



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

To: WSD Board President and Board of Trustees
From: Wilmer Chavarria, WSD Superintendent
Re: **Superintendent's Report for December 2024**
Date: 12/9/2024

Dear Members of The Board,

Below please find my report for **December 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
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Passing period at the high school

HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE, AND SUCCESSFUL

- **From Liz Parris, BSN, RN, NCSN:** On a regular basis, the health office and/or the school based health center (SBHC) assess students with orthopedic injuries, chronic pain etc. Oftentimes, the nurses work with the student's PCP to make a referral for physical therapy(PT) or the SBHC providers directly refer a student to PT. There are many barriers for our students and their families navigating the referral process or accessing these services in the community. Last school year, we began the process of creating a partnership with UVM PT to offer appointments on site throughout the school year. This will reduce or eliminate the barriers to accessing care, reduce the amount of absenteeism, tardiness or early dismissals related to appointments and increase the amount of time the students spend in the classroom learning. I am pleased to announce that WSD and UVM have signed a memorandum of understanding. We are expecting this service to begin in January 2025.
- **The district received** a generous donation of winter gear from Burton Company on Tuesday. Special thanks were extended to Ian MacFarland, who is a Vice President at Burton and also a volunteer at the school VVG, for facilitating this donation. This contribution will help ensure that students and staff are prepared for winter conditions, promoting their comfort and well-being.

SNOW DAYS AND WEATHER-RELATED CANCELLATIONS

It is important to also remind the board and the public the process I follow to call a snow day. As superintendents, we receive multiple notifications throughout the day and night regarding potentially hazardous weather events. I keep an eye on the severity and likely impact on Winooski and its surroundings before beginning conversations with our internal team and city agencies if necessary. When it becomes apparent that an event is likely to disrupt operations, superintendents in the Chittenden County area caucus and make some preliminary plans. If all the information available to me points to an obvious need for cancelling school, I will aim to announce this as early as possible.

In most cases, however, the need will not be apparent until the morning of. Superintendents are up as early as 4 AM to begin minute-by-minute monitoring and communication with each other. By 5:30 AM, some superintendents may call a snow day while others may wait depending on how the roads currently are, the ability for school busses to operate safely, the ability for employees to arrive to Winooski safely, the ability for students who walk to do so safely, the ability for families to drop off students, etc. In addition, I may still account for the potential weather in the following hour even if it is not visibly dangerous in the moment.

Even when some neighboring districts call a snow day, it may not be necessary to do it in Winooski, and vice-versa. While we account for our surroundings, there are factors that are unique to our schools, so not all districts in the area will make the same decision or do it at the same time.

We have snow days accounted for in our school calendar and the Agency of Education may waive the need to make up additional days due to severe weather.



GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES

- **We had to cancel our egress drill** on December 4th due to the low temperatures and high winds at the time of the planned egress. The Fire Department responders who arrived were against this decision. For clarification, when the building has to be vacated due to an emergency, we will do so regardless of the weather conditions (like in the event of a fire or violent intruder). For a planned drill, however, the superintendent has discretion to weigh the importance of practicing safety vs actually keeping students safe. If the conditions outside (such as rain, wind, material hazards, or extreme temperatures) in fact place students under obvious and unnecessary unsafe conditions, I have the responsibility to cancel a drill and postpone. Decisions such as these, much like calling a snow day, are not done lightly nor prematurely. This is why they cannot usually be done with plenty of advance notice, because we continue to hope that the planned event will still take place until the facts that point otherwise are loud.
- **Last week, the City consulted** with the WSD regarding the possibility to change George St. south side to resident-only parking and convert the west-most space to no parking, effective Jan 6, 2025. After much conversation and a walkthrough that included WSD administrators and City agencies (Fire, City, Police), it was decided that the city would move along with the plan. The WSD will be announcing this decision to staff and parents in the coming days and a letter will be issued jointly between the City and the schools. The City will take care of notifying residents, supplying signage, and enforcement on the street, while the WSD will enforce within our premises. In our communication, the WSD will remind families that our only designated drop off and pick up area is the front of the building.
- **Negotiations with the WEA** have officially begun. The Negotiations committee met with the WEA on December 3 and completed an initial agreement on ground rules and a preliminary timeline. The rules and the timeline are pending signature from both parties.

Patrice Lumumba is actively organizing our annual Wellness Day for K-12 staff (March) and the upcoming district-wide Staff Breakfasts, the first one taking place on January 17. The breakfasts are designed to create a relaxed, informal setting where staff members can gather, connect with one another, and share experiences in a low-pressure environment. These events aim to foster a sense of community among staff, enhance morale, and encourage collaboration across departments or teams. By building relationships outside of work tasks, staff members can better support one another and feel more connected to the broader school community. A Wellness Day serves as an opportunity for staff members to participate in activities that promote well-being, mental health, and physical health. The goal is to foster connections among staff members from different schools or grade levels who might not regularly interact. By bringing staff together for wellness activities, the district can promote self-care and help combat the stress that can arise from their demanding roles. It's also a chance for staff to engage in activities that improve their overall well-being.



High school students catch up with each other during passing period.

GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES (CONT.)

- **Our buses have** been reported to be overcrowded, especially during dismissal. Sarah Haven and I rode the bus with the most stops on December 2nd to monitor this. We found that, while the buses are full, they still managed to provide service to all students requesting it. There may be factors such as basketball season and other things that can alleviate the numbers temporarily. However, the administrative team decided to convert the Special Education bus into a regular route bus that can also serve Special Education. A change to some stops will be announced to affected families in the coming weeks. The change will not be announced to all families to avoid confusion.
- **Reductions and reassignments** were announced to individual staff members on Friday. The details regarding these changes continue to be worked on and we are collaborating closely with the union to ensure that the processes abide by the stipulations of the CBA.
- **During November MHS in-service**, the team lead activities to celebrate and reflect on success teachers have had in their classes quarter, look critically at student work, and provide supported planning time.

LOCAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY

- **Stevya Mukuzo**, our VSAC/GEAR UP Outreach Counselor, organized a successful Pre-Financial Aid event in collaboration with some VSAC staff and the ML Department. This event took place on Saturday, November 16th, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM at Winooski JFK in the Shared Gathering Space. It was well-attended by juniors, seniors, and their parents or guardians. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about financial aid options, create an FSA ID for their FAFSA, and complete the Vermont Grant application.
- Before the break, our students and staff collaborated with the Heritage Winooski Mill Museum for a community art project. Together, we crafted unique dolls that will be displayed in the lobby of the school district. This partnership celebrates creativity, culture, and the spirit of community in Winooski.
- About 14 middle and high schoolers attended the statewide Gay Straight Alliance Conference in Randolph with students from other GSA's around the state.
- Winooski High School students who volunteer or work for 21C Winooski Afterschool participated in a focus group with Vermont Afterschool to share their experiences about working in the afterschool field. Vt. Afterschool wants to learn how to support the young people involved in this work. They were also interested to learn what has gone well along the way. The end goal is to create resources for youth who like working in the afterschool field.

High school students during a morning class.





OPERATIONAL

From Cheyne: The automatic door operator arm separated (broke) on the 23rd of November during the craft fair. The operator arm is what connects the door to the automatic operator and is the main operational mechanism that opens and closes the door.

Kelley Bros who installed the automatic door operator during the Capitol Project came out on the 27th of November to replace the arm as we thought this was the only broken component. Upon attempting to replace the arm, they found that the operator was in an unsafe condition and more damage was found internally and that it could potentially fall from the mounting point of the window frame so they had to remove it due to safety concerns. They found that the motor was bad and another component as well and parts needed to be ordered and replaced. They took it back to the branch in Williston to perform said repairs when parts arrived.

I am still seeking an ETA for replacement parts. I have reached out to Kelley Bros this morning and should hear back with an update to where they are at with parts and when we could potentially expect to have the operator reinstalled hopefully by the end of the day. Matt and I also removed the low voltage power that actuates the crashbar (we didn't think about this until this morning) so that the door stays latched and won't swing open when the adjacent door is pulled open. If a badge is scanned into the card reader, or if Cathy pushes her button to let someone in, this door will not have power and will not be able to be opened. The only way this door would be opened was if someone opened it from inside. The door is locked and secure at all times unless it is opened from the inside

DATA BASED ON PREVIOUS QUESTIONS

FEDERAL FUNDING OVERVIEW

Title I - Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged

Title II – Supporting Effective Instruction

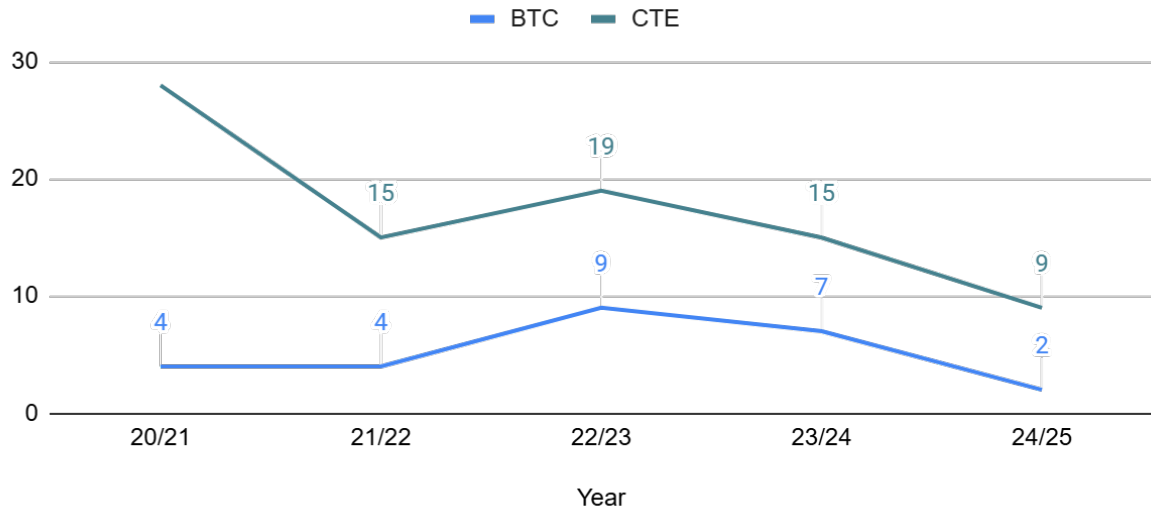
Title III- English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement

Title IV - Student Support and Academic Enrichment

	TITLE I	TITLE IIA	TITLE III	TITLE IV	TOTALS
12/4/2024	\$1,058,860	\$326,419	\$96,874.82	\$192,696	\$1,674,849
11/15/2021	\$1,703,285	\$302,115	\$100,349	\$247,725	\$2,353,474
	38% decrease	8% increase	3% decrease	22% decrease	29% decrease

Our Long-term Weighted Membership (LTWADM) came back much lower than expected. This can have a significant impact on the calculation of our Homestead Tax Rate. A lower number translates into a negative impact (higher taxes) for Winooski residents, including those eligible for tax credits. We are now in communication with the AOE about potential discrepancies in our data. Additionally, our new Data Manager, Sean Pagal, is carrying out a comprehensive audit of our reported numbers and submitting any necessary corrections as soon as possible to the AOE.

TECH CENTER ENROLLMENT TRENDS



COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

Hey Wilmer & Sarah,

In response to questions regarding enrollment trends at our tech centers, it's important to recognize that student acceptance has become more competitive, which is reflected in the changing numbers over the years. The higher enrollment numbers in previous years at our CTE programs can be attributed to less stringent acceptance criteria, which have since been adjusted.

There have been fluctuations in enrollment, especially due to factors such as English Language proficiency. For example, in the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 school years, certain students were not accepted into programs due to language barriers. However, through a successful collaboration with BTC, these students were able to complete the program and earn their LNA certifications in the 2023/2024 school year. This explains the temporary enrollment bump in the Intro to Healthcare program last year.

Additionally, some students began programs in Fall 2023, such as Auto Tech, but were unable to complete the semester. These students have since returned to WHS for the Spring 2024 semester. Similarly, students in the Education program at BTC did not respond positively and chose to return to WHS rather than continue to their second year. This is not a negative outcome but simply a reflection of students making decisions in line with their academic goals.

Furthermore, there have been instances where students were advised to return to WHS full-time to fulfill their graduation requirements. In some cases, students chose not to attend the tech centers at all, which, while disappointing, is a decision based on their individual academic plans.

On a positive note, we've received feedback from CTE and BTE that we are exceptionally welcoming to visitors, providing them with a warmer and more open atmosphere than what they have experienced at other institutions (without naming specific locations).

Lastly, changes to pre-tech offerings may also be influencing applications to the full programs. While we've had students who applied and were accepted, some opted not to attend for various reasons. This reflects the ongoing ebb and flow of student interest and engagement in our tech programs.

In summary, the enrollment trends are impacted by a variety of factors, including program competitiveness, student decisions, and changes to offerings. While the numbers may fluctuate, our commitment to providing quality education and support remains steadfast.

Hope this helps!

Jean



KEY DATES

- Saturday, December 14, Community Lunch and Budget Conversation, 12:30 PM, Winooski School District
- Wednesday, December 18, WSD Special Board Budget meeting, 6 PM, Library Learning Commons
- Friday, December 20, Veggie VanGo
- Monday, December 23 - Tuesday, January 1, Winter Break - No School

ADMINISTRATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

- I am attending the funeral of US Senator Fred Harris on December 14.
- I am hosting the Champlain Valley Superintendents Association meeting this on December 14.
- I am at Harvard coaching graduate students at the School of Education on December 17 and 18.
- I am attending the ARSC and a meeting with the City Manager on December 16.
- I am attending the working group meeting for the Sanctuary Schools policy on December 19.
- I am in Nicaragua from December 24 through January 2nd.
- I am attending Harvard's School Leaders of Color workshop on December 19.
- I hosted the Vermont Administrators of Color dinner on December 6.
- I attended the Vermont Superintendents Association Annual Business Meeting on December 6.
- I attended the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation board meeting on November 20.

ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

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

Item	Board Direction	Status
Enrollment Information	The board requested information regarding tech center enrollments	A chart and analysis of the trends was provided in this report.
Grievance Response	The board directed the administration to issue a response to the union regarding the last grievance.	A response to the last grievance has already been provided to the WEA. 10 days have already passed, and no response has been filed with the WSD, which effectively means that the matter is closed.
Reserve Funds	Questions were raised about the role of voters in creating, transferring, or using reserve funds.	This item can be answered by Sarah Haven in person who has consulted with different sources. Voters may approve the creation of new accounts or the use of reserve funds for purposes other than originally established.
Policy F24	The board directed the administration to survey what amounts other districts were reflecting on their F24 policy.	MMUU: \$50 Burlington: \$25 South Burlington: \$25 Milton: \$25 Colchester: No policy posted CVSD: No policy posted Essex-Westford: No policy posted