Integrated Field Review Report

REPORT

April 6, 2020

**North Country Supervisory Union
Final Report
Site Visit: January 21, 2020**

Compiled by:

North Country IFR Visiting Team

Submitted by:

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Schools & Enrollment

School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Brighton Elementary	110	PK-8
Charleston Elementary	115	PK-8
Coventry Village School	135	PK-8
Derby Elementary School	480	PK-6
Jay/Westfield Joint School	90	PK-6
Lowell Graded School	95	PK-8
Newport City Elementary	330	PK-6
Newport Town School	100	PK-6
North Country UJHS	270	7-8
North Country UHS	715	9-12
Troy School	190	PK-8

North Country Supervisory Union (NCSU) participated in the Vermont Agency of Education's Integrated Field Review (IFR) on 21 January 2020.

Prior to the site visits, the Visiting Team reviewed artifacts provided by NCSU. During the full day visit, the Visiting Team participated in interviews of the Superintendent, Assistant to the Superintendent, Business and Finance Director, Learning Design Director, counseling staff, intervention staff, teaching staff, students, parents, and school administrators. In addition, the Visiting Team observed classroom instruction and other NCSU 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
Katie Handy	Teacher	Kingdom East SD
Joanna Fowler	Teacher	Caledonia Central SU
Rebecca Owens	Teacher	Kingdom East SD
Sherri Gregory	Principal	Kingdom East SD
Bev Davis	Superintendent	Orleans Central SU
Travis Terrell	Physical Education	Orleans Central SU
Andre Messier	Principal	Orleans Central SU
Amy Kelley	Teacher	Orleans Central SU
Brian Ricca	Superintendent	St Johnsbury SD
Angela Miller-Brown	Library Media Specialist	Caledonia Central SU
Taylor Willey	Elementary Special Ed	Caledonia Central SU
Brenda Sattelberger	Teacher	Kingdom East SD
Dale Guisinger	Teacher	Kingdom East SD
Kelly Youngberg	Elementary Teacher	Caledonia Central SU
Jeff Coburn	Lead Tech Integrationist	Orleans Central SU
Jay Bonneau	Teacher	Orleans Central SU
Sam Carbonetti	Teacher	Orleans Central SU
Kim Hastings	Principal	Orleans Central SU
Kathy Smith	Teacher	Essex North SU
Sheli Aldridge	Teacher (ck)	Essex North SU
Kevin Doering (lead)	Education Quality Coordinator	Agency of Education
Jenn Dale	Education Quality Coordinator	Agency of Education
Toni Marra	Education Quality Coordinator	Agency of Education
Laura Greenwood	BEST/Act 230 Coordinator	Agency of Education
Caitlin Chisholm	Multi Tiered System of Supports Coordinator	Agency of Education
Susan Yesalonia	Health and Physical Education Specialist	Agency of Education

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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. A coordinated curriculum is being used at several schools, but is inconsistent per interviews across the SU, with the exception of math.
2. Per interviews, the Social Studies curriculum is being updated with the lens of equity.

Local Assessment System
1. Per interviews with staff and leadership, assessments are used as a screener and then to determine what student needs are. Student data is discussed at staff meetings and local professional development opportunities pertaining to improving student outcomes..
2. Per interviews, there is a diversity of local assessments governing reading, math and writing.

Instructional Practices
1. According to observations and some interview evidence, there is a lack of consistency in how learning targets are communicated to students in different classrooms across NCSU schools.
2. Many staff schedules have built in common planning time. Professional collaboration is evidently a priority for most of the schools in NCSU.

Proficiency-Based Learning
1. Several parents expressed that they needed more information around Proficiency-Based Learning, (PBL) because they do not understand how proficiency is derived and/or find it confusing.
2. Learning targets and/or Habits of Work (HoW) were posted in some rooms but not in all. When posted, targets/HoW were referred to differently in different classrooms and were often posted in language that to observers was well above grade level.

Commendations
1. NCSU promotes common planning time for all staff across all schools.
2. Student data is a driver for making instructional, programmatic and professional development decisions to best support NCSU students.

Recommendations
1. NCSU should consider reviewing and implementing (non-math) curriculum in a consistent way across the district and communicate the results to all stakeholders.

2. NCSU is encouraged to provide more professional development to teachers around proficiency based learning and communicate this shift using multiple modalities to all stakeholders (especially parents/families).

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. Most schools report the importance of personalized learning. However, what is reported varies among schools.
2. Students in grades 7-12 develop e-portfolios in which they set goals, reflect upon their learning, and plan for future learning as well as college and career paths.

Flexible Pathways
1. Secondary students have access to a variety of pathways including work based learning, internships, service learning, career center, dual enrollment, two alternative programs, and three academies organized around student interest.
2. After school programming offers enrichment and extension opportunities, providing flexible pathways to elementary students.

Full Breadth of Courses
1. Students have access to a variety of content areas and elective programming during the day and after school.
2. Students and parents report satisfaction with the variety of learning opportunities, but report that not all students may be aware of all of the opportunities available.

Student Voice and Choice
1. Elementary and middle school students have opportunities to direct their learning through a variety of structures and classroom routines.
2. At the secondary level, students are provided voice and choice through course selection and extracurricular activities.

Commendations
1. Throughout NCSU, schools are aware of the importance of supporting students in personalizing their learning and realistic about where they are in the process of providing students with opportunities to personalize their learning.
2. Secondary and elementary students are offered a wide variety of educational opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Schools in NCSU are recommended to find ways to document students' continued growth through formalized Personalized Learning Plans.

2. NCSU is encouraged to expand communication/channels for accessing the wide array of course offerings/options for students, to ensure all students/parents are aware of their options.

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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 suggests a strong use of interventionists, especially given some staffing difficulties. There is evidence of a coaching system in some schools to make use of expertise.
2. Evidence indicates that while some schools exhibit strong community outreach/connection (after school programs, community service, or parent involvement), others did not.
3. A fully funded equity coordinator works as part of the Design Learning Team and oversees responsibility for examining data from historically marginalized students.

Social/Emotional Health
1. There are schools that were using PBIS effectively, displaying the expectations in the hallways and classrooms. The PBIS expectations were understood well by students as attested to by interview evidence.
2. There is ample evidence of strong student-teacher relationships; most students were able to identify a trusted staff member they could go to if they needed additional support or had to voice a personal concern.
3. Several teachers reported student behavior as an issue, and social/emotional training as a need.

Physical Well-Being
1. Some schools have more time for physical activity than others; extracurricular enrichment programs (ex. Outdoor learning) are available to some schools but not noted in others.

Physical Environment
1. Expectations were posted along with personal and academic goals, and student work was posted on the walls throughout all schools.
2. Most of the schools appeared clean and well maintained.

<u>Commendations</u>
1. There is a clear initiative for equity from the NCSU admin level, such as equitable teaching practices and SU-led MTSS strategies.
2. Most schools are warm and welcoming, and have strong indicators of PBIS practices and visual displays of behavioral expectations.

<u>Recommendations</u>

1. Ongoing professional development and training would build confidence for staff members for implementing new initiatives, specifically with respect to social emotional and behavioral initiatives.

2. The schools that implemented PBIS with fidelity, could be used as models to support other schools in NCSU. This could provide an opportunity for PD to be developed within the SU, by certain schools or staff-members modelling best practices with PBIS for others.

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. Based on artifacts and interviews, NCSU provides choice-based professional development at a local, SU, and regional level.
2. Based on artifacts and interviews, NCSU provides opportunities for professional collaboration and coaching to support district initiatives.

Staff Evaluation
1. NCSU has a teacher evaluation system based on the Danielson model, and according to interview evidence, the model was inconsistently applied across the SU.
2. There was no evidence collected on the IFR field review to support the existence of any evaluations for support staff across NCSU.

Leadership
1. NCSU has various leadership teams at the local and SU level, however communication (based upon interview evidence) between and amongst teams is inconsistent.
2. Based on interviews, social emotional student needs can often supersede other administrative and leadership oriented work and duties, designed to support school improvement.

Staffing
1. Based on interviews, hiring and retaining high quality staff members is a consistent challenge across the SU.
2. Based on observations, the ratio of students to staff (teachers and support staff) was inconsistent throughout NCSU classrooms.

Commendations

1. NCSU offers a wide range of professional development opportunities and topics for staff to choose from to support teacher and student learning.

Recommendations

1. NCSU is encouraged to continue/expand incorporating departing staff survey information to improve efforts aimed at increasing the SU wide retention rates.

2. There is a need for reviewing, developing (where necessary) and implementing a consistent approach around the teacher and support staff evaluation system.

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. According to interview and artifact evidence, improvement planning included the NCSU use of common assessments for assessing specific learning needs, to determine which students will receive math and literacy intervention.
2. It was noted in evidence statements that there are varying levels of involvement in the continuous improvement planning and processes. The stakeholders reporting the least amount of involvement were parents.

Student Data System
1. The student data systems from the SU artifacts and interviews are: SWIS, DocuSped, Fountas & Pinnell, PNOA & Aims Web.
2. There are two data warehouses used to store, assess, and monitor student data: PowerSchool & VCAT; a few interviews indicated that staff would like to have additional training in their use.

Financial Alignment
1. Staff reported that they have adequate access to technology options for instruction but could use additional professional development around the use of technology and systems.
2. According to interview evidence, there are increased needs for student support in nursing, guidance and Special Education.
3. The focus on equity came up in a few different ways including interviews and artifact review; there is a presence of equity discussions/budget discussions across the schools and the SU.

Communication
1. A positive approach and attitude was noted from the guidance department and administration, faculty & staff; this is being utilized for partnering w/outside agencies for funds/support.
2. According to interview evidence, parents are concerned about NCSU billing practices at a few schools that are not always transparent/available.

Commendations

1. NCSU is commended for their palpable focus on equity, which was present in the evidence statements collected at all schools, among all stakeholders, and a noted priority in discussions at all levels for all topics.

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2. NCSU is commended for an aspirational approach to education funding. There is a clear commitment in the SU to 'say yes' in support of stakeholders to provide for a high-quality education for all.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that NCSU could consider a technology survey to confirm staff needs and understanding re: the latest use of technology at their schools.

2. There was evidence that there are inconsistencies when it comes to communication from the SU; specific areas that were noted are the Continuous Improvement Plan and budget. The SU could consider other ways of disseminating this information or highlighting some of this at a Parents' Group meeting.