

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

April 2, 2019

Winooski School District

Final Report

March 21, 2019

Compiled by the Winooski School District Visiting Team

Submitted by Liza Hartlyn



Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
John F. Kennedy School	485	PK-5
Winooski Middle School	172	6-8
Winooski High School	222	9-12

Winooski School District participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on March 21, 2019.

During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Director of Curriculum/ELL, Director of Special Ed & Early Learning, WMHS Co-Principals, Network Administrator, Wellness coordinator, 21C Director, Librarian, Preschool Director, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other Winooski School District 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
Chris Antonicci	Principal	Colchester SD
Colleen Cowell	K-5 Instructional Coach	Burlington SD
Valerie Lodish	6-8 Technology Integrationist	Burlington SD
Melissa Hathaway	Elementary Guidance Counselor	Burlington SD
Christine Seally	ELL Teacher	Essex Westford ECUUSD
Gwen Carmolli	Curriculum Director	Colchester SD
Jeff Evans	Curriculum Director	Champlain Valley SD
Donna Stafford	EQA Program Manager	Agency of Education
Patrick Halladay	Interim Division Director	Agency of Education
Peter Drescher	State Director of Education Tech	Agency of Education
Jenn Dale	EQA Coordinator	Agency of Education
Sigrid Olson	Personalized Learning Coordinator	Agency of Education
Laura Baker	Learning Disability Coordinator	Agency of Education
Liza Hartlyn	EQA 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. The district supports students and families in learning English. English Learning is embedded into instruction, parent trainings, and community liaison connections.
2. Evidence indicates the district has an articulated Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework that is utilized across the schools.
3. While evidence shows that curriculum maps are in place, some content areas are prioritized over other areas (e.g., Literacy and Mathematics are prioritized over other content areas).

Instructional Practices

1. Evidence indicates that teachers have clear expectations and learning targets for academic & heart (social-emotional) learning for all learners.
2. Observations reveal that visual supports & anchor charts are displayed in classrooms, PreK-12.

Local Assessment System

1. Evidence demonstrates a district local assessment is used to assess student learning in Literacy and Mathematics, three times per year.
2. Staff employ multiple methods for assessing student learning and sharing with students and parents (e.g., expositions, report cards, conferences, student-led conferences, Graduation Proficiencies (GP) & Graduation Expectations (GX) tracking, Personalized Learning Plans).

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. The district has a clearly articulated system of graduation proficiencies and expectations (GX & GP). Students have many opportunities to demonstrate graduation proficiencies and expectations.
2. Evidence indicates a variety of opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency outside the school, including community-based opportunities, after school programs, and summer programs.
3. Staff report their involvement in developing the proficiency system, which occurred over several years. Teachers worked collaboratively to develop and implement this system and report that they are taking the next steps to begin calibration of the GXs and GPs across grade levels and courses.

Commendations

1. Staff are deeply committed to meeting the needs of all students in order to develop readiness for college and career.
2. The district is committed to involving parents and community members with student learning, which includes numerous examples of partnerships, parent/family connections and supports, community celebrations, and collaboration with the greater community.

Recommendations

1. The district could consider revising curriculum maps, and calibrating assessments, to ensure alignment with the newly established Graduation Expectations and Graduation Proficiencies.
2. To increase readiness and calibration across grade levels for GPS & GXs, the elementary grades should continue to grow differentiated learning opportunities using student voice and choice.

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. Interviewees report inconsistency and confusion in how Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) are being developed and communicated. Parents state they have little involvement in the PLP process.
2. Students in middle and high school report discrepant views of PLPs; middle school students report feeling confused, while high school students understand that PLPs are used to track their proficiencies and plan their pathways.

Flexible Pathways

1. There are multiple flexible pathways through which students can earn credit. Some of these are more traditional (e.g., dual enrollment), while others include earning credit from working at a job, volunteer work, etc.
2. Parents report some confusion about how students are meeting learning goals and that most information is communicated via report cards, which is not always clear.

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Students report the need for a wider variety of classes at the high school level, especially advanced placement coursework, foreign language, and theater classes.
2. Through the dual enrollment program, students are able to earn both high school and college credit at the same time. For example, there were 13 college credits offered through Personal Finance classes.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Students have opportunities to share their opinions through after-school activities, summer programs, Youth Leadership Institute, and respected relationships with individual teachers and the school community.
2. Middle and high school students present self-designed expositions of learning, focused on a particular proficiency, multiple times a year to teachers, fellow students, and parents.

Commendations

1. Students and teachers report feeling very connected to the school community, which is welcoming and accepting to everyone.
2. Students report being very aware of their many opportunities to learn and meet proficiencies through multiple pathways and experiences.

Recommendations

1. The district should provide more information to parents about PLPs, and create a consistent system between the middle and high school.
2. Although a wide variety of Flexible Pathways are available to students, the district should consider providing a broader option of high school course offerings, such as Advanced Placement level courses, additional World Language Courses, and Performing Arts options.

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-cultural liaisons help families understand how students are performing in school, and help support academic and behavioral success.
2. Evidence reveals that district leadership teams, and school-based leadership teams, direct professional learning, annually, related to the MTSS framework.

Social/Emotional Health

1. The district has focused on providing implicit bias training for Pre-K, middle, and high school teachers this year. They will be introducing the training to elementary teachers next year.
2. Observations reveal evidence of positive and inspirational messages throughout the schools.

Physical Well-Being

1. Evidence uncovers programs and resources that support students' physical and emotional well-being (e.g., free meals, backpack program, school-based health center, clothing give-away, and donations directly to families).
2. The district has identified many basic health needs within the school community and has addressed them through creative problem solving. This has allowed students to be ready to learn.

Physical Environment

1. Observations and interviews reveal that the building is old and in need of upgrades to the space, however, staff are utilizing every inch of space in the physical plant. It is clean, well-lit and welcoming.
2. Students and staff report feeling safe, for many reasons including that fact that only one entrance is accessible to visitors during the day.

Commendations

1. Students, staff, and families identify diversity as a strength in their schools and community.
2. The district maintains clear expectations around maintaining safety, and prioritizing and meeting student needs.

Recommendations

1. The district should continue the work on implicit bias training.
2. The district should continue setting priorities around updating and upgrading the physical plant to address present and future enrollment increases.

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 cite the summer institute as a valuable professional development experience that promotes reflection and professional growth.
2. Evidence demonstrates a specific focus on meeting the needs of the unique (i.e., diversified) population of students.

Staff Evaluation

1. Teachers emphasize that the creation of cohorts, based on common evaluation goals, has led to more collaboration and peer support.
2. A thorough, well-documented mentoring program exists for new teachers.

Leadership

1. Evidence indicates that the building leadership teams have teacher leader representation and meet on a regular basis.
2. Parents report that leaders and staff are approachable and responsive to needs, as they arise; however, there is no formal system (e.g.-survey) to solicit feedback.

Staffing

1. Parents and students report that staff are responsive to students and families' needs, and committed to developing strong relationships with students and families.
2. Faculty and staff report an appreciation for collaboration and collegiality.

Commendations

1. The district invests time, energy and finances into human resources, through a commitment to professional learning, and to systems and schedules that foster collaboration.
2. Faculty and staff are adept at leveraging resources to meet the needs, both academic and social-emotionally, of their students.

Recommendations

1. Winooski School District should consider developing a district-wide strategy for soliciting parent/family feedback (e.g., survey) to supplement quantitative data used in decision making.

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. Interviewees express challenges in differentiating between district and school continuous improvement goals. The district decided to prioritize district level goals, as staff reports it to be a more equitable way to approach continuous improvement.
2. Teachers report lack of clarity in how data is explicitly used to determine continuous improvement needs.

Student Data System

1. Teachers, parents, and administrators agree that the multiple student data tracking systems, currently in use, lead to inefficiencies.
2. Interviewees believe that the transfer to Power School will streamline several data stream issues, including home/school communication and tracking of PLPs, GXs, and GPs.

Financial Alignment

1. Parents, teachers, and administrators suggest there is consistent commitment to financial support of the schools and to improving the physical infrastructure.
2. Evidence indicates that central office has leveraged state and federal financial supports to offset the tax burden on local residents; examples include universal free meals and English Learner supports.

Communication

1. The district has made strong efforts to reach out to their community members. For example, the District is piloting a successful and well-received visitation program for educators to visit homes of ELL students.
2. Parents report that communication between schools and families remains inconsistent in timeliness, accuracy, format, and frequency.

Commendations

1. The district continually thinks systemically across PK-12 in their needs assessment and continuous improvement planning process, leading to collaborations across the schools and efficiencies in the implementation of change ideas.
2. The broader community strongly supports the districts' schools financially. In response, the district works hard to creatively leverage state and federal opportunities to limit the local tax burden.

Recommendations

1. While there is a strong effort and commitment to reaching out and supporting families, the district should implement a more comprehensive and varied communication strategy. Multiple interactions with staff, students, and parents indicated an inconsistent pattern of how important information is disseminated.
2. While the district is committed toward more robust data management system, they should also consider developing strategies to help staff closely align data to Continuous Improvement Planning.