

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

March 28, 2019

Colchester School District Final Report
Site Visit: January 24, 2019

Compiled by the Colchester School District Visiting Team

Submitted by Donna C. Stafford



Schools & Enrollment

| School | Approximate Enrollment | Grade Span |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Colchester High School | 630 | 9-12 |
| Colchester Middle School | 467 | 6-8 |
| Malletts Bay School | 506 | PK & 3-5 |
| Porters Point School | 244 | K-2 |
| Union Memorial School | 243 | K-2 |

Colchester School District (CSD) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on January 24, 2019.

During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum/Grants Manager, Director of Student Support Services, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other CSD 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 |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Bonnie Birdsall | Director of Digital Learning & Communication | Champlain Valley School District |
| Kirsten Kollgaard | Director of ELL and Curriculum | Winooski School District |
| Steve Emery | Elementary Principal | Franklin West Supervisory Union |
| Dylan MacNamara | Special Education/ Director of Student Support | Essex Westford Educational Community Unified Union School District |
| Peggy Sue Vannostrand | Director of Special Education | Champlain Valley School District |
| Erin Kranichfield | High School English Teacher | Essex Westford Educational Community Unified Union School District |
| Danielle Petralia | Middle School Math | Essex Westford Educational Community Unified Union School District |
| Kate Grodin | Co-Principal Middle-High School | Winooski School District |
| Lee Orlando | Middle School | Burlington School District |
| Eva Gonova | Special Educator | Burlington School District |
| Mike Martin | Director of Learning | South Burlington School District |
| Laura Baker | Learning Disabilities Consultant | Agency of Education |
| Tracy Harris | Coordinator for Behavioral Supports | Agency of Education |
| Sigrd Olson | Personalization Coordinator | Agency of Education |
| Martha Deiss | PBL Global Citizenship Coordinator | Agency of Education |
| Liza Hartlyn | Education Quality Assurance Coordinator | Agency of Education |
| Donna Stafford | Education Quality Manager | 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. Evidence indicates that there is ongoing development of curriculum alignment and coordination throughout the district.
2. Evidence indicates that classroom teachers, special educators and support staff work closely to address student academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs.

Instructional Practices

1. Learning targets and goals are consistently displayed in classrooms and incorporated into lessons, as evidenced through observations and interviews.
2. Observation and interview evidence indicates students have ready access to technology, and teachers were observed using diverse technology tools during instruction throughout the district.

Local Assessment System

1. There is evidence of common assessments being used throughout the district.
2. Teachers report using data from local assessments to identify and meet their students' needs.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Transferable skills (Essential Expectations) are an important element of Proficiency-based Learning (PBL).
2. Reports indicate that the level of implementation of transferable skills (Essential Expectations) varies across schools.

Commendations

1. There is clear evidence that school staff are working to develop the skills students need in order to meet proficiency.
2. The shared clarity of learning objectives has allowed teachers, special educators, and support staff to better meet the needs of all students.

Recommendations

1. CSD is encouraged to continue aligning curriculum and instructional practices throughout the district.
2. CSD should explore ways to increase the consistency of implementation of transferable skills, or their Essential Expectations, so there is consistent implementation across all schools.

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 reveals that Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) are in varying levels of implementation district-wide.
2. Students, parents, and staff report needing more information to better understand PLPs and the PLP development process.

Flexible Pathways

1. There are several programs in place that allow students to design their own course of study.
2. Students have opportunities to receive additional educational supports, including literacy and math labs, as well as academic support time (specific to the secondary level).

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Students at the middle and high school report that the high school has a wide variety of courses offerings.
2. Some elementary report concern about a lack of offerings for students who excel academically.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Students report feeling comfortable communicating with teachers and administrators about problems or ideas for change.
2. Students report having the ability and opportunity to show learning in a variety of ways.

Commendations

1. CSD allows for student choice in the development and demonstration of learning.
2. CSD is committed to personalization, student voice and flexible pathways; this is demonstrated by the existence of programs that allow students to design their own courses of study and demonstration of learning.

Recommendations

1. CSD should consider ways of increasing student involvement in the development of PLPs, to increase ownership and potential success.
2. CSD should consider improving communication to students, teachers, and parents, regarding the purpose of PLPs, and the processes by which they are developed.

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. Evidence indicates that a MTSS framework is being implemented around the district, with a focus on behavioral interventions and supports at the K-5 levels and an academic framework of MTSS at the 6-12 level.
2. Evidence indicates an educational and positive approach to addressing behavioral concerns while students and teachers remark on the administration having a strong presence and addressing behavioral concerns swiftly and effectively. The administration outlined a tiered discipline model and described how their responses to student violations are equitable in that there is flexibility to do right by students and they work within the tiered model to provide individualization in their disciplinary responses.
3. There is an abundance of evidence of a robust MTSS framework for academics, where all students receive rigorous first instruction, as well as secondary and tertiary supports.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Staff, students, and teachers report a strong sense of community and positive school climate across the district.
2. Staff report that resources exist to support Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). However, they expressed a void of an aligned and comprehensive system to develop SEL skills and reported an inconsistency of who receives SEL professional development.
3. Evidence indicates that there are multiple SEL curriculum and programs being used across the district, however there is a lack of consistency across buildings in the district.

Physical Well-Being

1. Students, teachers, families and administration report feeling safe and supported by counselors, resource officers, social workers, nurses, and crisis intervention practices.
2. Although staff at some schools highlight their crisis response team/procedures as highly developed, crisis response plans/commands were not posted consistently throughout the school buildings.

Physical Environment

1. Observations reveal the buildings are well maintained, secure, with clear signage for visitors.
2. Observation data indicate that all schools are clean and welcoming environments.

Commendations

1. CSD maintains a strong sense of community and positive school climate, as indicated by observations and reports by students, staff, families, support staff, and administrators.
2. CSD has a district aligned MTSS framework with well-defined levels of intervention. The framework is implemented and communicated consistently across the district.

Recommendations

1. CSD should consider developing a consistent SEL program and curriculum for the district and ensure all teachers and support staff received the appropriate associated professional development.
2. CSD should consider posting crisis response plans/commands consistently throughout the school buildings.

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. All schools have established formal, regularly scheduled professional collaboration and learning time each week.
2. District and in-house professional development targets specific, data driven goals across the district, and all teachers receive professional development in those identified areas, creating alignment SD-wide.

Staff Evaluation

1. Teachers report that they would prefer a more authentic and genuine evaluation system that provides them with constructive feedback, to help increase their growth as professionals.
2. Newer teachers report finding the evaluation system helpful and supportive as they receive feedback three times per year; veteran teachers do not feel the process is as helpful and supportive, as they are only being officially evaluated every three years.

Leadership

1. Teachers, support staff, and parents report building administration and central office leadership are accessible, supportive, and responsive.
2. District leadership involves all members of the school community in developing the district vision.

Staffing

1. Evidence indicates that in the first 2 years of employment, teachers are part of a peer-mentoring program.
2. Coaches, interventionists and other instructional support staff, support teachers to offer high-quality instruction.

Commendations

1. Across CSD, students, teachers, and parents consistently feel supported, and feel they are valued members of a learning community.

2. CSD provides targeted, relevant, data driven professional development to support district goals.

Recommendations

1. CSD should explore potential changes to their teacher evaluation system to allow for more authentic feedback for veteran teachers.

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. Teachers report they are knowledgeable about the continuous improvement plan, input into the plan, and they identify how their daily work contributes to the district's goals.
2. School community members identify ways in which they can offer feedback on the effectiveness of academic and behavioral systems.

Student Data System

1. Teachers and instructional coaches use achievement data from a variety of resources (e.g., PowerSchool, DreamBox, Fountas and Pinnell) to make instructional and programmatic decisions.
2. Schools implementing Positive Behavior Supports and Intervention (PBIS) report using data to track behavioral improvements.

Financial Alignment

1. Evidence indicates equitable distribution and access to technology throughout all schools.
2. Evidence indicated that several of the buildings are at capacity, having only one common place for cafeteria/gym/auditorium makes master scheduling challenging and has an adverse impact on student learning.

Communication

1. Evidence reveals the district has a clear, collaborative plan that involves all stakeholders for the budgetary process.
2. Interview evidence indicates stakeholders are able to communicate openly and frequently with teachers, administrators and central office staff.

Commendations

1. CSD's continuous improvement process involves all stakeholders across the district, and is clearly communicated.
2. CSD has a strong commitment to communication and collaboration opportunities with students, teachers, parents and other community members.

Recommendations

1. CSD should strongly consider moving forward with developing plans for expanding building space to provide optimum learning environments for all students.