



# SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

**To:** WSD Board President and Board of Trustees  
**From:** Wilmer Chavarria, WSD Superintendent  
**Re:** **Superintendent's Report for November 2023**  
**Date:** 11/08/2023

---

Dear Members of The Board,

Below please find my report for **November 2023** and refer any questions about a given item directly to me during the regularly scheduled board meeting or to the Board President and me if your inquiry is prior to the meeting.

Thank you for your work in advancing the mission of our district to form students who will "lead healthy, productive and successful lives and engage with their local and global community."

Respectfully Submitted,

**Wilmer A. Chavarria, NBCT**  
Superintendent of Schools  
Winooski School District  
[wchavarria@wsdvt.org](mailto:wchavarria@wsdvt.org)



## ADMINISTRATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

- I continue to meet with Elaine Wang, city manager, for city-schools collaboration.
- On November 9<sup>th</sup> I will be speaking with WCAX about Act 127 and the likely implications on our district.
- On November 10<sup>th</sup>, I am attending the monthly Champlain Valley Superintendents Association.
- On November 14<sup>th</sup> I am at the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation Quarterly Board meeting. I plan to be back in Winooski the next day in the morning.
- On November 15<sup>th</sup> I am teaching a workshop on Universal Design for Learning in collaboration with CVSD educators.
- On November 17, I am attending the Champlain Valley Regional Standards Board work session.
- On December 1, I am attending the Vermont Educational Equity Collaborative in Hyde Park.
- On December 4 and 5 I am accompanying Sarah Haven to the joint VSA/VSBO meeting in Lake Morey.

## KEY DATES

- Veterans Day, 11/6
- Budget Conversation Series (Staff), 11/14
- JFK P/T Conf., Early Release 11:00am, MHS
- In-service, 11/16-17
- School Recess, 11/20-24
- Anti-Racism Steering Committee, 12/4
- VSA/VSBO Finance Training in Lake Morey, 12/4-5
- Presentation of Budget Version I, 11/29
- Finance Committee Meeting, 12/5
- Budget Q&A and Presentation of Budget Version II, 12/6
- Community Event for Budget Information,

## GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES

- As a requirement of Act 72 of 2021, the Vermont AOE carried out Facilities Assessments for school facilities across the state in order to support the development of “a plan to address the needs and conditions of the State’s school buildings...” While we will not hold our breath, the resulting Facilities Assessment Report received just this past week is very informative. A particular helpful portion is the “System Expenditure Forecast” for each site as it can serve as an additional resource to our long-term maintenance and care planning. This will also help us make expenditure projections over time to minimize “surprises.” The full report has been added to your packet a few words from our Director of Facilities are added later in the report.
- I spoke on the phone with the Interim Secretary of Education who expressed regret to announce that the Agency had made a significant error in calculations in advance of the Comprehensive Supports designations for schools earlier in the fall. This error means that the updated calculations place all three Winooski schools under this designation rather than the high school alone as had been originally announced by the state. An updated press release is going out soon from the Agency. As a reminder, Vermont’s Educational Quality Standards give the state the authority to exert some extreme measures against schools after two rounds of CS designations, including school closures, district incorporations into another, and forced transfer of students to private schools. In two years from now, Winooski will be one of the first, if not the first, to be at the will of the state on whether or not to exert this power.







Our student athletes are having a year full of joy, learning, and pride.

## GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES (CONT.)

- This past week, the WSD administration started a “Budget Conversation Series” for staff taking place every Tuesday after school in preparation for the district’s budget season and in anticipation of major changes to the funding formula. The first session was well attended by staff and administrators and excellent questions were received. The staff have been reminded that this is one of several “fronts” of communication related to budget. Other fronts include school site conversations led by respective administrators and board-led efforts that reach the wider community and are required by law.
- We distributed eclipse glasses to all students prior to the October Solar Eclipse courtesy of the ECHO museum. We are purchasing a new batch for the Spring but will likely receive donations again. The Agency of Education has requested information from each school regarding plans for this day. We’ve reported that students will be dismissed from school at 12:15 to ensure their safety on the road.

## GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES (CONT.)

- Our District Safety Committee meets every week on Mondays to discuss, plan, and execute improvements to our overall preparedness. Among other things, the committee is currently focusing on creating a brand new Safety Management Plan as required by new board policy and state law. The last iteration of a similar document is already several years old and does not account for major changes to our infrastructure and overall organization. In addition to the overall plan, a subgroup is also currently working on standardizing protocol for the most critical safety hazards such as bomb threats and options-based drills.
- We carried out an evacuation drill on October 27th. Everything went smoothly. A “Hold” took place at the Middle School on 11/3 due to an unexpected emergency involving a student whose documented need manifested in unsafe ways. This resulted in an important change in the “Hold” announcement protocol. The fact that the Hold was issued only for the middle school made it so that the rest of the building was mostly unaware. Moving forward, hold announcements will be made district wide while specifying where in the facilities the hold is located. All drills reports so far have been reported to the state. Staff badges have been updated, or are actively being updated, to reflect new changes in safety procedures.
- A meeting with our SRO and LT James Charkalis took place at the end of October to go over the upcoming changes to the SRO model and to start a conversation about the logistics related to the future of the program.
- A hearing is scheduled for a Policy 5114b violation. This hearing is before the superintendent, and it is the first of its kind this year. As required by policy, the superintendent will review the evidence presented by the school site administration and decide whether the case will become a hearing by the board. The board will receive notification if it results in a final referral.
- Another policy violation that did not lead to a hearing was a Weapons Policy violation in October. The administration submitted documentation to the superintendent for his review and to consider whether a board hearing was warranted. It was decided that the student would be best supported through other means while still abiding by the current policy requirements. The board president and vice president were informed prior to this decision.

## GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES (CONTINUED)

- From Facilities: Happy November from the Facilities Team! With the seasons changing, we are gearing up for the winter which consists of getting our equipment ready. We saw our first snowfall on 11/1 which brought the sudden rush to ensure we are ready, and happy to share that we are. The District has awarded, by bid, a new contractor to maintain the entire campus roadways with snow/ice removal and we are looking forward to working with them. In the last month, we are also excited that since the project started, and upon completion and recent turnover last spring of the entire campus, we are under 100 work orders...major accomplishment and kudos to the team!
- In 2021, the Vermont General Assembly enacted Act 72 which was meant to address conditions of public school facilities across the state which tasked the AOE to conduct facilities assessments in all school buildings. This plan was to gather the overall health of school facilities in order for the State to understand the varying conditions with plans of each facility developing a 5-Year Capital Improvement plan required by Act 72. Bureau Veritas was chosen to lead these assessments on behalf of the AOE which is what this report is based from and helps WSD understand and to build our improvement plan where areas of the facility need upgrades. These assessments are the beginning of the groundwork needed to address long term deficiencies in school facilities. Within the Capital Project, we had to value engineer areas due to being over budgeted where this report helps us determine where we stand with those areas in order for us to complete the work as required.

## OTHER UPDATES:

Policy F3, which was recently approved for adoption by the board, has been modified by the VSBA due to changing guidance from the Vermont AOE. We will abide by the new changes but the board does not necessarily have to bring this back to the full process if it does not wish to do so. Instead, we are adding it to the calendar for adoption once we have finished the rest. We already fulfill the legal requirements even with the previous policy.

Policies B4 and C3 were due for a first read during our upcoming 11/8 board meeting. As stated in our last report, deeper audit reflected that these policies had indeed been adopted by the board in the Spring but had not been posted. They are now posted and they have been taken out of this year's cycle.

The Annual Plan Document (Google Sheets) was updated with a new tab that shows the upcoming budget meeting and process dates. All board members have access to it. Please refrain from modifying anything in the document as this may amount to quorum. For your convenience the dates are also posted on the next page...



**WINOOSKI SCHOOLS**  
We are the future.

## BUDGET ADOPTION TIMELINE

	Date	Focus
<b>1 BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS AND BASELINE</b>	8-Nov	FY25 Budget Context Presentation
	29-Nov	Baseline Level Services Budget document will be distributed electronically
<b>2 BUDGET PRESENTATION</b>	29-Nov	Presentation of Budget Version I: Opening presentation including significant increases & decreases
	6-Dec	Budget Q & A, Presentation of Budget Version II
	13-Dec	<b>Budget Q &amp; A, Presentation of Budget Version III, Preliminary Revenues/AOE 3-Year Comparison</b>
	20-Dec	Budget Q & A, Presentation of Budget Version IV, Preliminary Revenues/AOE 3-Year Comparison
	3-Jan	Budget Q & A, Presentation of Budget Version V, Preliminary Revenues/AOE 3-Year Comparison
<b>3 BUDGET ADOPTION</b>	10-Jan	<b>Adopt Budget</b>
<b>4 ANNUAL REPORT, WARNING, AND VOTE</b>	19-Jan	Annual Report Ready to Print
	26-Jan	Post Annual Meeting Warning
	30-Jan	Annual Report Distributed
	2-Feb	Budget Flyer to Printer
	14-Feb	Budget Flyer Distributed
	4-Mar	Annual Meeting
	5-Mar	<b>Budget Vote</b>

## GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES

- Our IT office secured a \$10,000 grant for the ongoing security of our school district. This will relieve a portion of our local budget while continuing our work to secure our building.
- IT and our district librarian attended an annual Educational Technology conference hosted by Vita-Learn. This conference has provided insight and collaboration with other school districts in Vermont on various subjects from classroom learning, to hardening our defenses with cybersecurity. Our Director of Technology hosted a round-table discussion with other school districts concerning the future needs of our network infrastructure.



Our Performing Arts Center hosting our students in action.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATES

- Results for the Vermont standardized assessments, the Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program “VT-CAP,” are required to be released to each student and the student’s guardians. In advance of these releases, I am meeting with teams in each school site to introduce the result overviews and to start a conversation on how to support families with questions.
- As is now common knowledge, schools across the state and the nation are grappling with an increase in need for mental health supports and manifestations of behavior that is physically dangerous. Alternative programs have continued to evolve over the years in Winooski and have proved resilient and adaptable during difficult times, but the same spirit of responsiveness forces us to assess our current state and brainstorm ways in which to improve. A working group is being convened by the Director of Student Services, Katherine Blair, to explore creative options.



## MORE TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATES (CONTINUED)

- Our Middle School Principal, Kate Grodin, has been honored with a Fulbright award for leaders and will be traveling to Germany for the rest of November to strengthen her expertise in education. I extend my sincerest congratulations and wish her lots of learning, growth, and enjoyment. The High School principal will cover her responsibilities in the meantime with access to substitute administrative coverage as needed.
- The director of Equity at the Champlain Valley School District reached out for ideas on how to best support students given that their district is experiencing an increase of recently arrived families with students who benefit from language supports. Since Winooski has been doing significant work in this area in the past, I am inviting a group of our team members to visit our neighboring district for an afternoon on November 14 and share some of our experiences. I am particularly excited to lead a conversation around a topic that is of interest to me and for which I've been formally trained in years past. I am also happy to strengthen our interdistrict supports and collaboration.

Students enjoy story time during their library class.





Engaging in physical activity and making use of our brand-new gym.

- Both soccer teams did well this season in terms of competition, learning, and community building. I congratulate students for their dedication, effort, and discipline, and to all adults involved in making these activities meaningful for them. At Winooski, we know that student athletes are students first, and so I'd like to acknowledge that winning is not the goal, but rather the experience, joy, and personal growth that comes from engaging in a collective effort. Congratulations to all our student athletes for their remarkable efforts.
- Act 76, went into effect on June 20, 2023. The state legislature and early childhood stakeholders passed this law to transform Vermont's early care and education system. An element of Act 76 is to provide full-school-day, full-school-year prekindergarten programming for 4-year-olds beginning in 2026. The law removes negative grade-level weight for PreK in the "weighed long-term membership" calculation for school funding, contingent on several provisions that standardize PreK. Our Early Learning team is brainstorming ways to roll out this part of Act 76.





- The Career Cafe is a “mini job fair” held on-site in the main entrance lobby of Winooski High School during the Advisory & Lunch hour. It is an opportunity for students to practice their career fair skills while learning about current job openings and future career pathways; and for organizations to build awareness at Winooski HS about the ways in which they engage young adults who are seeking current employment and/or exploring future career pathways in your field. Career Cafe is a great way for you to find your next internship, volunteer opportunity, summer program, job and more!
- Some Middle and High School faculty and students attended the annual Rowland Foundation Conference at UVM on October 26th. The keynote speaker was Ross Gay who is a poet, essayist, and professor at Indiana University Bloomington and author of *The Book of Delights* and *Inciting Joy*. The focus of the conference centered around Growing Community- Making Space for Joy in Creativity in School.
- The creatures have escaped from the JFK art room! Renee Weertman, our new Art Teacher, has been working with JFK students to identify feelings and create amazing creatures. The student-created creatures are up around the building for everyone to enjoy.
- Morning Meeting is a particular and deliberate way that all JFK classes begin their day. All classroom members—grown-ups and students—gather in a circle, greet each other, and listen and respond to each other. Every JFK classroom will invite families to join their student's class for a Morning Meeting. Some classes have already had their fall family Morning Meeting, some are scheduled, and some are still in the planning stage.
- We recently hosted teams from Essex and Missisquoi to look at our k-5 literacy implementation. Both teams came away impressed by our skilled teaching staff and quality of our literacy program.

**This letter is from Adam Hurwitz** in regard to a question posed by Board Member Steven Berbeco during our last Board meeting.

Good morning Wilmer et al,

Happy to share some context that I think will help answer the question posed by the board. First, here are the numbers – last year when we offered the PSAT to 10th and 11th graders, we had 50 students sign up. This year for the Pre-ACT, we had 67 students sign up.

I can't say for certain, but I would posit the reason for the increased interest this year in taking a test like this is the increased efforts the high school counseling team has made to normalize and demystify the pursuit of postsecondary education. We took great care to speak with all the 10th and 11th graders about the value, and limitations, of taking a test like this.

We shared with students that a benefit of taking the Pre-ACT would be familiarizing themselves with the structure and timing of the test which can help them prepare for the ACT. Since the ACT is a test that can help them access college and scholarship opportunities, the Pre-ACT might help them in their pursuit of postsecondary education.

We also shared that this was a low-stakes test in a number of ways. First, that it is a practice for the ACT and the results are simply feedback to help them identify areas for growth. Second, even the real, full-scale ACT is playing an increasingly limited role in college admissions and scholarships with so many institutions adopting test-optional policies (for good reason given the inequities these tests traditionally served to uphold). So if they don't perform as well as they want on these tests, they can just choose not to share the scores.

I will say that in proctoring the test, Amy and I noticed some things that align with what we discussed in the staff meeting this week. For many students, the process of using a test book and an answer sheet (and bubbling in answers) seemed completely new, so we were able to coach them on that. At the end of the day, even if most students don't end up sharing these test scores out, we feel the experience is useful in preparing them for future tests for things like professional licenses, certifications, etc.

I hope that information is helpful. Please feel free to reach out if you want to discuss further.

Adam Hurwitz (he/him)  
Winooski High School



## ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Below are a few items the board assigned to management along with a status update.

Item	Board Direction	Status
Superintendent Report to the Board	PSAT, seems to have a positive response and the board wonders where that is coming from. Wilmer to follow up and bring that information to the next meeting.	Information is presented in the previous page of this report.
C7 Student Attendance Policy	Additional, broader, language added to the policy to ensure all community members are informed and understand the policy.  "Restorative Practice" terminology, is there something else that can be used as this term means different things to different people and could be off putting.	The word "understandable" was added for second read.  "Board of Directors" was changed to "School Board" for second read.  "Restorative Practices" will not be incorporated in new policy in order to keep it at a high level and as close to the law as possible. Other policies cover our approach to student-centered practices and further policy procedure can engage with this concept.
B3 Alcohol & Drug Free Workplace Policy	Definition of Workplace to be modified  Question of whether Board members are bound by this policy  Remove footnote 3 - simple logistical reminder	Definition 2 "Workplace" was modified to add "not limited to."  Language to specify board members was not added.  Footnote 3 was removed.
Agenda Planning	Update all board meeting information to reflect the new 6pm start time	Board Webpage has been updated  Agenda templates have been updated
Board Budget	Update Budget Timetable to reflect updated meeting schedule -Nov 29, Dec, 6, 13, 20 and January 3rd.	The Budget Timetable has been updated and can be viewed <a href="#">here</a> and in the Board's Annual Plan document to

	December 13th meeting time may be adjusted for those community members celebrating Hanukkah	which all members have direct access to.  Updated meeting schedule has been added to the <a href="#">board budget page</a> .
Board Community Activities	Dates to be offered to Legislators in December and one in January. December 13th will not be offered	Legislators have been contacted.
Budget Context Presentations	Wilmer to bring the 1st budget presentation to the board.	Presentation in packet.

## RECOMMENDED ITEMS TO REVIEW

It is my recommendation that the board review all agenda items in your packet ahead of time and be prepared to approve the Consent Agenda and other applicable items produced by the administration and listed for approval.