

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

November 26, 2019

Washington Central Unified Union School District
Final Report

Site Visit: October 17, 2019

Submitted by the Washington Central Visiting Team



Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Berlin Elementary	217	PK-6
Calais Elementary	126	PK-6
Doty Memorial	80	PK-6
East Montpelier Elementary	229	PK-6
Rumney Memorial	176	PK-6
U-32 Middle/High School	766	7-12

Washington Central Unified Union School District (WCUUSD) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on October 17, 2019.

Prior to the IFR the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by WCUUSD. During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum, Business Manager, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other WCUUSD 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
Tracy Wrend	Superintendent	LSUUSD
Valerie Sullivan	Director of Curriculum and Instruction	LSUUSD
Mark Carbone	Middle School Principal	MMUUSD
Nancy Cmejla	2nd Grade Teacher	MMUUSD
Allie O'Hara	School Counselor	OSSU
Carrie Casavant	3rd Grade Teacher	OSSU
John Greenia	Tech Support Specialist	OSSU
Jenn Dale	Education Quality Coordinator	VTAOE
Josh Souliere	Assistant Director Education Quality	VTAOE
Katy Preston	Education Consultant	VTAOE
Kevin Doering	Education Quality Coordinator	VTAOE
Lori Dolezal	Education Quality Assurance Manager	VTAOE
Peter Drescher	State Director of Education Technology	VTAOE
Toni Marra	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.

Curriculum Coordination

1. Evidence indicates WCUUSD has adopted a system wide mathematics program K-8, which allows for flexibility in teacher practices and professional judgment, as well as facilitating data analysis and decision-making.
2. The SD has worked to establish agreed upon student learning outcomes and performance indicators system wide; they are working on processes for ongoing improvement.

Local Assessment System

1. The system has a well-articulated local comprehensive assessment system that is widely understood by students, staff and parents.
2. Teachers consistently use multiple sources of data to inform instruction.

Instructional Practices

1. Elementary classrooms employ a workshop model to differentiate instruction in both literacy and mathematics.
2. Students and parents report having sufficient instructional supports for all students across content areas (e.g., technology, coaching, interventionists, special education services, reteach, call back, etc.)

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Evidence indicates there is inconsistent development and application of the transferable skills proficiencies.
2. Parents expressed concern about inconsistencies in elements of proficiency-based learning, including proficiency scales and how they are defined across classrooms.

Commendations

1. WCUUSD has worked to establish consistency and coordination in curriculum and instructional practices.
2. WCUUSD has established a well-defined local comprehensive assessment system and accompanying practices within that system.

Recommendations

1. WCUUSD should work on defining the transferable skills proficiencies and completing proficiency scales.

2. WCUUSD should work on a communication plan to explain the proficiencies and build support/buy-in for the system.

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.

Personalized Learning Plans

1. Students and parents stated that there is evidence of a Personalized Learning Plan, but the process has not been communicated adequately across all stakeholders as there is still confusion regarding the process.
2. Leadership shared they want to work on having Personalized Learning Plans be more of a process, rather than a product, and are working on strengthening and streamlining the process.

Flexible Pathways

1. There are multiple Flexible Pathways offered to students in the district (i.e., Career Technical Education, dual enrollment, early college, independent study, Branching out, Community Based Learning, project based learning, zenith program).

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Students have access to a wide variety of opportunities offered to students in the district (i.e., art, music, foreign language, technology & design and core academic (AP), etc).
2. Parents and students stated that sometimes there is a disconnect between what is mandated for graduation versus courses they would like to take.

Student Voice and Choice

1. There are a wide variety of student activities for students to participate in. i.e. after school clubs and activities, student government. Students also sit on various committees, Branching Out Program, call back system and Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together.
2. Students understand the systems that are in place where their voice can be recognized, (i.e., picking their own advisor), but don't feel like they are always heard.

Commendations

1. In WCUUSD there is a lot of opportunity for students in the district, particularly around courses and Flexible Pathways.
2. In WCUUSD there is a prosocial environment and commitment to the relationship between staff, students, families, and their schools.

Recommendations

1. WCUUSD should continue to explore ways to improve Personalized Learning Plans, specifically working towards making the experience more of a process rather than just a product.
2. WCUUSD should explore additional ways and opportunities to communicate their personalization process to stakeholders to continue to increase understanding.

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.

Multi-tiered System of Supports

1. Schools report utilizing a Multi-tiered System of Supports system; however, the implementation and use of Education Support Teams and the special education components varies.
2. In general, schools are utilizing Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports and responsive classroom, though interview evidence indicates a disparity in staff resources applied to supporting behavioral interventions.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Interview evidence and observations indicate school climate is positive, and all students consistently could articulate behavioral expectations which were posted throughout the buildings.
2. Students consistently indicated throughout the district that they had at least one adult they were comfortable talking with if needed, and that overall they were comfortable in their school environment.

Physical Well-Being

1. Students and teachers generally report positive relationships and students articulated pride in much of their work, which was frequently on display in all of the buildings visited.
2. Student's physical needs are supported by traditional activities, but also intentional active physical time, games, seating choices, and multiple offered learning environments.

Physical Environment

1. Most buildings were found to be clean and well-maintained.
2. According to observations and interviews, schools were reported as safe, secure and welcoming.

Commendations

1. Schools in WCUUSD have done a good job in displaying and teaching behavioral and academic expectations throughout the district.
2. WCUUSD is commended on promoting positive student - teacher relationships which support a positive learning environment.

Recommendations

1. WCUUSD is encouraged to work further on developing consistent Multi-tiered System of Support objectives and resources for meeting the needs of all students.

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.

Professional Development

1. Professional development is strongly supported district wide. There are various opportunities for professional development for all staff.
2. A deliberate design of district-wide professional development was mentioned by various stakeholders to include menus/choice, and this has been voiced as a positive feature of that design.

Staff Evaluation

1. WCUUSD staff evaluations are anchored in the Danielson Framework and managed by staff in TeachPoint. Interview evidence indicates the evaluation process has been beneficial to staff.
2. The evaluation process includes formal observations in the first 2 years and more informal walkthroughs as longevity progresses. The district is building their capacity for more peer observation and feedback through this system. Some of those features are presently being used in TeachPoint.

Leadership

1. Stakeholders reported that there have been various changes in building and WCUUSD leadership, but that the transitions have been smooth and positive. Parent interviews revealed that they feel that the latest transitions in the building administrators have been positive and beneficial for the schools. Communication from all leadership is reported as a major strength.
2. Mentoring for beginning and new to the district teachers, is district wide. New teachers feel supported in the two year mentorship process. Mentors also feel supported by having programs of support on mentorship.

Staffing

1. Stakeholders report that schools are well staffed. Some schools share or blend positions of support and specialists.
2. Teachers report feeling trusted, appreciated, and valued in their positions. Administrators and parents mirror those feelings in their reporting of stable, trustworthy, and hardworking teachers and staff at their schools.

Commendations

1. WCUUSD has been able to develop strong leadership roles throughout the district, which has contributed to teachers feeling trusted, appreciated and valued in their positions.
2. WCUUSD should continue their systemic, highly collaborative, community approach as reflected in numerous stakeholder evidence statements detailing the district goals and priorities which are clearly articulated in common language across all schools and staff within.

Recommendations

1. WCUUSD should continue their work to build and strengthen their evaluation process, specifically their capacity for more peer observation.

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.

Continuous Improvement Planning

1. Washington Central educators indicate that the Continuous Improvement Plan is a tool used broadly across the district to support their planning and implementation of programs, practices, and some policies.
2. Various stakeholders indicated their input was both sought after and included in the planning process for the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Student Data System

1. Infinite Campus is used successfully as the school wide information system and as a support for Multi-tiered System of Support, as well as general communication with parents. Evidence indicates the data systems used throughout the SD are effective.
2. WCUUSD uses a number of tools to collect data, all of which work together to provide stakeholders the information they need.

Financial Alignment

1. WCUUSD has made significant investments in technology and the staff to support the use of technology. According to students, teachers and parents across the system, the access to and use of technology is robust and consistent across schools.
2. Some educators hope the recent merger will lead to a more equitable allocation of funding, especially across the elementary schools.

Communication

1. Parents indicate that effective communication varies widely from school to school and in some cases, namely in special education, is actually lacking.
2. Educators, students, and parents indicated communication about proficiency is adequate, but there is still significant confusion and anxiety.

Commendations

1. WCUUSD educators feel highly supported by both school and district resources and personnel
2. Most groups interviewed indicated that their students were getting a high quality education
3. WCUUSD has clear alignment of their systemic needs, vision, and prioritized goals with their professional development needs and continuous improvement planning.

Recommendations

1. WCUUSD should take advantage of the recent merger as an opportunity to ensure there is equitable distribution of resources between schools.
2. WCUUSD should consider examining communication practices within all schools to ensure students, parents, and other stakeholders are receiving the same level of information.