



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

To: WSD Board President and Board of Trustees
From: Wilmer Chavarria, WSD Superintendent
Re: **Superintendent's Report for September 2024**
Date: 9/6/2024

Dear Members of The Board,

Below please find my report for **September 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 JFK student arrives by bus looking forward to a day of learning and fun.

GENERAL UPDATES

- **We welcomed families** and students back with a family orientation and back to school BBQ. The orientation offered essential information, ensuring everyone felt ready for the school year ahead. Families explored classrooms, met teachers, and experienced the learning environment firsthand. The back-to-school BBQ had an incredible turnout—nearly the entire community came together to celebrate the new school year.
- **The staff gathered** for the annual convocation at Winooski School District. Our students led a powerful session, bringing together voices from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences and perspectives. After their presentation, students took the lead in breakout sessions, guiding staff through discussions that will help us all move forward together.
- **Congratulations to Caitlin MacLeod-Bluver** for becoming a finalist for the 2025 Vermont Teacher of the Year title. As you may recall, two of our outstanding high school teachers were finalists last year as well, and the streak of achievement reflects highly on the work of our district as exemplified by our remarkable staff. We wish Caitlin the best as a decision is expected to be announced soon.



Expanding to 4 Pre-K classrooms allows students to attend a school day option, 8:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. We will prioritize our 4-year-old students for this option to support the continued growth of kindergarten readiness skills. The longer day was a need identified in the Community Needs Assessment Survey completed a few years ago and the four classrooms are all at full capacity (64 preschool students).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- **Our incoming 9th graders** started their high school journey with a day full of excitement and community building. Students bonded in their new advisories, got introduced to the green and white day schedule, met their teachers, and took part in a fun scavenger hunt.
- **21C Afterschool programs** will begin the week of Sept 16th with some old-time favorites and some new offerings. We are excited about new partnerships with the Winooski Heritage Mill Museum for the Mandala Community Project and local dance experts for Dance and Creative Movement classes. Check out the Session 1 flyers on the WSD website under the parent and family tab.
- **An admissions representative** from St. Michael's College will be set up in the Main Lobby this week. This is the first of several visits from colleges & universities this fall. The School Counseling Department has invited these schools to come to WHS because many of our students would be first-generation college students and will not have an opportunity to visit any college campuses before they need to make a decision about postsecondary plans. We're very excited about our students having the chance to learn about a variety of postsecondary opportunities.
- **This month there are 2 separate** events happening for high school students to explore careers in health care and engineering. On Monday, September 23rd from 3:00-4:00 Spartan Advance UVM Medical Students Health Professions Career Pathway and on Wednesday, September 18th from 3:00-4:00 and GLOBAL FOUNDRIES Engineers Advanced Manufacturing, STEM Career Pathways will be here at WHS.
- **High School Spirit Week** and Homecoming! During the week of September 23th to September 27th will be spirit week with advisor challenges and competition. On Friday, September 27th we will have some home soccer games and a homecoming dance in the evening.



A high school student problem solving math questions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- **The 6th grade Academy** will launch its fall expedition “Power by Persistence” Students work together with an artist from Circus Smirkus to create a performance and then transfer their newfound excitement for the circus directly into theme related art, music, science, history, math and language studies. The expedition will start the week of September 16th and culminate in a school performance on Friday, October 4th.
- **The district has received** an Artists in Schools Grant of \$4,000 through the Vermont Arts Council located in Montpelier, Vermont. Mary Ann Debay, WSD Clinical Psychologist, applied for this grant which will provide a 10-day residency with artist Melisse Sollee in partnership with Inclusive Arts Vermont for students in the middle/high school intensive needs classroom and the JFK therapeutic classroom. Inclusive Arts Vermont is a nonprofit arts and education program with a mission of using the magic of the arts to engage the capabilities and enhance the confidence of children and adults with disabilities. The Arts Council’s programs are made possible by funding from the state of Vermont, which matches federal dollars from the National Endowment for the Arts.

GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES

- **We have seen an uptick** in Spanish-speaking families enrolling in our schools (close to 30 students so far), which has made it evident that the presence of a Spanish language liaison is in order. We have secured a part-time volunteer for the time being who will support us up to four hours a day every day. We may be able to access some funding for this year if necessary.
- **The Winooski Education Association** has notified us of their intent to bargain this year for their professional staff unit. A first contact is expected in early November which means that the board must select its negotiating team soon. Once a negotiation team has been established, the administrative team will provide them with suggested items for negotiation, much like our previous round, which proved successful.
- **The VT AOE has approved** the WSD's significant disproportionality plan which was developed last spring and which will begin to address our identification by the VT AOE with disproportionality in our identification of white students with an emotional disturbance (ED). The district will work closely with the VT AOE on next steps which will include the allocation of funds from our IDEA B Grant and student progress.
- **We have enrolled our JFK** students in the backpack program. This program primarily serves JFK students by providing them with non-perishable food items to take home, ensuring they have food to eat over the weekends.

Students count play money from their previous class before the start of the community meeting.





MORE UPDATES

- **The Necessity Store** is now available for students three times a week and for community members once a month. This store provides essential items to those in need, supporting the well-being of students and the wider community.
- **The Winooski Early Childhood Program** was inspected by the Child Development Division in the Vermont Agency of Human Services and determined that our 4th classroom is in full compliance with their regulations.
- **To start the school year** our Early Learning classrooms received a wonderful donation from Hydro-Québec with back-to-school supplies for our preschoolers. The remarkable donation not only supplied our preschoolers, but it also fully funded supplies parents would have needed to provide for their children in the full school-day program. The excitement was off the charts as our youngest learners received backpacks, books, notebooks, chalk, crayons, and play dough.
- **Speaking of Hydro-Québec**, we are in contact with its CEO about a potential new initiative to supply vouchers to students and families who need it to get laundry done for free. More details to come as we mature the logistics around the initiative. For now, they have committed \$15,000 to support the Necessity Store. Special thanks to Krista Parisi for keeping this partnership going for a second year and to Patrice Lumumba for making a good case for why this is a good investment



A student catches up with work after breakfast.

HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL LIVES

- **The Veggie Vango initiative** has been launched for students, families, and community members and will occur twice a month. This program is in partnership with Vermont Foodbank, providing fresh vegetables to the community. The program officially started today Friday 6, 2024. Next time it will be here is the 20th of September.
- **Due to damage from a recent windstorm**, there are currently no night games scheduled as our light poles are undergoing repairs. We hope to have them operational soon and will keep everyone updated. In the meantime, we welcome everyone to stop by and enjoy a game during the day.
- **The Field Theater in partnership** with WMHS will be bringing back Playing Fields on September 13th. Playing Fields is an evening performance that takes place on School Playing Fields. The event is free to the school and free and open to the general public to attend. The event is intended to be a back-to-school party for the school district and will hopefully be an opportunity to highlight schools as the center/pillar of the community. "The event should bring people together in merriment and awe."



A Pre-K student enjoys playing during their (luckily long) recess.

HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL LIVES

- **Fall sports are in full swing**, and our teams have been working hard to build strong connections on and off the field. We are excited to see the dedication and energy our student-athletes bring this season. Our first home game for the Girls' team is on Friday, September 6th. We also have Homecoming games scheduled for the Boys' team on September 27th and the Girls' team on October 9th. We encourage everyone to come out and support our athletes. This might be a time-consuming endeavor, especially because most factors that lead to this identification are outside the schools' control.

SRO FAREWELL

Please see below for Jason Ziter's farewell letter to the WSD Staff, which he titled "A NEW CHAPTER IN THE BOOK CALLED "LIFE."

Students, Staff, Families and the Winooski Community,

I am writing to let you know that my family and I are relocating and moving out of state. My wife and I will be helping with the ministry of a church that we'll be attending there, and I have accepted a new job continuing to support children, youth and families in a very similar role as my SRO position.

Working for the Winooski Police Department as well as my position as the School Resource Officer for the School District has been an absolutely incredible experience. This has been the best job I've ever had! The role of the School Resource Officer embodies the true meaning of "Community Policing." I have taught many classes, run camps, sang at basketball and soccer games, cheered at state finals and championships and had the extreme privilege of coaching baseball.

I have made many great friends, watched you all grow, and seen many graduate. Being asked to be the speaker for the 2021 graduating class was an extreme honor and one I will cherish for a very long time. I am very grateful for the many things I've learned from all of our different communities. Learning how to say hello or greet people in most of our languages has made the bond between my position and the community stronger.

Working alongside the staff here at Winooski has been wonderful. I have made many lifelong friends! You are all amazing and talented and should be proud of the work you do. The impact that the Winooski community has made on me will last a lifetime. I will take what I've learned here and use it at my new job.

My last day of work will be Wednesday, October 2nd.

I will miss you ALL!

With much love, respect and honor,

Officer Jason
Corporal Jason Ziter



KEY DATES

- Friday, September 13th, 6pm @ WSD Field: The Flynn: Playing Fields - Cirque Kikasse's Circus Performance
- Tuesday, September 17 @ 6 PM: First PTO Meeting of the Year.
- Friday, September 20th: Veggie VanGo
- Friday, September 27: Homecoming Dance
- Wednesday October 9: Early Release 11 AM (P-T Conferences for the middle high school)

ADMINISTRATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

- On September 13 I am with the Champlain Valley Superintendent's Association for the morning.
- On September 12, I am at the VSA all members meeting in Killington.
- On September 9 I am meeting with the City Manager, as regularly scheduled.
- On September 5 I attended two external engagements: a committee meeting for the onboarding of the new Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation CEO and an informational meet-and-greet at Harvard for graduate students interested in being supported through coaching.
- On September 3 I attended the VSBIT Hazing Harassment and Bullying training. I will continue to attend the rest of the series this year.
- On August 26 I met with Robert (Board President), the Mayor, and the City Manager.
- On August 23 I had my first session with my mentor, Amy Rex, for a second and final year.
- On August 20, I attended the LANL Foundation quarterly board meeting.
- On August 16 I attended the ELOE Program Launch at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

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

Item	Board Direction	Status
Teacher Evaluation Process	The board requested an update on how the first year of the new teacher evaluation system went.	This report has been added under the “long term” tab of the board spreadsheet. You will receive a report after the first year.
Treasurer Transition	The board had questions about the treasurer transition, including whether the board can appoint an interim or how the appointment of an assistant treasurer could help.	We are waiting for actions from our current treasurer regarding an official appointment of an assistant. We were able to secure someone to step forward for the role (thank you Alyssa, who also assists us with our meetings). We reached out to counsel for additional thoughts but have not received an answer as of this writing.
Policy Adoption Process	The board would like to revisit our policy adoption process and clarify whether we are overdoing it. Board member Nicole volunteered to look into it but preliminarily the board agreed not to wait an entire year for adoption.	Board member Nicole may provide with updates during the meeting.
Policy E21	Policy E21 was discussed and most of it was to remain the same for the second reading. Only one omission was requested at the title.	“In the schools” was deleted from the new version of the E21 policy, and the current version is included in your packet.
Budget Parameters	Direction from the board is necessary regarding the upcoming budget, but the members present felt that the entire board needed to decide parameters (ideally September meeting). We are hoping that the Commission will have more information by October related to potential recommendations for cost containment to the legislature.	An item was added to the agenda so that the entire board can provide guidance and parameters to the administration as we begin to draft next year’s budget.

Joint Meeting	A meeting was to be scheduled with the City Council.	November 4 was selected and added to everyone's calendar. The WSD School Board will come to the council at 6 PM. Agenda items will be finalized between the Mayor and the board President.

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.