



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

To: WSD Board President and Board of Trustees
From: Wilmer Chavarria, WSD Superintendent
Re: **Superintendent's Report for October 2024**
Date: 10/09/2024

Dear Members of The Board,

Below please find my report for **October 2024** 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 Ends Statement 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



A middle school student engages in group work during a morning class.

CELEBRATE

- **Caitlin MacLeod-Bluver named 2025 Vermont Teacher of Year:** On Monday, September 30th a special high school community meeting was held in the performance arts center (PAC) to celebrate Caitlin. We were accompanied by the current and former Vermont Teachers of the Year as well as the Interim Agency of Education Secretary of Education Zoie Saunders. We are proud of Caitlin who joins principal Jean in our second state-wide honor this year.
- **National Principals Month** is a time to recognize and celebrate the important role that principals play in the education system of the United States. It is observed throughout the month of October each year. We extend our thanks and appreciation to our principals and directors who take on the heavy task of looking after hundreds of young people and the adults that serve them. As a former principal, I recognize the strength, creativity, and love that it takes to wake up every morning and face uncertainty with courage. We are thankful for your presence and leadership.

ASSESSMENTS

Grades	VTCAP	2023	2024	Difference
3	ELA	38%	42%	4%
3	Math	28%	24%	-4%
4	ELA	26%	39%	13%
4	Math	9%	22%	13%
5	ELA	31%	14%	-17%
5	Math	16%	2%	-14%
5	Science	18%	7%	-11%
6	ELA	29%	37%	8%
6	Math	10%	20%	10%
7	ELA	23%	32%	9%
7	Math	14%	18%	4%
8	ELA	29%	22%	-7%
8	Math	12%	13%	1%
8	Science	17%	18%	1%
9	ELA	25%	27%	2%
9	Math	31%	17%	-14%
11	Science	18%	29%	11%

- We are wrapping up our fall benchmark assessments and will begin data reviews in mid-October.
- I was interviewed regarding the latest VTCAP state testing scores. You can watch the report here. As is to be expected, the interview only includes snippets without much context, so the longer story here is that while the state saw slight decreases across the board, Winooski performed better in terms of growth across the board. 6 out of 7 grades tested improved in at least one tested subject, and 5 out of 7 grades saw an improvement in ELA, some of those were large jumps. Math was a mixed bag with 4 grades making progress while 3 grades went in the other direction. Overall, however, it is a noticeable improvement for Winooski. More of this data is included in the concurrent budget presentation for today's board meeting.

NEW EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM

We have launched our new early literacy program, "EL Skills Block," in K and 1st grade. Early reports are that the teachers feel this program is an improvement over Foundations.



On October 2nd we celebrated “Jason Day.” This was officer Jason’s last day with the WSD and included many symbolic and celebratory actions, like a parade at JFK, card-writing in classrooms, wearing red (his favorite color), and an end of day celebration where he received a certificate, flowers, and a toast with cider, because his last name is Ziter. We wish Jason the best on the next chapter and are forever grateful for the time he dedicated to our students. He reminded us daily what it looks like to do your job well, acting with compassion and respect for the dignity of all people under his care and serving as a model to officers everywhere.

GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES

- **On September 26**, we carried out our first ever Options-based Drill where all three options (run, hide, fight) were allowed. Because of the rain, most people chose to hide or “fight.” Those who chose to fight practiced the protocol that includes turning off lights, silencing devices, and barricading a door. People who chose to “fight” engaged in a focused lesson with students and adults about best practices when fighting is our last resort. Families were notified more than 24 hours in advance and once again while the drill was taking place. We are thankful for everyone who makes these difficult drills more manageable, especially our students who abide by the expectations.
- We have received a few warnings over the past month of potential swatting, where false threats of violence can be made usually via phone to school administrative offices. We receive notifications both from our local law enforcement and from state agencies to be aware of potential threats within a range of time and within specific geographic regions. We take these warnings seriously and ensure that a balance is maintained between being internally aware and prepared and keeping non-credible threats away from the student body and public in general to avoid unwarranted fear and chaos. In the unlikely event of a credible threat, we are ready to take swift action.
- The Public Safety Committee continues to meet on a biweekly basis. During this time we review feedback from staff submitted through a google form and address pressing issues brought by different departments. Additionally, we carry out long-term and preventative planning, including maintaining a yearly drill schedule and keeping the All-Hazards Operations Manual updated.
- The Winooski Education Association has formally notified the WSD of their intent to bargain for a 2026-2028 contract. The board already selected a committee and is ready to begin. The union hopes to kick off the process in November.



Students at JFK Say good-bye to officer Jason.

GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES (CONT.)

- **We continue the search** for a School Safety Coordinator. We had extended an offer to an excellent candidate last month, but he declined the offer after much deliberation. A combination of factors, including the necessity for flexibility in hours and the pay range contributed to the candidate's decision. We continue to actively recruit but also want to be careful not to rush a decision. We are currently in talks with some people that have been personally recommended by officer Jason. The board will be updated further once movement has been made. In the meantime, our relationship with local law enforcement continues to be active. Lieutenant Charkalis joined this week's safety committee meeting at the request of officer Ziter, and he will continue to provide us assistance while we transition.
- **From Facilities:** The majority of our start-of-year items are done with the new work order ticket system the district moved to earlier in the year. This has already proven to be a great change from our previous system—much more advanced and many more options within the program allows us to be more fluid on our day to day and more successful on resolving tickets and managing them. To date, we have completed 416 tickets and have been able to keep them in the mid 30's from week to week. A job well done from the Facilities Team Members!



MORE UPDATES

- As of July 1st, the Winooski School District entered into a food service contract with Genuine Foods. Genuine was able to jump in and get to work serving summer meals to WSD summer programs and programs throughout the city. On August 22nd, Genuine catered the back-to-school community BBQ here at WSD. Since the start of school, we've held one Food Service Committee meeting. This committee consisted of students, staff, administration, board members, and Genuine's kitchen manager and regional director. The kitchen crew is hard at work implementing some of the changes. We are excited about the ongoing collaboration in this committee and look forward to our next meeting later in October.
- The Winooski Education Association and our administrative team continue to meet in a committee to create clear guidelines for new placement situations, based on the limited stipulations in the contract, the education context beyond Winooski, and previously-ambiguous cases that serve as examples. So far we have arrived at a series of parameters for different categories of licensed personnel and both sides of the committee believe the guidelines foster fairness and comparability to the rest of the industry. We plan to continue to convene a few more times in the year.

WINOOSKI'S USE OF FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS

Every year the Winooski School District receives federal money through several grants. One of those grants, the Consolidated Federal Programs (CFP), is designed to provide all children with significant opportunities to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education and close educational achievement gaps.

The US Department of Education divides the CFP into four parts or titles. Each Title has specific purposes and restrictions. Winooski is eligible for and has elected to consolidate each of the funds below, except for Title III into a School-Wide Program (SWP). SWP allows us more flexibility in how we spend our federal funds. The amounts below represent our initial allocation. In late October the AOE will allocate additional funds.

How Much Federal Funding Does Winooski Receive?

TITLE I	TITLE IIA	TITLE III	TITLE IV	TOTALS
\$980,471.00	\$189,911.00	\$53,548.83	\$145,354.00	\$1,369,221

Title I

The purpose of the Title I program is to provide all children with significant opportunities to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education and close educational achievement gaps. This year we are spending Title I funds on:

- Coaches and Interventionist Salaries
- Academic tutoring for students
- PK teaching positions
- Summer School stipends for teachers
- Parent & Family Engagement - e.g., the Family Learning Bonanza

Title II

Title II has several purposes, including increasing student achievement to meet Vermont's challenging academic standards, improving the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders, and providing low-income and minority students greater access to effective educators.

This year we are spending Title II funds on:

- Homeless Transportation
- Coaching to support the Implementation of Proficiency-Base Learning
- Conference fees for Vita Learn

Title III

The purposes of this program are to help ensure that children who are multilingual learners attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet challenging State academic standards. This year we are spending Title III funds on:

- Liaison Support
- Summer programming in math and literacy

Title IV

The purpose of this program is to improve student's academic achievement by increasing our capacity to create a safe and healthy school environment. This year we are spending Title IV funds on:

- Circus Smirkus Residency
- Therapeutic Theater Arts Resident

We are also required to set aside money for independent schools that serve Winooski students. This year we have to reserve \$43,489.38 for four schools.

If you have any ideas about additional investments or have any questions about how we spend this money please contact Michael Eppolito

Email: meppolito@wsdvt.org

Phone 802-383-6148

Or reach out to your liaison.



A student gets ready backstage before performing.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

- 21C continues to embrace opportunities for HS students to be leaders in afterschool through its DREAM2 mentoring program at the WHS on Tuesdays and Fridays, the new WMHS Volleyball Afterschool Skills Program on Tuesdays, and the JFK Mandala Community Project on Wednesdays.
- The Winooski Early Childhood Program is in our second year using The Creative Curriculum. This play-based preschool curriculum focuses on school readiness skills in Social/Emotional, Cognitive, Physical, and Language development. The planned activities, and classroom setup are all designed to accomplish preschool learning goals, and objectives that align with the Vermont Early Learning Standards. The Curriculum shows teachers how to integrate learning in literacy, math, and science throughout the day in an engaging play-based way.
- Family Conferences in Middle/High School are being scheduled for families on Wednesday and Thursday, October 9th & 10th. We look forward to seeing many families for this first round. As always, liaisons take on the logistics for most families whose first language is not English and then teachers schedule everyone else. This system will be strengthened later in the year with a new digital scheduling platform.



A student in middle school finishes work and starts to get ready for the next class.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

- As part of our efforts to promote inclusion and enhance our students' literacy skills, we have introduced a Spanish Heritage Language class for students in Grades 1 through 5. This class is led by Erin Hurley and Bernardino Chavarria, our Spanish Liaison Volunteer, and is currently being run as a pilot program once a month. We are carefully considering offering such opportunities to our other language groups during the school day, but the process can be a slow one due to licensing and other requirements. Heritage language instruction can be a powerful tool to promote belonging and to develop literacy skills that can be transferred from one language to another.
- JFK's 5th grade is learning about the biodiversity in the rainforest. As a way to bring the learning to life, the 5th grade recently went to Bolton's Ropes course, made possible by the Bolton Outdoor Adventure Fund as a way to make connections to the tree canopy and biodiversity in a Vermont forest. This experience specifically benefits students with an ML background because it provides them with hands-on learning, an opportunity to increase background knowledge, and a chance to learn new vocabulary in a real -world setting. Students also participated in a Zoom Chat with Dr. Margaret Lowman, PhD, author of the book *The Arbornaut*. Part of the learning students are doing is understanding why scientists, like Dr. Lowman, study the rainforest. The video chat gave students the chance to ask her questions directly and learn about her amazing career.



Our Vermont Teacher of the Year, Caitlin MacLeod-Bluver guides students through a discussion on Lumumba's last speech.

HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES

- The Necessity Store was stocked with coats, gloves, snow pants, and deodorant for our students and their families in need. This effort is part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring that every student has the necessary resources to feel comfortable, supported, and ready to learn, especially as we approach the colder months. By addressing these basic needs, we are directly contributing to the well-being and focus of our students.
- Due to the ongoing Main Street construction, we will not be holding our annual Walk to School event this year. While this is a disappointment for many who look forward to this tradition, we are prioritizing student safety and exploring alternative ways to promote physical activity and community engagement
- JFK's PE classes participated in Kids on the Ball, a local non-profit organization. Students had the chance to learn about and play tennis through games, fun, and play. Jake Agna, a Vermont Tennis coach, started the non-profit to provide opportunities for personal growth through youth games.



A student in 5th grade explains the solution to a math problem.

HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES

- From Coach Jackson: Here are some brief updates from our teams. Middle School Boys & Girls Soccer-Both teams have shown strong participation and positive sportsmanship. We had a team building week last week that focused on being a good teammate and bridging the gap with our high school players. High School Boys Soccer-The team has had a successful season with a solid win-loss record, showing growth and competitiveness. Coaches are focused on skill development and teamwork. High School Girls Soccer-The team is working hard, navigating some challenges with player availability. Despite this, they continue to show resilience and dedication. They had an impressive win vs Danville 2-1. Sign-ups for Basketball are happening now!
- From Cheyne: Soccer season is in full swing and that means managing our grounds and keeping our fields prepared each week for our soccer teams. Although the seasons are changing (love the fall colors) we still are in need of mowing and trimming as part of our day to day outside work along with maintaining rubbish, playgrounds and garden beds. In the coming weeks this will come to an end and we will begin preparing for yet another season's change and gearing up our equipment to be sure we are ready. Until then, enjoy the beginning of fall and all it has to offer.

HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES

- This year the WSD has select high school students attending the Bridging Program which is a program run through Champlain Community Services (CCS) whose mission is to assist school-aged youth with disabilities to step confidently into their adult years by introducing them to meaningful community opportunities, exploring topics connected to healthy adult living and building healthy relationships. Bridging at CCS partners with Burlington, Colchester, Mt. Mansfield Union, South Burlington and Winooski High Schools. Working with interns from the UVM School of Social Work and mentors from partner high schools, the Bridging Coordinator guides students through a full academic year organized around four learning modules; Career Exploration, Community Connection, Independent Living and Advocacy. The students attending the program are building skills, strengthening connections and having so much fun while they explore important topics.
- The WSD is partnering with the CHILL program again this year to offer both skateboarding and snowboarding opportunities to select students within the WSD. Established in 1995 as the very first youth development program, Chill Burlington operates year-round with snowboard, skateboard, and stand up paddleboarding programs for youth from 11 to 19 years old. They work with various schools, youth agencies, social programs, and boardsports partners to provide these programs with all associated costs covered and barriers to participation removed. CHILL utilizes the latest Positive Youth Development best practices to ensure participating youth build resiliency through targeted lessons and challenging physical activities. The programs use the process of learning boardsports, an experiential learning cycle, and a core value-driven curriculum to help youth grow personally and see that there is a path out of their current circumstances.
- Patrice Lumumba was asked to represent Winooski in the Vermont Educational Equity Collective. He attended the first meeting of the year in Colchester where he met with other leaders from different school districts. The focus of the meeting was to discuss logistics, share successes, and learn from one another's experiences. This meeting provided an excellent opportunity to network, exchange ideas, and collaborate on strategies to improve our respective equity and belonging efforts. Patrice shares that he sees this as a valuable platform for continuous improvement and fostering a stronger educational community in Vermont.
- On Thursday, October 3rd, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the Performing Arts Center (PAC), the Winooski Police Department and Winooski School District hosted a presentation by Homeland Security Investigations about INTERNET and APP Safety. Project iGuardian is for parents and guardians of students. The project is an outreach effort to share information about the dangers of online environments, how to stay safe online, and how to report abuse and suspicious activity. Know how to set limits on your child's phone and also set limits to their apps.

TREASURER RESIGNATION

Matt Francis
133 Franklin St
Winooski VT 05404
treasurer@wsdvt.org

October 2nd, 2024

Winooski School District
60 Normand Street
Winooski VT 05404

To the Winooski Board of Trustees, District Clerk, and Winooski Public,

Please accept this formal notice of resignation from all Winooski School District Treasurer duties, effective November 1, 2024. It has been a pleasure to serve on behalf of the Winooski community and be involved with the School District. Many thanks are warranted to the staff for their cooperation and passion.

My family and I are moving out of the community and therefore cannot continue my responsibilities through the next election. In my place, Assistant Treasurer Allyssa Ravelin will assume the duties of Winooski School District Treasurer in accordance with Winooski Charter § 23-17 until the next municipal election. Accordingly, Allyssa Ravelin will receive the Treasurer's full stipend. I will ensure a smooth transition with documentation of procedures as a reference.

Sincerely,
Matthew Francis
Winooski School District Treasurer



KEY DATES

- Wednesday October 9th: Early Release / MHS Family - Teacher Conferences
- Thursday October 10th: No School / MHS Family -Teacher Conferences
- Friday October 11th: No School - Yom Kippur and Dashain

ADMINISTRATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

- On 10/24 I will join board members for the VSBA conference.
- I will be in Nicaragua the week of October 14.
- On 10/4 I am meeting with the city and the police regarding next steps in the identification of our new District Liaison Officer
- On 9/28 I attended the Vermont Administrators of Color Affinity meeting in Montpelier.
- On 9/20 I attended the Champlain Valley Superintendents Association, where we convened after the AOE's regional Listen and Learn Tour earlier that day.
- On 9/17 and 9/18 I was at Harvard providing in-person coaching for the new Education Leadership, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship cohort.
- On 9/16 I attended the ARSC meeting, which was the last meeting with the old committee format. Moving forward, the ARSC will be comprised of a smaller number of dedicated individuals, chosen via application.
- On 9/12 I attended the VSA all-members meeting in Killington.

ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

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

Item	Board Direction	Status
Agenda	Under "Announcements and Recognitions" add an "other" item.	Standing item has been added.
Agenda	The board requested the Newsletter and Community Engagement planning document as standing items.	Standing items added to the agenda (community planning document will be added for November).
Food Services	The board would like an update on the new food services provider.	An update is offered in this report and Sarah Haven is available for questions.
Community Use of School Facilities	The board was notified that an updated procedure has been previously posted but while it included differentiated fees per group category it did not include a hierarchy of scheduling priority for competing requests.	The DOM is currently meeting with various stakeholders for a draft new procedure.
Budget	The board directed the administration to offer three scenarios: level funding, level services, and inflationary growth. Additionally, it requested for the presentations to include a "Budget 101" with basic information about the school budget.	Budget presentations will begin during this month, with the context presented in two parts. The scenarios requested will be presented during part 2.
Policy Adoption Process	After an analysis of the policy adoption requirements by board member Nicole Mace, the board discussed and decided that a separate section will be added under the policies tab on the website to list policies that have been approved for adoption. This will serve as the warning before a final adoption in an upcoming board meeting	A new section has been added and the first batch of policies to be adopted through this method will come before the board in November.
Scholarships	During the committee reappointment discussions, it was mentioned that Karen Greene would no longer be in charge of scholarships due to her retirement. The administration was requested to consult with her for potential options in leadership or a plan moving forward.	Karen Greene was contacted and she provided a reply that was in turn provided to the committee.