

Integrated Field Review Report

Barre Unified Union SD
Final Report
Site Visit: October 29, 2019

Submitted by BUUSD Visiting Team



Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Barre City School	844	K-8
Barre Town School	833	K-8
Spaulding High School	881	9-12
Central Vermont Career Center	125	9-12

Barre Unified Union SD participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on October 29, 2019.

During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction Director, Business Manager, Special Services Director, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other BUUSD 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
Jessica Stainton	Curriculum Coordinator	Windsor Central SU
Sherry Sousa	Director of Student Support	Windsor Central SU
Melinda Robinson	Elementary Teacher	Orange Southwest UUSD
David Roller	Principal	Orange Southwest UUSD
Shannon Lessley	Director of Curriculum & Assessment	Harwood UUSD
Donarae Dawson	Director of Special Services	Harwood UUSD
Sarah Schoolcraft	Assistant Principal	Harwood UUSD
Sussette Bollard	Superintendent	Central Vermont SU
Jessica Poe	Coordinator of Student Support	Central Vermont SU
Dennis Delena	HS Teacher	Central Vermont SU
Toni Marra	Education Quality Coordinator	VTAOE
Josh Souliere	Assistant Director Education Quality	VTAOE
Jenn Dale	Education Quality Coordinator	VTAOE
Kevin Doering	Education Quality Coordinator	VTAOE

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 ample evidence that there is curricular alignment across schools in the School District.
2. The Schools District has hired curriculum coordinator/coaches who are working across district to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment across the system.

Local Assessment System

1. Confidence in common assessments varied between teachers, administration and parents.
2. Although there is evidence of utilizing data as part of a local assessment process, assessment tools vary among schools and grade levels.

Instructional Practices

1. Evidence indicates there are inconsistencies in work expectations and grading practices experienced from school to school.
2. There are opportunities for individualized enrichment for all students in core academic subjects.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Evidence suggests there are elements of a proficiency based system in place. Evidence also suggests there is limited coordination and calibration of these elements.
2. Evidence at the secondary level indicates positive work on the instructional side of implementing Proficiency Based Learning, however teachers, parents and students agree the evaluation/grading system needs improving.

Commendations

1. Curriculum coordination work has been completed to align vertically and horizontally, and it provides teachers with the support and resources needed to support implementation.
2. Students state they are academically supported by their teachers and are able to access help when they need it.

Recommendations

1. BUUSD is encouraged to continue efforts to develop their Proficiency Based Learning and grading model, ensuring coordination efforts school to school, classroom to classroom.

2. BUUSD is encouraged to continue their work to define and communicate a local assessment system that reflects the districts' selected proficiency standards.

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. Evidence indicates that Personalized Learning Plan development and implementation is not consistent across the middle and high school level.
2. Although evidence indicates Personalized Learning plans exist, the intentional use of them was not evident from school to school.

Flexible Pathways

1. Students and staff value work based learning opportunities and career exploration opportunities that are offered.
2. Various Flexible Pathways are offered, but some interviewees suggest access can feel inequitable due to the need for transportation to access some opportunities, and the need to be part of a specific program in order to access certain classes.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Evidence indicates there are a lot of course options for students, including Advanced Placement courses, Honors, Dual Enrollment, the Arts, and Early College, to name a few.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Students have choices regarding the classes they can take and how their classroom communities are set up/arranged.
2. Most students report they are a part of a leadership group and feel they can influence change.

Commendations

1. Students and parents express they appreciate the strong support and commitment to the Arts, the variety of programs/courses offered, and opportunities for student voice/choice.
2. BUUSD has a robust menu of Flexible Pathways, Work Based Learning opportunities, and courses offered to students.

Recommendations

1. BUUSD is encouraged to examine ways they can decrease perceived inequities and access to certain courses and educational opportunities.

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. Some students and parents expressed there weren't a lot of warnings, redirection, or opportunities to change their behavior before being sent out of the classroom.
2. Most teachers, students and parents reported that there is a positive behavioral school-wide program in place in the elementary schools for following the school-wide expectations, and that the approach has been beneficial for most students.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Evidence states that teachers are regularly available to give students extra help before school, after school, and during the day. They are willing to be flexible and understanding about students' lives outside of school and address individual needs.
2. Students and parents voiced their appreciation for the guidance and nursing staff and programs at all schools.
3. It was observed, and teachers and students reported, there is an overall culture of respect and sense of belonging across all schools.

Physical Well-Being

1. Students stated that they feel generally safe. They are able to articulate the behavioral expectations and consequences for their behaviors. Parents expressed confidence in the school's ability to make sure their students are well taken care of by school staff.
2. Most students expressed that they appreciated opportunities to "take a break" when needed, and had the supportive space/locations in the schools to do so, such as room 207 and the Tidal Pool room.

Physical Environment

1. Parents feel that the physical environment inside the buildings are safe (e.g. buzz in, security cameras, visible passes etc). However, there was concern expressed regarding safety for some drop off/pick up sites and me some older, more dangerous playground equipment.
2. Some expressed concern about open concept spaces in some schools that do not provide a lot of room to maneuver around, especially for someone with a disability or special needs with a mobility issue.
3. The staff and students in some programs report that there is a shortage of space, which impacts safety. For example, it was reported that some classrooms do not meet the square footage requirements for the programs they serve.

Commendations

1. BUUSD is commended for their school-wide behavioral systems, and the academic and behavior supports provided to students.
2. BUUSD is commended for creating a culture of mutual respect and positive climate across the School District.

Recommendations

1. BUUSD should consider examining their system for addressing behaviors pre-escalation, for example, possibly creating a warning or leveled system for addressing behaviors in their classrooms.
2. BUUSD should consider examining their physical spaces to ensure space is being utilized efficiently and effectively, or that space requirements are met to complete the work.

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 occurring through building based PLCs. The administration selects the focus for the PLCs, but teams have some choice in how the PLC operates and the content is based on identified needs.
2. District administration is purposeful in their professional development opportunities to ensure alignment across schools, grades, and classrooms.

Staff Evaluation

1. The district has identified a framework for teacher evaluation based on the Charlotte Danielson model, and an online system for collection of evaluation documents called Teach Point.
2. Although there is an evaluation system in place, some teachers report inconsistent application of the district-wide teacher evaluation system, which results in variable impact on professional growth.

Leadership

1. Teachers report strong support for the Leadership Team, and that communication is valued and is an area of continued growth and focus.
2. Teachers are given the opportunity to problem solve and take leadership roles within the buildings.

Staffing

1. Centralized hiring practices has begun in order to achieve greater consistency in staffing.
2. Evidence indicates that teacher and administrator turnover has been an ongoing concern for several years.

Commendations

1. There are district-wide hiring practices to achieve greater consistency in hires and hiring practices, which will build greater equity within the School District.
2. Administration is recognizing the assets of their staff through the coaching model, service on Leadership Teams, and their participation in decision making.

3. BUUSD has developed professional learning programs and practices that meet the needs of specific schools, and align practices across the School District.

Recommendations

1. BUUSD should consider reviewing staff evaluation practices by administrators and educators to achieve greater consistency and value of the professional evaluation, support, and growth experience.

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. Most students and teachers interviewed are unaware of the Continuous Improvement Plan and its contents. Some report they are aware of a strategic plan, and they report that may be the same thing.

Student Data System

1. Infinite Campus is used at school and evidence indicates the system provides teachers, educators and students the information they need.
2. Student data can also be found in SWIS, STAR 360, and CICO.

Financial Alignment

1. The centralization of several departments and financial systems has created a greater sense of equity, quality, and alignment across the district.
2. Evidence indicates there is equitable distribution and use of technology in schools (centralized carts in some schools, 1:1 in some schools, and promethean boards).
3. Some interviewees reported they feel there is unequal funding to support sports and the arts in some schools.

Communication

1. Evidence indicates that general communication from teachers to parents is inconsistent classroom to classroom and grade to grade in most schools.

Commendations

1. BUUSD has a strong student data system and processes to support the use of the system.
2. The centralization of budget, resources and positions is aimed at increasing equity, quality and consistency across schools.

Recommendations

1. BUUSD should consider examining current communication practices and how to strengthen them across the district where needed.
2. BUUSD should consider increasing awareness of their Continuous Improvement Plan, participation in the plan's development, and other continuous improvement efforts across the district.