

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

March 22, 2019

Essex Westford Supervisory District

Final Report

Site Visit: February 7, 2019

Compiled by the Essex-Westford Supervisory District Visiting
Team

Submitted by Kevin Doering



Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Albert D. Lawton	345	6-8
Essex Elementary School	383	PK-2
Essex High School	1264	9-12
Essex Middle School	432	6-8
Founders Memorial School	413	3-5
Hiawatha School	201	PK-3
Summit Street School	218	PK-3
Thomas Fleming School	236	4-5
Westford Elementary	179	PK-8

The Essex Westford School District (EWSD) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education’s Integrated Field Review (IFR) on February 7, 2019.

Prior to the visit, the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by the EWSD. 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 EWSD 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
Pat Burke	Principal	South Burlington School District
Kathleen Collaro	Elementary Literacy Coach	South Burlington School District
Katie Cuttitta	Special Educator	Champlain Valley School District
Lindsey Cox	iLab Teacher/Advisory Coordinator	Winooski School District
Miranda Davison	Federal and Education Support Programs	AOE
Lori Dolezal	Education Quality Manager	AOE
Martha Deiss	MTSS Coordinator	AOE
Kevin Doering	Education Quality Coordinator	AOE
Michael Clark	Superintendent	Grand Isle Supervisory Union
Christine Harvey	Academic Interventionist	Burlington School District
Paula Jensvold	Math Coach	South Burlington School District
Michelle Lass	First Grade Teacher	Champlain Valley School District
Nina Dudley	First Grade Special Educator	Colchester School District
Jennifer Loiseau	French Teacher	Colchester School District
Amy Listenik	Science Teacher	South Burlington
Heidi Kelly	Classroom Teacher	Colchester School District
Amy Murphy	Special Education Consultant	AOE
Susan McKelvie	Principal	Grand Isle Supervisory Union
MC Moran	Title II Director	AOE
John Painter	Math Chair and Teacher	South Burlington
Carole Renca	Librarian	Burlington School District
Mattie Scheidt	Middle School Principal	Burlington School District
Josh Souliere	Assistant Director of EQR	AOE

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. Teachers share that Professional Learning Communities occur within and across buildings; these are teacher-led and focused on clear goals.
2. Evidence indicates that curriculum coordination occurs, especially within schools and school teams. Vertical alignment between schools happens less frequently according to interviews and observations in different school visits.

Instructional Practices

1. Instructional practices vary based on school and grade level; these practices include turn and talk, small groups, opportunities for the student to process learning, and whole class discussion.
2. Observations and interviews reveal inconsistencies in the access to technology, (e.g., SMART boards and 1:1 Chromebook access) across schools.

Local Assessment System

1. EWSD has common assessments across all schools, driven by their assessment plan and Alpine data.
2. Interviews and artifacts reveal that student work is assessed consistently via rubrics.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Most schools have their own proficiency-based grading model, and EWSD is working on providing a consistent proficiency-based grading model across the district.
2. According to interviews and artifacts, transferable skills are in place, understood and assessed regularly.

Commendations

1. School and district PLC's are in place, have clear goals, and are teacher-led.
2. EWSD has common assessments across all schools, driven by their assessment plan.

Recommendations

1. EWSD should continue to work on developing a clear and consistent proficiency-based grading model district wide.
2. EWSD should consider looking at equitable access to instructional resources across the district, including access to technology.

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 a planning effort, 6-12, in the creation of a scope and sequence, adoption of a unified platform, and training for teachers regarding Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs).

Flexible Pathways

1. At the high school level, students have easy access to a variety of flexible pathway opportunities, including Virtual Learning, Dual Enrollment, Technical Center, and Community Based Learning.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Evidence indicates that as students progress through the district, they are offered an increasingly wide breadth of courses in the arts and sciences, as well as technical offerings.
2. At the high school level, there are unique offerings that students report are valuable specific to the Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, Global Leadership Program and STEM Academy.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Students state that they have choices in their learning and expressions.
2. Students gave evidence of varying extracurricular choices offered.
3. Interview evidence suggests a range of reaction to the PLP process from parents and some students including high expectations, confusion, and questions about the process.

Commendations

1. Students have the opportunity to express voice within their school communities and see evidence of the impact of their words and actions.
2. EWSD provides to students a significant amount of offerings for courses and extracurricular activities.

Recommendations

1. EWSD should consider improving mission/vision and communication regarding the utility of PLPs.

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. Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a focus area for the district, and practices are in various stages of development.
2. Many schools had consistent Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) messages posted and systems in place.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Staff, students, and teachers report a strong sense of community and positive school climate across the district.
2. Evidence reveals social, emotional, and well-being practices, such as posted student expectations, groups to address current needs, and anti-bullying policies in many schools.
3. Students report feeling safe and supported in their environment.

Physical Well-Being

1. Most schools have anti-bullying policies and promote community within the school; however, interview evidence also indicates that some students are still concerned about bullying.
2. Observations reveal that many schools have adequate space that allows students to move and be physically active. Not all areas were accessible to all students.

Physical Environment

1. Evidence indicates that systems are in place for organized operational actions (i.e., crisis response).
2. Observations reveal that primary spaces are large and bright, organized, and inviting.

Commendations

1. Most schools post consistent positive climate and school community messaging and students generally report feeling supported in their environment.
2. Schools promoted access to, and time for, physical activity and movement throughout the school day.

Recommendations

1. EWSD should consider providing a social/emotional survey to ensure all students feel safe and supported within their educational environments.

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. Teachers report having many opportunities for professional development, supported by administration through funding, time and resources provided.
2. Professional Learning Communities allow for collaboration focused on school and district initiatives.

Staff Evaluation

1. Teachers report regularly set goals as part of the Danielson Framework, or other models of reflection, for teacher evaluation.
2. Due to merger changes, interviewees report some inconsistencies across the district regarding evaluation processes.

Leadership

1. Teachers report having opportunities for learning and collaboration in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Learning Circles, Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), leadership positions and teacher mentoring.
2. Staff and students report confidence in leadership and they feel supported; they note the development of an overall vision and mission to help guide their work.

Staffing

1. As observed, class sizes range from 14 to 25 students per teacher with additional support staff present in some classrooms.
2. Some schools report that they have an “overloaded system” in regard to special education, and some students voice a desire to see a more efficient identification process for learning disabilities.
3. Interviewees report that high quality teachers and staff tend to remain in the district and benefit from a teacher mentor program.

Commendations

1. EWSD stakeholders report a culture of shared concern for students and positive school climate with highly qualified staff, little teacher turnover, and appropriate teacher to student ratios.
2. Staff across the district report ample access to professional development and collaboration through systemic and ongoing opportunities for growth, which foster a culture of learning.

Recommendations

1. EWSD should continue to streamline processes and/or seek out staffing in response to special education concerns.
2. EWSD should work to create a coordinated and clear district-wide evaluation process and timeline for teachers, administrators and staff.

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. EWSD has a single Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) focused on equity and aligned with VT MTSS. The CIP was developed with broad input and participation.
2. The CIP informs the work of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in all schools. PLCs meet regularly and are supported by PLC leadership/facilitator training.

Student Data System

1. Alpine, Bulb, and PowerSchool are all used PK-12. Other programs and applications are available to teachers and schools as needed.

Financial Alignment

1. Administrators, Board, and Community Members identify issues with delivering transportation in an equitable way across the 3 communities.
2. EWSD is involving stakeholders to work on ensuring equity across the merger zones (i.e., former “districts”) via undertaking resource allocation reviews.

Communication

1. Several interviewees report school-to-home communication could be improved and more consistent.
2. EWSD is engaged in a two-way conversation with the community to identify the vision of the newly merged district.

Commendations

1. EWSDs’ Continuous Improvement Plan is broadly developed, clearly communicated, and drives their work.
2. EWSD has devoted time and resources to the establishment of a robust PK-12 Professional Learning Community model.

Recommendations

1. EWSD should consider conducting an audit with the goal of developing a single unified master plan to guide the equitable stewardship of all school buildings and properties.
2. EWSD is encouraged to continue to stay on track with its current strategies, while building the systems, culture, and traditions of the newly merged district.