting Team

Submitted by

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Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Craftsbury Academy	145	5-12
Craftsbury Elementary	55	PK-4
Hazen Union High School	280	7-12
Hardwick Elementary	220	PK-6
Lakeview Elementary	55	K-6
Woodbury Elementary	50	K-6
Wolcott Elementary School	110	PK-6

Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on November 5, 2019.

Prior to the November 5 date, the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by OSSU. During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Accounts Manager, Chief Financial Officer, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other OSSU 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
Bethann Pirie	Elementary School Teacher	Lamoille North SU
Betzi Goodman	Elementary School Teacher	Lamoille North SU
Erin Carr	Elementary School Teacher	Lamoille North SU
Katie Bryant	Middle School Teacher	Lamoille North SU
Melinda Mascolino	Principal	Lamoille North SU
Dan Morrison	Principal	Lamoille South UUSD
Jim Calhoun	School psychologist	Lamoille South UUSD
Kate Torrey	Principal	Lamoille South UUSD
Maura Weiler	PBL Coach	Lamoille South UUSD
Ben White	Curriculum Director	Mt. Mansfield UUSD
Heather Ferreira	Elementary School Teacher	Mt. Mansfield UUSD
Mary Abele-Austin	District Math Coach 5-8	Mt. Mansfield UUSD
Rebecca Thibault	Human Resource Director	Mt. Mansfield UUSD
Debra Taylor	Superintendent	Washington Central UUSD
Jim Nichols-Fleming	Special Educator	Washington Central UUSD
Lisa Hanna	Grades 5-6 Instruction	Washington Central UUSD
Lori Bibeau	Business Manager	Washington Central UUSD
Andrew Prowten	Program Technician	Agency of Education
Kevin Doering (lead)	Education Quality	Agency of Education
Marni Troop	Project Aware Coordinator	Agency of Education
Caitlin Chisholm	vtMTSS Coordinator	Agency of Education
Ryan Parkman	PBL Mathematics 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 interview evidence of curriculum inconsistency between schools, but OSSU is in the initial stages of aligning their curriculum.
2. The Bridges in Mathematics program is in various phases of implementation across the SU at the elementary level.

Local Assessment System

1. OSSU is in the beginning stages of aligning assessments across the district.
2. The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System is used consistently across the SU.

Instructional Practices

1. There was evidence of widespread access to technology, especially more modern applications, such as 3-D printers, Recent versions of smartboard technology, MacBooks, etc.
2. Several elementary classrooms were teaching and using cursive handwriting.
3. Learning targets were posted and noted in classrooms observed across the SU.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. According to interviews with parents and students, communication about Proficiency Based Learning is lacking.
2. There is evidence showing that teachers are trying various instructional and reflective practices to encourage students to make learning a personal, relevant and community-based experience.
3. According to interview evidence at different levels, the Supervisory Union has reached out to develop effective community partnerships to promote external learning.

Commendations

1. OSSU is encouraging and supporting innovative instructional practices derived from both traditional and 21st century practices.
2. OSSU has made great efforts to develop community partnerships to enhance learning and transferable skills.

Recommendations

1. OSSU is encouraged to increase communication and development of the Proficiency Based Learning system across the SU and provide opportunities for community engagement and education about the shift to Proficiency Based Learning.
2. OSSU is encouraged to continue the coordination and development of the local assessment systems, along with curriculum alignment across the SU.

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. During interviews, students were unable to make connections between their Personalized Learning Plans, Proficiency Based Grading System and Graduation requirements.
2. During interviews, teachers indicated that their recent change to their approach to Personalized Learning Plans is supporting consistent implementation and clear expectations for all.

Flexible Pathways

1. There are a number of flexible ways for students to demonstrate their learning and explore career paths through local community connections.
2. Through observation and interview, there is a wide range in the variability of ways to show proficiency in content.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Through interviews, parents and students indicated that schools offer programs outside the school walls during the school day such as skiing, outdoor adventure facility and community health training, to enhance their courses of study.
 2. During interviews, parents and students indicated a need for more effective communication in regards to the resources and programs available to students to participate in.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Students indicated their ability to advocate within the school in order to create new opportunities, clubs and systemic changes to school programming.
2. During interviews, students and administration shared their experience in Teacher-Student Advisory programs and their focus on building community and creating connections for each student in order to support their learning.

Commendations

1. Schools have systems in place, such as advisory programs, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and student leadership programs, in order to focus on building a positive school community and supporting all learners.
2. Schools are focused on connecting with and giving back to their local and global communities through a variety of student empowered initiatives.

Recommendations

1. OSSU is encouraged to enhance the transparency and focused communication of opportunities available to all learners within the community and how to access them.
2. OSSU communication of the Personalized Learning Plans, Proficiency-Based Grading Requirements and how they connect, should be made clearer to teachers, students, and parents, underscored by a consistent approach to their implementation.

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. Meetings and collaboration among various stakeholders are happening for various purposes according to evidence at all of the schools within the SU.
2. Family voice is involved and communication with families is evident across schools.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Some schools found challenges fully supporting increasing numbers of students with high behavioral needs.
2. PBIS was evident in the schools; there were readily visible programs in place to support the implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports in schools and behaviors noticed in the school suggest that a positive system was working well.
3. The merger has resulted in some confusion and misinformation about impact on schools, inclusive of closures.

Physical Well-Being

1. There is a strong sense of community with the local schools as evidenced in interviews and observations.
2. Schools are meeting students basic needs, specifically around food and hunger, providing healthy snacks and access to various times to eat.

Physical Environment

1. The physical environments vary widely depending on the location or school (i.e., heating, space available, etc.)
2. There is a wide variety and inconsistency of how student work is displayed in schools.

Commendations

1. The Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports system has had a positive impact on all stakeholders.
2. The schools across the SU are seen as an important part of their community.

Recommendations

1. OSSU is encouraged to direct attention to the systemic involvement of parents under the auspices of the merger, and the increasing levels of noted student social/emotional needs.
2. OSSU is encouraged to examine how facilities are used based on student needs and class size.

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. Professional development is a priority for OSSU to unify the district according to interview evidence, and staff expressed an appreciation for the choice of professional development opportunities.
2. Evidence indicates that OSSU is employing a systematic approach to developing staff expertise, in order to allow veteran teachers the opportunity to coach/mentor newer teachers.

Staff Evaluation

1. Teachers generally expressed that the evaluation system is fair and feedback is effective.
2. Evidence indicates that there are inconsistencies in some schools about how non-teaching staff members are evaluated.

Leadership

1. Student wellness and trauma awareness is a focus of leadership and professional development.
2. Staff, parents and students communicated a positive relationship with the central office and their communications about the merger.

Staffing

1. Availability of specialized staff (i.e. Guidance, BI, School Nurse) is inconsistent across OSSU according to interviews and observations.
2. Staff, parents and students expressed an appreciation for the culture of collegiality and communication

Commendations

1. Overall the school community expressed positive sentiments around the Supervisory Union's management of the merger.
2. Teacher evaluation is implemented consistently and perceived as effective across OSSU schools.

Recommendations

1. OSSU is encouraged to address the inequity of availability of specialized staff in each building and to check on how non-teaching staff are evaluated in each of its schools.

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. Interviews with central office staff and teachers indicated that in-service days are dedicated to offering half days for grade level or content level Professional Learning Community work. Other half days are Professional Development Academy with 11 courses offered, some with credit. Teachers appreciated the offerings and found them helpful.
2. Document evidence and interviews indicated an increasing emphasis on including social emotional learning, Multi-tiered Systems of Supports, trauma and equity when examining proposed goals and investments.

Student Data System

1. There is a robust system of local assessments and SU-wide standardized assessment systems, and the central office uses this system to generate reports for schools.
2. Parents at the elementary level appreciate the data analysis system that spots a student's struggle early and communicates that to parents in an easy to understand format. Secondary parents report that the systems are under development and in the beginning stages of implementation.

Financial Alignment

1. Parents saw no deficits in resources for the students' education stating that in their view, OSSU was utilizing resources properly. Students have everything they need according to interview evidence.
2. Teachers felt they had plenty of technology related resources for a small school on more than one occasion; these included the use of google docs, microphones, speech to text, student's using the 3-D printer for special projects, use of SeeSaw and Freckles apps and other supports from their tech department(s). All classrooms supplied with LCD projectors, document cameras, tv screens or smartboards.

Communication

1. From interviews of central office and principals, central office administrators are shifting their approach by connecting change initiatives to Vermont Agency of Education recommendations and meeting regularly with principals to provide support.
2. Artifact review showed a focus on community engagement and parent involvement in the OSSU improvement plan and by individual schools as a focus area. However, as per parent interviews,

parents had no idea what the Action Plan or Continuous Improvement Plan was except to note that facilities improvements were being made.

Commendations

1. All stakeholders felt that schools were well resourced and that students did not lack any materials, supplies, or technology. Students, parents, teachers felt budgetary resources in terms of materials and staffing were well utilized and met the needs of the students
2. OSSU is using a proactive approach to centralizing services following the merger (nursing, facilities, instructional coaches, special ed staffing, utilizing tech resources). This is also evident in the Superintendent's visits with Principals to provide consistent instructional support.

Recommendations

1. OSSU is encouraged to expand community and parental input into the Continuous Improvement process and plans.