

Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

March 13, 2018

White River Valley Supervisory Union

Final Report

Site Visit: January 30, 2018

Submitted by Jesse Roy



Schools & Enrollment

| School | Approximate Enrollment | Grade Span |
|---|------------------------|------------|
| Bethel Elementary | 183 | PK-6 |
| Chelsea Public School | 175 | K-12 |
| The Newton School | 116 | K-8 |
| Rochester School | 143 | PK-12 |
| Sharon Elementary School | 164 | PK-6 |
| South Royalton School | 386 | PK-12 |
| Stockbridge Central School | 56 | PK-6 |
| Tunbridge Central School | 110 | K-8 |
| <i>Whitcomb Junior / Senior High School</i> | 126 | 7-12 |

White River Valley SU Supervisory Union (WRVSU) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education’s Integrated Field Review (IFR) on January 30, 2018.

During the afternoon of the IFR training, the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by WRVSU. 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 WRVSU learning environments through observations and facilities tours led by students. *Per the request of White River Valley Supervisory Union administration, findings, commendations and recommendations only represent grades PK-6.*

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 |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Brynne MacMurtry | Special Education Teacher | Rivendell Interstate SD |
| Elaine Arbour | Superintendent | Rivendell Interstate SD |
| Jan Cole | Special Education Supervisor | Rivendell Interstate SD |
| Adam Norwood | Elementary Principal | Orange East SU |
| Allison Kidder | Special Education Director | Orange East SU |
| Colin McLaughlin | Teacher | Orange East SU |
| Crystal Emerson | Elementary Teacher | Orange East SU |
| Kevin Petrone | Elementary Principal | Orange East SU |
| Shannon Lessley | Curriculum Coordinator | Orange East SU |
| Bill Hammond | Elementary Principal | Marion W. Cross |
| Candace Crosby-Rogers | Special Educator | Marion W. Cross |
| Aron Tomlinson | CTE Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Coordinator | Hartford SD |
| Alisha Keel | Counselor | Hartford SD |
| Cathy Newton | Elementary Principal | Hartford SD |
| Doug Anton | Teacher | Hartford SD |
| Heather Smith | MS/HS Special Education | Hartford SD |
| Shelia Powers | Elementary Principal | Hartford SD |
| Tristan Upson | MS/HS Principal | Hartford SD |
| Jesse Roy | EQA Coordinator | AOE |
| Josh Souliere | EQR Assistant Director | AOE |
| Kevin Doering | EQA Coordinator | AOE |
| Lori Dolezal | EQA Manager | AOE |
| Marianna Charalabopoulos | EQA Coordinator | AOE |
| Peter Drescher | Education Technology Coordinator | AOE |
| Richard Boltax | MTSS Coordinator | 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. Per staff reports, there is a need for greater curriculum coordination across WRVSVU schools.
2. Per teacher reports and observations, there appears to be a high degree of autonomy in material taught between WRVSVU classrooms within schools.

Local Assessment System

1. Staff report that a district-wide interim assessment (Star360) is being used to measure literacy and math performance.

Instructional Practices

1. Per observations, unit and daily learning targets are communicated to WRVSVU students with fair consistency, both verbally or through visual postings.
2. Though inconsistent, observations and interviews reveal examples of differentiated and student-centered teaching practices across schools. Growth in this area is prioritized in the WRVSVU strategic plan.

Proficiency-Based Learning

1. Per staff, parent and student interviews, there exists an early understanding of what is meant by proficiency-based learning.
2. Per observations, staff and student interviews, while WRVSVU schools have largely transitioned to proficiency-based grade reporting, proficiency-based teaching and learning practices are in the early stages of development in most classrooms.

Commendations

1. Use of Star360 assessments provides staff with opportunities to analyze interim performance data and to guide instructional decision-making.
2. WRVSVU has begun the transition to proficiency-based grading and learning practices.

Recommendations

1. WRVSVU should work to ensure that a consistent, standards-aligned core curriculum is being taught across schools and between classrooms.
2. WRVSVU should continue its focus on developing a shared understanding of instructional best practices in all schools and classrooms.

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. Staff report that PLPs are being initiated in upper elementary and middle school grades at some schools, supported by priorities outlined in the WRVSVU strategic plan.
2. Some staff and students report limited development and application of plans, though some expressed excitement over their potential.
3. Per staff and student reports, upper elementary students are practicing personal goal setting for learning and behavior in some buildings.

Flexible Pathways

1. Parents, staff and students report that small class sizes allow for individualized and flexible instruction for students.
2. Limited use of technology in instruction was observed across WRVSVU, though an SU digital learning plan has been developed to “broaden and deepen learning.”

Full Breadth of Courses

1. All elementary schools in WRVSVU offer music, art and PE each week, and most feature additional, unique electives.
2. Parents and staff report interest in expanding the availability of popular outdoor learning opportunities that are occurring in some buildings.
3. Parents interviewed across WRVSVU indicate that they would like to see greater enrichment and elective opportunities for students.

Student Voice and Choice

1. Per observations, student art, learning projects and academic work are displayed prominently in all WRVSVU buildings.
2. Per observations, project-based learning is a prevalent component of many WRVSVU schools and classrooms, and “experiential learning” is prioritized in the SU strategic plan.

Commendations

1. WRVSVU promotes personalization of elementary education through project-based learning, personal goal setting, and the leveraging of small class sizes.
2. Evidence of student learning is proudly showcased and celebrated throughout all WRVSVU buildings.

Recommendations

1. WRVSVU should examine existing practices that promote student choice in individual schools and classrooms, and consider how to universalize these approaches.
2. WRVSVU should consider additional opportunities to further incorporate widespread student goal setting into elementary teaching and learning.

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. WRVSVU staff interviews reveal an absence of a clear MTSS framework, though all schools feature supplemental academic and behavior supports.
2. The development of a complete MTSS framework is a feature of the WRVSVU strategic plan.

Social/Emotional Health

1. Some WRVSVU school have adopted Tier 1 programs for social and emotional health, with varying degrees of implementation observed.
2. WRVSVU schools employ a wide variety of supports for student social-emotional health, including aspects of Responsive Classroom, Second Step, conscious discipline approaches and teacher advisory.

Physical Well-Being

1. WRVSVU schools emphasize physical health and wellbeing through a variety of methods, including brain breaks, meditation, healthy snacks, outdoor education and opportunities for physical activity.
2. WRVSVU schools feature in-school dental, medical and mental health care for students through their grant-funded HealthHUB program.

Physical Environment

1. Per interviews and observations, WRVSVU schools are neat, well organized and welcoming. Some feature creative approaches to maximizing limited space.
2. Per observations, all schools had security systems featuring electronic front door locks and cameras, however not all were actively in use to prevent external access.

Commendations

1. Targeted academic and behavior supports are available in all WRVSVU schools, and the use of the Star 360 program helps to identify students with academic needs.
2. WRVSVU schools feature a clear focus on students' physical and emotional health.

Recommendations

1. WRVSVU should continue work to develop a comprehensive and consistent MTSS across schools, ensuring timely and equitable access to needed interventions.
2. WRVSVU should consider adopting a universal program for social and emotional learning across buildings, or at least ensure that all schools are implementing a chosen program with fidelity, ensuring equity in high-quality first instruction of social-emotional learning.

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. WRVSU teachers generally report ample professional development opportunities, including funds for personal professional development and flexibility in use of those funds.
2. Many WRVSU teachers report they do not find the monthly half-day SU-wide professional learning opportunities valuable, citing misalignment to school needs or lack of follow-through.
3. Between and within schools, time to collaborate around student data, instruction and the curriculum is reported to vary widely.

Staff Evaluation

1. Staff reports that WRVSU is piloting a new staff evaluation model based on the Danielson framework, with plans to align future professional development to needs revealed during evaluations.
2. Staff reports a mentoring program for new teachers, SU-wide.

Leadership

1. Staff and parents report that administrative turnover across WRVSU leads to confusion, unclear priorities and reduced follow through with innovations.
2. Staff report that activities and practices to support leadership development, both for administrators and teaching staff members, have become a WRVSU focus in recent years.

Staffing

1. Interview evidence indicates strong collegiality between teachers in most WRVSU schools.
2. Most parent and student groups report that they appreciate the dedication of their teachers.
3. Observations and interviews reveal a wide range of student-to-staff ratios in WRVSU classrooms and differences in the availability of interventionists for academics and social-emotional wellbeing between schools.

Commendations

1. WRVSU leadership is piloting a new staff evaluation model that they believe better meets the needs of student, educators and administrators.
2. WRVSU teachers are dedicated to their work, valued by parents and students, nurturing and supportive.

Recommendations

1. WRVSU should examine their processes to recruit and retain strong, consistent leadership, helping to sustain momentum and cohesiveness of SU and building initiatives.
2. WRVSU should design their current professional development model to foster alignment and sustainability of priority learning across schools, while honoring the unique context of each building.

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. Staff report that WRVVSU features an SU-wide plan for improvement that drives school plans.
2. Staff and parents report inconsistent awareness of and participation in continuous improvement planning at their schools.
3. Per staff reports, some see long term planning for improvement as taking a back seat to the demands of the impending merger, while others see the merger as an opportunity to reexamine approaches to teaching and learning.

Student Data System

1. Per staff reports, the Web2School system is used SU-wide for student information and attendance reporting.
2. Per parent and staff reports, there are differing levels of awareness and use of web-based systems for academic data and grading in WRVVSU buildings.

Financial Alignment

1. Staff and parents report that the availability of both learning resources and general supplies vary widely across WRVVSU.
2. While most staff, students and parents describe adequate availability of technology, several groups report needing more support in integrating technology into instruction.

Communication

1. Per parent interviews, satisfaction with the level and frequency of classroom and school level communication varies widely.
2. Parents and staff report a desire for more communication related to the SU merger.

Commendations

1. WRVVSU has created an SU-wide strategic plan that serve as a starting place for school plans and as guidance for professional development, fostering alignment.
2. WRVVSU has adopted the Web2School system SU-wide, creating the potential for greater data analysis and responsive to student needs.

Recommendations

1. WRVVSU should consider a professional development emphasis on the integration of technology into instruction and learning.
2. WRVVSU should consider further exploration of individual schools regarding external communication practices, resource availability and approaches to continuous improvement planning.