



**Burlington and Winooski Public Schools
Burlington and Winooski, Vermont
DLSC Interim Report**

**Nellie Mae Education Foundation
District Level Systems Change
Submitted by Education Development Center
March 20, 2013**

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Background Information

Burlington and Winooski School Districts

The Burlington School District serves just over 3,900 students in nine schools from Pre-K through Grade 12.¹ The school district serves the most diverse group of students in the state of Vermont, in part because the city of Burlington hosts a refugee resettlement program. Current activities in the district include a vote passing the school budget on March 6, 2013. The School Board settled on a 5.3% budget increase for the next fiscal year, which includes \$1 million in cuts that will be absorbed by eliminating two administrative positions, 12 paraeducators, two Burlington High School teachers, one K-6 Spanish teacher, .5 wellness teacher, and cuts in athletics and co-curriculars.² One of the main initiatives included in the school budget is a one-to-one initiative in the high schools and middle schools. The proposal for this initiative includes budget modeling and how the district will sustain the program over time.³ A recent bill proposed and passed by the Vermont House of Representatives (but still needs to be approved by the Senate) would shift retirement costs to schools, saving Burlington city taxpayers and reducing the tax impact of the school budget. The Burlington City Administration and School Department have been discussing the potential effect this would have on both the school and city budget.

The Winooski School District is the smallest geographic school district in the state of Vermont. Grades Pre-K through 12 are housed in a single building serving 850 students.⁴ Recent announcements in the district include that the State Board of Education voted to conduct a consolidation study. According to the Winooski School District website, “the purpose of this study is to look at educational opportunities for students while containing costs.” Under consideration are options such as sharing a central office with another school district. The report will be completed in May 2014, with an interim report submitted in December 2013.⁵ In addition, the State Board of Education approved a superintendent search for Winooski. The new superintendent contract would be for up to two years (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2015) with the option of a possible third year while the study is completed. The search committee has met six times to develop search criteria, define interview protocols, and review candidates. The committee interviewed candidates, but decided to reopen the school spring advertisement for three days and postponed a site visit until further notice where the potential candidates would meet the school board, faculty/staff, families, and community members.⁶ Fall 2012 NECAP scores revealed significant gains reading and writing for eleventh graders compared to last year. As in Burlington, the Winooski School budget was voted upon and passed on March 5, 2013. The School Board proposed a budget increase of 2.1% for the 2014 fiscal year to account for increases in costs for utilities, central office costs, contractual obligations, and training for selected staff.

¹ Vermont Department of Education, Chittenden County Enrollment Report, 2010-2011:

<http://edw.vermont.gov/REPORTSERVER/Pages/ReportViewer.aspx?%2fPublic%2fEnrollment+Report>

² Burlington School District 2013-2014 Budget Information: <http://bsdweb.bsdt.org/Board/BoardBudget.php>

³ Burlington One-to-One Initiative: <https://sites.google.com/a/bsdt.org/one-to-one/home>

⁴ Vermont Department of Education, Chittenden County Enrollment Report, 2010-2011:

<http://edw.vermont.gov/REPORTSERVER/Pages/ReportViewer.aspx?%2fPublic%2fEnrollment+Report>

⁵ Winooski School District Announcements, Decision of State Board of Education regarding Consolidation Study for Winooski School District: <http://www.winooski.k12.vt.us/site/default.aspx?PageID=1>

⁶ Winooski School District, Superintendent Search: <http://www.winooski.k12.vt.us/Page/1350>

Similar to Burlington, this budget reflects a 1:1 initiative in the middle and high schools as well as professional development for teachers in literacy and math.⁷

Burlington and Winooski High Schools

Burlington High School (BHS; founded in 1964) is the only high school in the district. This comprehensive high school serves 1,100 students from diverse socioeconomic and language backgrounds: 21.6% of students are from non-English language backgrounds and 15% of students take English language learner classes.⁸ The school employs 105 faculty and staff and offers over 180 college preparatory and honors level courses across 12 disciplines.

Winooski High School (WHS; founded in 1864) is also the only high school in the district and served 259 students in the 2011-2012 school year from diverse ethnic, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Thirty-five percent of students are designated English language learners and 56% qualify for free or reduced lunch. The school has 44 faculty and staff.⁹ This year Winooski High School welcomed a new principal.

Work Plan – Year 1 Implementation

According to the Burlington/Winooski work plan, the first year of the implementation grant includes planning and implementing several different initiatives, including designing structures to provide the foundation for the Partnership for Change effort in both districts and several programs and resources specific to teacher instruction.

Burlington and Winooski have emphasized developing structures, habits, and procedures to engage in system-wide change that supports student-centered learning for all students. The Burlington/Winooski site plan highlights the need for developing relationships, cultivating shared ownership and leadership, and engaging in critical conversations about school change within the school systems as part of its “inside change strategy.” Burlington/Winooski has focused on developing two major structures to guide this work: the Transformation Academy, which includes five fellows, five implementation teams, and a dean of transformation, as well as the Steering Committee. Guiding this work is the Partnership for Change staff. It is through these structures, which seek to establish shared ownership and leadership, that student-centered learning will take shape. These structures provide leadership for the change initiative as a whole through an authentic, grassroots approach where direction emerges through conversation and shared decision-making rather than beginning with stated goals and outcomes.

According to the Burlington/Winooski proposal narrative, the Transformation Academy provides all educators with embedded credit-bearing learning opportunities “to establish and facilitate an ambitious model for teacher learning and career development; and to

⁷ Winooski School District FY2014 Budget Presentation:
<http://www.winooski.k12.vt.us/cms/lib03/VT01001251/Centricity/Domain/5/FY%202014%20Budget%20Presentation.pdf>

⁸ Burlington High School: School Profile 2012-2013:
<http://bhs.bsd.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/homepagefiles/cms/2383201/File/BHS%20Profil%202013.pdf>

⁹ Winooski High School: School Report 2011-2012, Vermont Department of Education:
<http://edw.vermont.gov/ReportServer/Pages/ReportViewer.aspx?/Public/School%20Report&orgid=PS351&schoolyear=2011-2012&codevalue=6>

support and coordinate stakeholder engagement in the inquiry-based work needed to generate the practices and policies of a student-centered learning system.” The implementation teams are one of the key structures for engaging diverse stakeholders, including students, educators, families, and community members, on five topics central to student-centered learning: youth leadership and involvement, family school partnerships, community-based learning, personalized and proficiency-based learning, and effective teaching and learning environments (formerly effective teaming practices). The implementation teams are “designed to engage in collaborative learning and research [and] generate products and make policy recommendations related to their topic.” The implementation teams conduct participatory action research around a guiding question that is relevant to the fellowship topic. Each implementation team has a fellow and two co-chairs: one who sits on the Steering Committee and another who develops agendas, facilitates meetings, and conducts follow-up. In addition, each of the five fellows works with the corresponding implementation team and supports the participatory action research by conducting research. The work plan includes designing an RFP process and selecting five fellows as well as developing the implementation teams, including student and union representation on each implementation team, and establishing regular meetings of the implementation teams. Hiring a dean for the Partnership for Change and a project manager to help coordinate and guide the work of the implementation teams, fellows, and Steering Committee was also in the work plan for Year 1. Establishing, populating, and providing training for the Steering Committee was another major element on the work plan. In addition, the work plan called for developing credit/degree-bearing pathways for teachers participating in the Transformation Academy.

Several initiatives geared directly at changing teaching practice were also included in the Year 1 implementation work plan. For example, designing and planning the Year End Studies (YES) program was included in the work plan. The YES program takes place during the final two weeks of the school year where students have a choice of classes that incorporate more flexible use of time and community aspects into the learning. Common planning time was another major element of the work plan. Both schools have dedicated PLC meeting times for students. Implementing a 1:1 technology initiative was in the first year implementation work plan; this included reviewing 1:1 devices, soliciting bids, installing wireless hardware, hiring a technology support and integration specialist, providing professional development, and rolling out the 1:1 devices among the freshman classes at both schools. Teaming or academies was another component in the implementation year. In this teaming approach, cohorts of students have the same group of teachers for all of their core classes (English, math, history, and science). Special education and ELL teachers meet with the teaching teams too as scheduling allows. Selecting ninth grade teachers at Burlington High School and ninth and tenth grade teachers at Winooski High School, providing professional development for teaming teachers, and implementing teaming starting in fall 2012 were all elements of the Year 1 implementation plan. Another element featured in the Year 1 work plan was providing instruction for ELLs and other student groups to help close learning gaps. The plan calls for conducting research on effective models for these students; piloting models for summer instruction for ELL and low-income students; increasing college counseling services for ELL, low-income, and first generation students; and piloting accelerated learning programs for ELLs and low-income students.

Policy Context

Several policy initiatives in Vermont could have an impact on student-centered initiatives in Burlington and Winooski, including a move to proficiency-based graduation requirements and new standards for professional learning for teachers. In October 2012, the Vermont Department of Education appointed an Education Quality Standards Commission, tasked with recommending a state policy framework by 2014 (school level implementation is expected in September 2014). The group is reviewing graduation requirements and the possibility of moving toward a proficiency-based graduation requirement, as well as implementing multiple, flexible pathways and personalized learning plans.¹⁰ The commission has reviewed John Everitt's Nellie Mae Education Foundation report on superintendent and school board member support for proficiency-based learning and multiple pathways as well as documents from the Great Schools Partnership on proficiency-based learning, graduation and performance indicators, and learning pathway assessments. In addition, the commission is making recommendations on professional learning for teachers across the state. Draft language of the policy includes an emphasis on "ongoing, embedded, collaborative team professional development" within each school, new teacher mentoring, and common professional learning time for all teachers in each school. In addition, teachers must demonstrate progress in their understanding of differentiated instruction, assessment practices, and data analysis.¹¹

Currently, Vermont Department of Education graduation requirements include (1) demonstration of attaining or exceeding standards (either Vermont's *Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* or comparable local standards) as measured by results on performance-based assessments; or (2) successful completion of at least 20 Carnegie units; or (3) any combination of the above that demonstrates that students have attained the Framework or comparable standards. Thus, schools and districts can implement proficiency-based learning, but this is not a requirement of the state. Each school is required to administer assessments of student performance that are consistent with the Vermont Comprehensive Assessment System. All students are required to participate in the statewide assessments in mathematics, reading and writing, and science in grades 3-8 and 11 (unless a student qualifies for alternate assessment or an exemption). Schools also assess student performance in additional subject areas and grade levels using portfolios, norm-referenced standardized tests, and locally developed assessments.¹²

Data Collection Spring 2012 and Fall 2012

Two members of the EDC evaluation team visited the Summer Development Institute on June 25th and 26th, 2012. A second site visit was conducted October 2nd and 3rd, 2012. The purpose of these visits was to collect data about the districts' progress in their first year of implementing their DLSC work. Twenty-one interviews were conducted and transcribed. Observations were conducted of 10 different classes and ranged from 20 to 80 minutes in

¹⁰ Vermont Education Quality Standards Commission, Graduation Requirements Draft Language: <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/eqs.html>

¹¹ Vermont Education Quality Standards Commission, Professional Development Draft Language: http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-EQS_2013_02_06_Professional_Development.pdf

¹² Vermont Department of Education, Graduation Requirements: Graduation Requirements: <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/rules/2000.html#graduation>

length.¹³ In addition to these two site visits, the evaluation team also developed a teacher questionnaire that was administered to all faculty in the two high schools in November 2012. The questionnaire collected information about teacher preparation, teachers' instructional practices, participation in DLSC activities, and attitudes about and involvement in professional learning. In total, 34 teachers participated in the survey, including 15 teachers from Winooski High School and 19 teachers from Burlington High School. Data collection activities are summarized below.

Spring 2012 data collection included:

- Observations of the Summer Development Institute 2012 and Burlington and Winooski team meetings
- Teacher interviews
- Project leader interview
- Community member interviews

Fall 2012 data collection included:

- Administrator interviews (Burlington and Winooski principals, vice principals, and superintendents)
- Teacher interviews (Winooski and 9th grade teachers at Burlington)
- Project leader interview
- Student focus group interviews (Winooski and 9th grade students in Burlington)
- 10 Classroom observations (Winooski and 9th grade classes in Burlington)
- DLSC leadership event observation (Steering Committee meeting)
- LCP interviews
- LCP meeting observation
- Teacher questionnaire

Despite a full schedule of interviews and observations over two site visits, we wish to acknowledge at the outset that our dataset is small and that insight into the Burlington/Winooski's implementation of the SCL core is still quite limited. During our fall site visit in Winooski, opportunities to conduct observations and student focus group interviews were limited due to testing. In Burlington, data collection focused on 9th grade only. With this in mind, the goal of this document is to reflect what was seen and heard during these site visits and to report what was learned from analysis of the questionnaire data, while acknowledging that there is much more to see and understand than could possibly be captured in such a limited time. As in all the DLSC sites, the work around student-centered learning is in the beginning stages. This interim report presents highlights from the data rather than a comprehensive overview of all the findings and data collected.

¹³ EDC modified an observation protocol originally used by ITL/SRI International, and sponsored by Microsoft Partners in Learning, to conduct classroom observations in the U.S. and in other countries. This protocol captures activity structures, teacher roles, student participation and collaboration, and use of technology in the classroom. Tallies of what were observed include what we captured from partial-period observations so that we may have observed more than one activity structure, teacher role, student activity, and so forth during a single class observation. Our observation data distinguish entire *observations* (lasting 10 to 40 minutes or more) and *instances* of SCL-related practice within those observations. An instance may be brief or sustained but clearly reflects one of the measured domains.

Findings: Student-Centered Learning Core

Findings for this section are organized according to the four key features of SCL practice that NMEF identified for the District Level Systems Change initiative: 21st Century Knowledge and Skills, Embracing Community Assets, Flexible Use of Time, and Proficiency-based Pathways, Demonstration of Mastery, and Personalization. The NMEF theory of action posits that changes in the core are critical to improving students' opportunities for a broader and more engaging educational experience. In this interim report, results on 21st Century Knowledge and Skills and Flexible Use of Time are provided. Findings on all four key features of SCL practice will be included in the August report.

21st Century Knowledge and Skills (Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment)

Classroom observations, teacher and student interviews, and teacher questionnaire data reveal areas where instruction has shifted to incorporate student-centered learning as well as areas for growth. Providing instruction that engages students in knowledge building and problem solving and in collaboration were seen across many observations and highlighted by school faculty in interviews. Incorporating personalized and individualized instruction and extension of learning outside, however, were far less frequent. More traditional approaches to instruction and assessment were observed and referenced by teachers and students, highlighting that while progress has been made more is needed to shift to student-centered approaches.

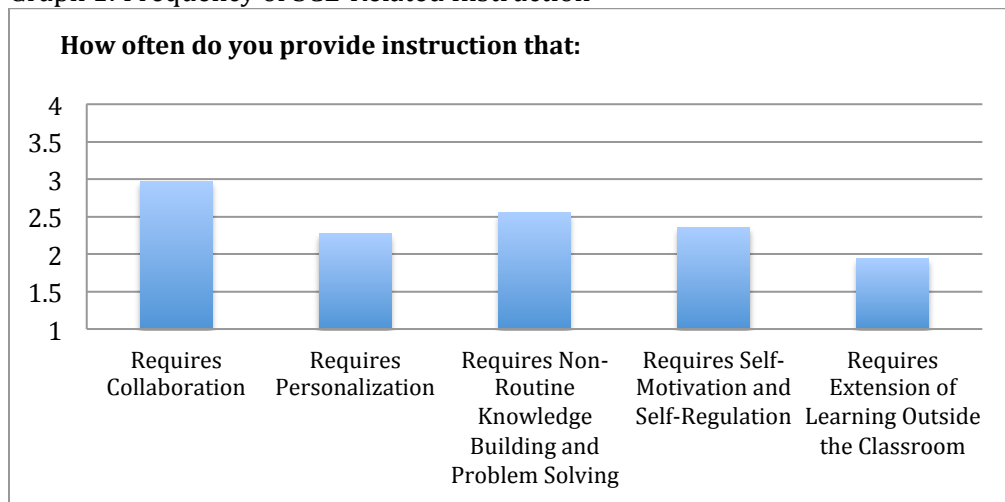
School administrators identified the development of 21st century skills as an important focus. In interviews, school and district administrators closely associated the development of 21st century skills with the implementation of 1:1 technology initiatives in the high schools. For example, a WHS administrator shared that the use of MacBooks supports instruction and assessment that promotes 21st century learning skills, specifically conducting research. BHS administrators made similar comments, adding that technologies support collaboration among students and make it easier for students to collaborate outside the classroom. These two areas, knowledge building and problem solving and collaborative work, were observed across many classrooms, in interviews, and in the teacher questionnaire. While these were often observed in classes that had technology readily available, there were observations and instances of students engaged in critical thinking and collaboration without the use of personal devices.

Students were often asked to work in **collaboration** with others. Overall, researchers observed seven instances of students working in small groups and this was the dominant activity in 5 out of 10 of the observations across both schools. In addition, in two observations students worked together to create products that included contributions from each student in the group. For instance, in a BHS algebra class, students examined the work of the other members of their four-person teams and provided feedback to their team members. In a BHS civics/world societies class, students used iPads to peer review essays and provide feedback. In another BHS English class, students were asked to identify elements of romance in short stories they had read and then decide together with their small groups whether the short stories were romance stories, citing evidence.

In the teacher questionnaire, 72.4% of teachers reported that students work together in pairs or small groups on an assigned task often or everyday (the second highest mean across activities listed in the survey). Nearly 82% of teachers reported that they provide

instruction that requires collaboration often or all the time. Of the five major areas associated with student-centered learning, collaboration received the highest mean (see Graph 1). At WHS, the move to a block schedule has helped create more opportunities for students to work collaboratively, according to one teacher: “This year I am actually finding that I can do a lot more, the kids have more of a chance to work in groups and in teams to really challenge each other a lot more than with the short time” (BW12SD11) One WHS teacher explained a recent project where students worked in groups to create a media presentation (TV talk show). Students had to agree on a topic of interest that the teacher approved, but the project was “not teacher-guided; it was student-centered.” This teacher explained, “That’s pretty much what I do with a lot of students. We may be reading together and there will be some explicit teaching first, but then the rest of it is mostly done in group or teamwork – and I hope as much as possible using technology as well” (BW12SD11), despite the fact that the classroom is not included in the 1:1 MacBook initiative.

Graph 1: Frequency of SCL-Related Instruction



Note: Average response values: How often do you provide instruction that requires: [1 = Never, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Often, and 4 = All the Time]

In 13 classroom observations across both schools students engaged in **knowledge building and problem solving** by conducting research, working on tasks with no single correct answer, participating in activities that required students to make a claim and support it with evidence, or revising work in response to self-assessment or feedback from peers. For example, in a BHS biology class, students worked individually and used their iPads to explore 3-D models of cells and to respond to a mix of closed- and open-ended questions. Students were encouraged to conduct research on the web to help answer the questions on the worksheet. These findings correspond to teacher questionnaire data where 54.6% of teachers said that they provide instruction that requires non-routine knowledge building and problem solving often or all of the time (see Graph 1). According to teachers who participated in the questionnaire, providing oral feedback on student work (100%); asking open-ended questions (96.6%); and modeling for students how to reflect on a problem/analyze results from an experiment/write up results of research (89.7%) were the instructional activities that were quite important or most important to their lessons.

Data also revealed more traditional approaches to instruction and many fewer instances of providing **personalized and individualized instruction** and **extension of learning outside the classroom**. In just two observations students engaged in making decisions about how they would approach a problem or complete an assignment. In only one observation students worked according to deadlines that were different for each student. In just one observation were students engaged in information about other countries and cultures. There were no instances of looking outside the walls of the school, relating ELO experiences to classroom content, or reflecting on cultural and/or historical perspectives.

Teacher questionnaire data mirror these observation findings: 72.8% of teachers reported that they occasionally or never provide instruction that requires extension of learning outside of the classroom and 69.7% said that they occasionally or never provide instruction that requires personalization (see Graph 1). In an interview, one WHS teacher explained that they “are right at the very beginning of that [connecting students to the community] but talking about what makes sense....We don’t want to just shove kids out there and say, ‘Gee, this looks like a good opportunity,’ but have it really well structured” (BW12SD12).

In the teacher questionnaire, 89.3% of teachers reported that students “participate in discussions led by the teacher” often or everyday, a much more traditional approach to instruction. This was the highest mean across activities included in the survey, including working individually on an assigned task, working together in small groups on an assigned task, working to solve real-world problems, etc. Researchers observed more traditional practices as well: there were eight instances of students engaged in individual activities, seven instances of students engaged in whole-class, teacher-led activities, and six instances of teachers presenting information and facilitating whole-class discussion. For example, in an ELL class at WHS, students worked individually to build their literacy skills by rotating through stations that included completing READ 180 instruction on the computer, reading silently, and participating in a teacher directed activity. In an interview, one teacher at WHS explained,

I teach very low levels. Sometimes it’s a little harder to do these areas [21st century skills and critical thinking] when they are working on a word-to-word level, when you just basically show pictures and try to work and it’s phonics awareness. So, I think in my class, it’s less than any others just because it’s a foundational class. (BW12SD11)

Both Burlington and Winooski High Schools serve large populations of ELL and new immigrant populations. These students often require intensive literacy instruction and there was a sense that incorporating higher level thinking skills was difficult to accomplish in these foundational classes that focus on providing students with the basic skills needed to succeed.

Flexible Use of Time (School Day, School Week, and School Year)

Progress toward implementing flexible use of time is in its beginning stages at both high schools. As one Winooski teacher explained,

Flexible use of time—we are not there yet. We are at the beginning of this whole thing. So eventually, I think that down the road, we will like to be more flexible, but

at this point, we're just not. We're still structured around the class schedule, an 8 to 3 schedule. (BW12SD11)

Winooski adopted a 90-minute block schedule this year, which teachers reported helped them use time more creatively; for example, now there is enough time to leave the classroom and go out into the community during a single period. One teacher explained,

For project based, ninety minutes works a whole lot better. Just getting them out of the school like last year—I really struggled. When we had field trips I would try to only take the classes that had lunch and the class before or the class after. We will be able to do field trips in the ninety minutes. (BW12SD12)

Year End Studies

During the 2011 Summer Development Institute, teachers showed enthusiasm for the Year End Studies (YES) program, which allows students to study an area of interest during the last two weeks of the school year. The program will be implemented in the 2012-2013 school year at Burlington High School (the program was intended to start this past June 2012, but was delayed). To accommodate for the YES program, BHS's school calendar was changed. School started earlier this year and there is no longer a separate exam week. This has had an impact on teachers as they have had to adjust their own schedules and are working to develop programs for YES. Teachers submitted proposed programs, including an in-depth study of diabetes (examining types of diabetes, the history of the disease, health information, etc.), fashion design, getting ready for college, movies in the Cold War, and college ready as an athlete. Each program has a community component. For example, the getting ready for college program is inviting in local business leaders and university admissions officers. YES helps to initiate ELOs, but one teacher and one community member interviewed in the spring admitted that this two-week initiative is not ideal in terms of extended learning and they hope to expand ELO opportunities at both schools.

Winooski is hoping to adopt the YES program in the 2013-2014 school year and is anxious to learn from Burlington's experience as they move to incorporate the program. An administrator from WHS explained that they are not only interested in learning how to implement the YES program, but also learning from the program to incorporate innovative practices throughout the school year:

I'm not excited about the YES project as kind of a stand alone part of the school year; I am interested in it as a way to think differently about what learning can be when students have more voice in it. I'm more excited about it as a way to learn about things we might take and embed into the entire school year, not just the last two weeks of the year. (BW12SD5)

Findings: Resources and Supports

Findings for this section are organized according to the four major resources and supports that NMEF identified as critical for accelerating or deepening progress in the SCL Core. These include: Human Capital/Professional Development, Data Systems, Technology Systems, and Management and Infrastructure. Changes in these resources and supports can

improve the organizational and professional learning environments that have a direct effect on students' learning opportunities. In this interim report, results on Human Capital/ Professional Development, Technology, and Management and Infrastructure are presented. Findings on all four major resources and supports will be included in the August report.

Human Capital/Professional Development

In Burlington and Winooski High Schools, there are several school-specific professional development supports in place as well as professional supports that span both districts, including the technology integration specialist and the Summer Development Institute. In addition, the efforts to build teacher collaboration and professional culture through PLCs and the academies have served to support teacher learning.

In Burlington, professional development has focused on differentiated instruction, especially as they moved to condense the levels of classes from three levels to just two levels (college preparatory and honors), as well as integrating technology. Administrators and teachers noted that more professional development and support is needed in these areas. A teacher explained that she would like more hands-on training in DI:

I think a lot of us have been trained in DI, but the training's often ineffective because it's not practical....What I would really love to see is someone who is an expert in DI who can come in and work with one team for an extended period of time where that person can come into our classrooms, say, 'Here's how I see you doing DI. Here are some other options that can make that better.' So it's really practical, hands on, on-the-fly, as-we-go training that allows us some time for reflection on what is working and what isn't working. (BW12SD10)

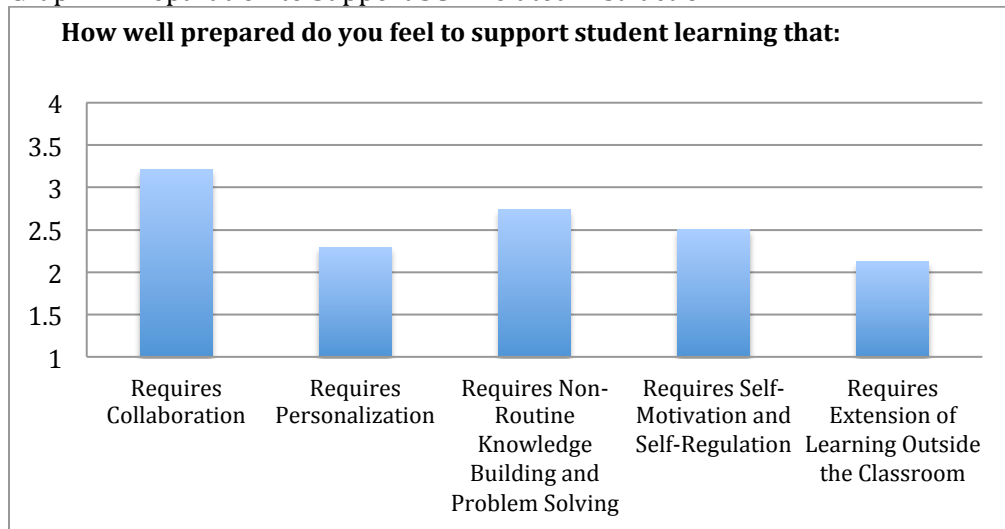
Winooski teachers voiced that more professional development is needed on proficiency-based learning, specifically "how to really approach the teaching under proficiency-based learning" (BW12SD11). Support for the Common Core was also highlighted by teachers as a needed area for professional development. In addition to the technology integration specialist, which is shared with BHS, Winooski has Teaching All Secondary Students professional development for teachers.

Thus far, the two districts have not been able to capitalize on district in-service time as a way to provide shared professional development and collaborative time for teachers across the two schools. Timelines made it difficult to submit proposals for professional development in time to implement them this year (all of the in-service time for the 2012-2013 school year was spoke for in March 2011). Another challenge is that the two districts have separate teacher contracts that provide different levels of financial support for professional development. Burlington teachers are given \$1500 for professional development, which the school has used to provide courses through the University of Vermont. Winooski teachers do not have this budget. This makes planning common professional development opportunities difficult.

Teacher questionnaire data demonstrate that there is a need for more professional development: the majority of teachers (64%) reported that they were either not at all or to a small extent receiving the professional development needed to implement student-centered learning practices. Many reported that they were either not at all prepared or minimally prepared to provide instruction in 3 of 5 major areas associated with SCL:

extension of learning outside the classroom (67.7%), personalization (61.7%), and self-motivation and self-regulation (50.0%; see Graph 2). Eighty-three percent of teachers reported that they were interested in pursuing professional development related to student-centered learning. This indicates a willingness among teachers to engage.

Graph 2: Preparation to Support SCL-Related Instruction



Note: Average response values: How well prepared do you feel to support student learning that: [1 = Not at all Prepared, 2 = Minimally Prepared, 3= Adequately Prepared, and 4 = Very Well Prepared]

Summer Development Institute

The Summer Development Institute (SDI), which includes teachers from both Burlington and Winooski High School, provides professional development to support teachers implementing student-centered learning approaches. During the SDI in June 2012, clear references were made to student-centered learning in a presentation that launched the institute. The presentation focused on key themes of student-centered learning, including personalization, building on student strengths, social and emotional support, anytime/anywhere learning, technology, assessment and feedback, and student independence. Three essential questions were meant to guide teachers during the institute: 1) What does teaching look like when it centers on students? 2) What learning environments give access to all students? 3) How can we put our best thinking together regarding working with students of different backgrounds and with different needs? Proficiency-based learning was another major theme and a session was dedicated to this topic during the institute led by the fellow on personalized and proficiency-based learning.

Throughout this year's Summer Development Institute there was a focus on technology, especially the use of iPads and iPad apps, like Good Reader and adaptive technologies for students with special needs. Teachers were told that technology is a means of supporting personalization and proficiency-based approaches. For example, the Good Reader application allows teachers to give feedback to students. One problem, however, was that Burlington teachers all had iPads and Winooski teachers had MacBooks. iPad apps are not compatible with MacBooks, so many of the sessions, which were related to iPad apps and

resources, were not applicable to Winooski teachers. This limited opportunities for collaboration between teachers from each of the two schools as well as learning opportunities for Winooski teachers.

During our fall 2012 visit, teachers and administrators expressed that the SDI was not as successful this year in terms of bringing Burlington and Winooski teachers together. One teacher explained,

Next year I'd like to see the SDI not only better at integrating Winooski and Burlington teachers but also saying this is really about transformation. If you want to become better at doing a traditional social studies curriculum, then there are a lot of other places you can go....Eventually I think we need to say this is really about certain kinds of transformation. (BW12SD13)

Administrators anticipate that next year will be better and remain committed to the SDI as a way to promote teacher learning and collaboration between the two schools. For example, one administrator explained,

[The SDI] is an opportunity for professional development to happen in a way that is really focusing the professional development on the partnership and the Partnership for Change initiatives and bringing those into practice in the school and getting teachers from Winooski and Burlington talking together. It didn't work all that great this past summer, but I know that they're working to improve it for this next year. There is a lot learned from the experience last year. (BW12SD5)

These quotes highlight not only a commitment to making the SDI better, but also an openness to learning from past experiences to improve opportunities for collaboration and to challenge teachers to transform their practices to more student-centered approaches.

Teacher Collaboration and Professional Culture

As part of the "inside change strategy," facilitating collaboration among teachers has been another major area of emphasis. Two major structures have served to promote collaboration: PLCs and committee meetings as well as the academies or teaming practices.

Both Burlington and Winooski high schools have dedicated time for teachers to meet in PLCs. At BHS, teachers meet in weekly PLC meetings within grade-level departments and the Freshman Academy teams meet once or twice per week. During our fall 2012 visit, EDC researchers were able to observe two PLC meetings at BHS. In the PLC meetings observed, there were norms of practice with identified leaders and note takers. In the fall site visit, administrators discussed how they have worked to build those structures and norms of practice so teachers can engage in deeper questions about school change. In one PLC meeting, teachers worked together to define a common assessment for the end of the term. Teachers debated about the objectives, came to a consensus, and discussed materials they could share. In another PLC meeting the principal was invited and teachers voiced concerns about managing students and the need for more training on differentiated instruction, especially now that the levels were compressed. Teachers felt they had too many students and the students' needs were too varied for instruction to be effective. During the PLC meeting the principal offered to look into redistributing some students into other classes

and encouraged teachers to visit a nearby school with a strong reputation for implementing differentiation instruction effectively.

Winooski is working this year on vertical alignment from grades 6 through 12, particularly around defining proficiencies to determine whether students can advance to the next grade. In talking with administrators in Winooski, including the principal, vice principal, and superintendent, a key goal is getting teachers to work together. Vertical alignment teams have been established, and as one administrator explained,

Part of it is really empowering them and that vertical alignment team. The more empowered they are to solve problems together, the more they're going to be able to move out of a mindset of private practice into a collaborative problem solving mode. (BW12SD5)

To support teacher collaboration, Winooski moved to a block schedule allowing for shared planning time where teachers meet bi-weekly in grade related meetings and bi-weekly in committee meetings. Committees include the 1-to-1 laptop initiative, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, proficiency-based learning, individual pathways and exit criteria, scholarship and awards, parent and community, and literacy. Teachers chose their committees based on their own interest.

One administrator admitted that the collaborative culture among teachers at WHS is “in its infancy” (BW12SD3). Interviews with teachers also indicated that the efforts are in beginning stages. Teachers reported that the collaborative culture has improved recently through the focus on writing across the curriculum where teachers worked together. When talking with teachers about the committees, there was some confusion about the work of these groups because there are no clear objectives. One teacher explained, “Initially, we are just settings goals to figure out what we are going to get out of these committees” (BW12SD11). Another teacher said, “We never really talked fully about what we should expect people to have for goals. So a step was maybe left out and people were very unclear in many committees yesterday what to do. So I'm hoping that will be revisited” (BW12SD11).

Teacher questionnaire data reveal further insight into the professional culture at both schools. More than half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers are familiar with each other's teaching goals and classroom practices (60.0%) and that they have opportunities to observe their colleagues teach (53.3%). Forty-three percent of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers have a shared vision of effective instruction. This would suggest that more work is needed to help teachers collaborate and learn from and with one another. Other findings suggest that there is a strong foundation upon which to build this collaborative culture with 53.3% of teachers reporting that teachers ask for assistance from one another and 50.0% of teachers said that they share teaching strategies with one another. Sixty-six percent of teachers reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that teachers believe they share responsibility for the success of all students.

Academies

Effective teaming practices is one of the focal points of the Burlington/Winooski approach to student-centered learning and is another example of how the schools are working to

encourage professional collaboration. Burlington High School has established three 9th grade academies, which started in the fall of 2012. Each academy is comprised of one teacher from each of the core disciplines: science, math, English, and history. In addition, a special educator and an ELL teacher work with the academy as well. These teachers have the same group of students and work together as a team to plan, discuss student progress, and intervene when students are struggling. As one teacher explained,

The goal of the academy was to plan together, work together, discuss students together, be able to have a time where you could work together and better suit the needs of the kids and make sure these freshmen aren't falling through the cracks. (BW12SD10)

Teachers meet with their academy colleagues once a week. Occasionally on Fridays, one of the school administrators meets with academy teachers across the three academies to discuss progress. This structure has allowed for more collaboration between teachers. One teacher explained,

Physically we've been quite separated, and professionally we've been very separate. So this is the first time, really, besides like a summer SDI or maybe some social connection that we have, where I've actually been able to sit down with teachers from other disciplines and discuss curriculum or discuss students. So that's a radical change in that. (BW12SD10)

During a focus interview, students said that having classes with the same students allows them to "get to know people better than if you had classes with all grades" (BW12SD8). They thought this was a positive outcome of the academies, but also lamented that they were not able to spend time with friends in other academies. Many had worried that academies would limit some of the independence they were hoping to experience in high school. Students reported that this had not been the case and that they even forget sometimes that they are in academies: "I feel like I don't realize I'm on a team" (BW12SD8).

Many of the change initiatives implemented this year at BHS have been concentrated in the Freshman Academies. This year, BHS instituted the academies, iPads for ninth graders, compressed levels, and the YES program. During a PLC meeting and in our interview with a focus group of teachers, teachers voiced that they were overwhelmed by the number of changes implemented simultaneously. Being pulled in so many directions may threaten how well these programs are implemented. It will be important to monitor progress as the work continues to unfold. Freshman academy teachers have been especially affected by these initiatives. One teacher explained,

A teacher said something to me the other day that I think is really important, which is that she said, 'Well, I don't really see that we've had anything change this year.' And for those of us in this room, that's like 'What!?' So it's kind of been trickling. I mean these things have all kind of been happening over the years, but it kind of has compounded in ninth grade, and so...It depends on where you are in the school how you view this. (BW12SD10)

During site visits, only freshmen teachers were observed and interviewed. This quote highlights that these findings are not necessarily representative of the entire school.

The academy structure has not been implemented in Winooski High School this year. There are some teachers who team teach classes. For example, the American Studies course is team taught by an English teacher and social studies teacher. The two teachers have the same group of students and their classrooms are connected to one another. During one observation of this class, however, the teachers divided up the class and were essentially teaching two different classes. In the English class, students reviewed anonymous peer writing samples to identify elements of great, good, and poor traits of writing. Students had to cite examples and explain why elements were great, good, or poor. In the social studies class, students were introduced to a new unit on the experiences of immigrants, specifically Chinese immigrants in the 1870s. Students would be engaging in an investigation for the next two 90-minute class periods around a set of focus questions about the Chinese immigrant experience. Both teachers had students engage in small group work and asked open-ended questions, two instructional approaches that are more student-centered. It was unclear, however, how these two class sessions related to one another. During an interview with Winooski teachers, one teacher explained that more is needed to support teaming practices:

So we're not necessarily teaming as much as could be done, but I think we need more professional development on some of this. I think a lot of teachers know the key word of teaming but I don't think anybody had very directed focused professional development on how to exactly do that. (BW12SD11)

These findings seem to indicate that the will to experiment with teaching and team with other teachers seems to be present among Winooski High School and Burlington High School teachers, but more support is needed. Teachers in both schools were able to see the advantages of these approaches, despite experiencing challenges in implementation.

Technology

During the fall 2012 site visit, administrators from both districts voiced their belief that technology could be used as a means for personalizing instruction and making learning more relevant for students. As one administrator explained,

It's not really about the computer or laptop or whatever the device is. What that tool has allowed us to do is change the way teachers are teaching and students are learning, where the teacher becomes the facilitator of the learning and the students are more collaborative in their learning. (BW12SD2)

Burlington High School distributed iPads to ninth graders at the beginning of the school year. Administrators at BHS reported that teachers and students have adopted these tools quickly:

Whether at the student side of things or the teacher side of things, I think both have come along really quickly with some of those [technology] skills and really asking students to take more responsibility for their learning....They are just more fluid about the use of technology and support of learning, which I'm pleased about. (BW12SD1)

Interviews with teachers and students revealed that some teachers have really worked to incorporate the iPads into their instruction, while others are still trying to learn the

technology. Students said that use of iPads in class was mixed. In some classes, like civics and English, iPads are often used. In other classes, including science, math, and languages, it is not used at all (though recently students got their French books on the iPad). One teacher who has embraced iPads explained,

I use multiple apps in my class. In the beginning they [iPads] are going to be a distraction because you have to learn how to use them. It's like teaching for the first time where you've got to get your style, or you've got to get your norms down, your protocols. But I have a lot of success with it. So for me it works great. I like it a lot. There are a lot of negatives to the iPad that people can identify with, but in my room I've had a lot of positives. I really enjoy the use of it and having access to it. It just makes a lot of things a lot easier if you're ready to use it. (BW12SD10)

Freshman students at BHS said that they liked having iPads as an instructional tool, giving them access to resources like Khan Academy, highlighting books as they read, and getting access to word definitions instantly. One student liked using the Nearpod app, where students take a quiz and get immediate results so they know which questions they got wrong. Students said they liked having the immediate results and felt it was much easier and more effective than taking a traditional quiz. Students use the iPads as a journal and often teachers allow them to turn in assignments online or through e-mail, which is much easier. They would like to have more of their books available on the iPad. Students talked about how some play games and instant message during class, which is a distraction. "Teachers need to find a way to keep on top of that. When used correctly, this can be a great asset" (BW12SD8).

During classroom observations at BHS, evaluators witnessed examples of how iPads had been integrated into instruction, including having students use iPads to conduct research, view models of cells, read required texts, take quizzes, and write and peer-edit essays. There were 10 instances in the classroom observation data of students engaged in using technology to support their learning, all of which occurred in the freshman classes where students were using their iPads.

During our fall site visit Winooski was still working to finalize the student contract that would allow the administration to distribute MacBooks in mid-October. Administrators reported that they worked with Burlington High School comparing notes on how to construct their student contacts. In addition, Winooski was working to set up a student data management system to give teachers ready access to data so they can begin having focused discussions on student achievement, breaking down the data and engaging in problem solving. They hope that these will be the focus of PLC meetings and discussions, especially as students transition from elementary, middle, and into high school. They want to all teachers to take responsibility for student achievement.

Management and Infrastructure

Central to the Burlington/Winooski work plan and change initiative is developing a number of structures to drive instructional, policy, and community change. The teacher fellows, corresponding implementation teams, Partnership for Change staff, and Steering Committee provide the foundation for the Partnership for Change efforts in these two districts.

Establishing five teacher fellows who “will be our research arm,” according to one administrator, has been a major emphasis over the past year. The fellows are each assigned to one of five topics that are central to student-centered learning, including youth leadership and involvement, personalized and proficiency-based learning, effective teaching and learning environments (formerly effective teaming practices), community based learning, and family school partnerships. During the spring site visit, fellows talked enthusiastically about their work as a process of organizing, collaborating, and reflecting. They hope to “provide a new vision,” “engage in questions about what’s important,” and “think differently about time and curriculum” to establish “different ways of looking at being a teacher.” According to Partnership staff, the work of the fellows should align with that of the implementation teams where the fellow provides needed knowledge and research to the team.

Specific goals about the fellows’ work, end products for their first year, and how success will be measured were less clear because the focus of the work has been on creating these structures and defining roles. One fellow explained, “part of our job is to sort of figure out what [the job of a fellow] looks like” (BW12SD13). Each fellow is developing a work plan detailing expected activities for the upcoming year and indicators to measure progress.

Similarly, the work and objectives of the implementation teams are emergent. An administrator said, “I think we’re feeling our way and I think we’re all just a little bit curious about how these implementation teams, which are still being formed, and how people’s ideas will overlap” (BW12SD1). The expectation is that the implementation teams will identify indicators of progress as the work unfolds. Each implementation team met at the end of October to start the process of goal setting and to recruit community members to serve on each of the teams. The work thus far has focused on populating each of the implementation teams (with at least 10 members each) and ensuring that each has a diverse set of members, including teachers and staff from both Burlington and Winooski high school as well as members from different community groups (e.g., New Americans, low-income).

Another major structure in the Burlington/Winooski work is the Partnership for Change staff. The goal of the Partnership for Change staff, which includes the project director and project manager, is to ensure that “key stakeholders have a common vision of the future of where we are going with the partnership” and express a consistent message. Spreading positive news and information about the work of the Partnership is another major task. They had hoped to hire a director to run the Partnership for Change last year. They were unable to hire and instead two interim directors were in place this year. One is in charge of the fellows and professional development and the other oversees the implementation teams and organizes the independent studies. This year they began another search for a director and are holding a community event with the final three candidates for the position on March 11, 2013.

The Transformation Academy language has been shifted over this past year. In the work plan, the Transformation Academy was central to the change effort, but over the past year and in working with communication consultants, the group has realized that the work of the implementation teams is “the heart of what we are trying to do, especially in the first 18 months, first two years” (BE12SD7). They hope that this shift in their language and in the organization of the work will “help people to see the importance of that work.” Learning and

experimental research are still central to the effort, there has just been a shift in how this is organized.

Developing all of these structures has taken time. It took longer than anticipated to chair the implementation teams, for example. Interviews with teachers and administrators revealed dedication to taking the time to do this work well. As one teacher explained,

We're really at the beginning here. We are really in those starting stages, so the work is going to reflect that. And I think if you could come and talk with us in February, you might get a really different snapshot. And then come back next June, get another really different snapshot....One of the gifts of Nellie Mae is the gift of time. You've got three years, so we can actually take our time to try and do this right. A lot of things have slowed us down. (BW12SD13)

As the fellows, implementation teams, and Steering Committee begin their work and as they hire a new director it will be important to continue capturing these snapshots and observing progress toward identifying objectives. The absence of clear goals and objectives threatens to minimize the impact and change effort. At the same time, the concerted effort to include all stakeholders in decision-making could be extremely powerful in making this change happen.

Community Engagement and Public Demand

The “outside change strategy” for Burlington and Winooski includes developing capacity within the larger community (e.g., parents, community organizations, community members) to become involved in school change. Engaging the New American, refugee, and immigrant community members as well as families in economic hardship in Burlington and Winooski has been a key component of the work. In interviews, it was clear among many constituent groups that community members have a vital role in the Partnership for Change effort. For example, a Winooski teacher said, “If we don't have the community work behind us, we can never change the school. It's a lot of community support. I think without the community there is no way we can do this” (BW12SD12).

Three main efforts have been used to help engage the community: the Lead Community Partner, which has used a variety of strategies to connect with families, from one-to-one meetings, to group meetings at community centers and events, to talking with parents at school activities; the Steering Committee, which brings together diverse groups within the community to help lead the Partnership for Change effort; and the work of family school partnerships fellow with efforts underway in Burlington High School to reach out to families in both school communities.

Lead Community Partner

The LCP for Burlington and Winooski has been very active, both within the community working to engage all members of the community in the Partnership for Change efforts, but also within the schools and with the Partnership for Change staff. This year, the LCP is dedicated to building capacity of community members as community organizers and building parent leadership. Another major goal is to find a local organization or coalition to

take over the work of Voices for Vermont's children, which is a statewide organization. A community member explained, "Voices For Vermont's Children, who is the lead community partner...their expectation and our expectation is that it's in an interim, incubating capacity - that this work should transition" (BW12CL1). The LCP hopes to recruit, support, and retain youths from marginalized backgrounds by connecting them with existing and emerging school-based groups and Partnership for Change initiatives.

Finally, the fourth goal of the LCP this year is to advise and partner with the Partnership For Change staff and school leaders on community outreach and communication strategies. The LCP staff meet weekly with the Partnership for Change staff to check in, strategize, and coordinate their efforts. During the meetings, LCP staff provide insight on how to engage the community and work together to solve problems and discuss challenges they are experiencing in the work. For example, during an observation of one of these meetings in the fall, LCP and Partnership for Change staff discussed the agenda for the upcoming Steering Committee meeting, coordinated calendars of upcoming events, and strategized how to get community members involved in the implementation teams. LCP staff warned of using academic language, which is not accessible to many in the community, especially families where English is a native language. They also voiced concern over getting community members involved in the implementation teams because the goals of each group are emergent, which makes it difficult to communicate to community members the purpose of the work and why they are needed. There was a sense that the flexible and emerging nature of the goals conflicts with the accessibility goal. Staff engaged in a rich discussion about how to resolve these issues, but this is a clear tension and challenge to the work.

One of the main areas of work this past year with the LCP has been the development of two "Parents for Change" action groups. Each group—one in Burlington and one in Winooski—has identified a topic of interest and is working to gather information by meeting with school leaders and teachers. The LCP provides coaching during monthly meetings, including role-playing, offering information about the education system, and helping community members understand how to conduct interviews and research in order to become informed and make recommendations about an issue. These coaching sessions are based on the PICO community organizing model with the goal to develop capacity so parents can organize and work toward their goals on their own. According to one community member,

The golden rule of all the organizing work we're doing is don't do anything for anyone that they can do for themselves...so there is this big part of the work that is about how people learn to become leaders by doing things that leaders do.
(BW12CL1)

The LCP worked closely with about 30 leaders in the Burlington Parents for Change group for their Public Action Meeting on November 12. (The Parents for Change group in Winooski is off to a slower start, but has identified transportation as the issue they would like to address.) The Burlington Parents for Change group identified the student placement system for New American youth as an issue, especially given that many of these students are graduating from high school without the skills needed to make them ready for college. In preparation for the meeting, the parent group conducted interviews on student placement procedures at Burlington High School with the English Language Learner Director and the Equity Director for the Burlington School District, the ELL fellow for the Partnership for Change, and the director of guidance at Burlington High School. According

to a community member, efforts were made to empower the parent leaders: “They call and they set up a meeting. They set up the agenda. They ask the questions” (BW12CL1).

The parent group worked with the LCP to prepare a written report, a summary of which was presented during the Public Action Meeting. The Parents for Change group also presented recommendations for student placement policies as well as student and parent testimonials about current student placement practices. Burlington’s superintendent, Equity Director, and English Language Learner Director as well as Burlington High School’s principal were all asked a series of questions during the meeting about whether they would help with each of these recommendations. All committed to working with the group. Parents ran the entire meeting. The audience mainly listened to the presentations. There was a script for the entire meeting. The meeting itself was not an opportunity to engage community members in decision-making and problem solving. The decision-making came prior to the meeting when parents conducted the research and prepared the report, with the help of the LCP.

Steering Committee, Family School Partnerships, and Other Outreach Efforts

The Steering Committee is an important part of the infrastructure for the Partnership for Change and includes 30 members representing many aspects of the communities (e.g., parents, business leaders, school administrators, community members, union representatives, school board members, students from both schools, LCP staff, and Burlington and Winooski high school teachers). During our fall 2012 site visit, evaluators observed the second Steering Committee meeting, which largely focused on creating a shared understanding of the work of the committee among its members. The goal of the meeting was to ensure that every member would be able to answer two questions: 1) What is the Partnership for Change? And 2) what is my role as a member of the Steering Committee? Thus, the meeting focused on reviewing the goals of the Partnership for Change, the implementation teams and fellows, and the roles of the Steering Committee. During future meetings, the structure will consist of a budget report, updates from each of the implementation teams, discussion on how to communicate the work, and oversight of projects and requests for funds. Updates and reports from two of the fellows and the LCP were presented during the meeting observed, modeling how these will be conducted at future meetings. The co-chairs made it clear that the role of the Steering Committee is to make connections between the implementation teams – not do the work of the implementation teams. The co-chairs made reference to several subcommittees that would be established, including a subcommittee on the budget and one on communication. There was some discussion among the group on whether it would be useful to have an executive committee. In discussing the possible make-up of the executive committee, concerns were raised about equal representation of youth and teachers from each of the two schools. Other members were concerned that adding too many representatives to the executive committee would be counterproductive; the executive committee should be small so they can make decisions more easily than the larger group. Another suggestion was creating task forces that would work on issues briefly, rather than establishing permanent subcommittees. No final decisions were made about these issues during the meeting. Overall, members were engaged throughout the meeting and asked many questions about the work. It was clear that while many structures have been developed, there is still more work to do, especially in terms of populating the different committees and teams. The Steering Committee was observed as a structure that was in the process of determining what its role will be and how it will make decisions.

In addition to the work of the LCP and the Steering Committee, efforts have been made at Burlington High School to reach out to parents and provide information about school policies and practices. In an interview in summer 2012, the fellow for family school partnerships explained that during the school year she and a few other teachers hosted Saturday morning events for parents to talk about topics such as understanding the report card, learning about the Jupiter grades system, and safety on the internet. The fellow for personalized and proficiency-based learning worked with Partnership staff and consultants from Eagle Rock School in Colorado to conduct the first Community Learning Conversation, which focused on “What do our graduates need to succeed?” Over 300 parents, teachers, students, business leaders, school administrators and community members from Burlington and Winooski attended the meeting. Volunteer facilitators helped organize the conversation and translation services were provided across nine different languages to ensure all members of the community could participate.

Finally, at Winooski High School the staff spent an in-service day prior to the school year going out into the community. Teachers were broken up into six groups, each focusing on a specific lens (e.g., culture, religion, history, educational institutions). Each group was assigned to go out into the community to gain a better understanding of what resources are available that the school could use to support student learning as well as the perceptions community members had of the school. Teacher groups then presented their findings to the staff. Teachers met with city leaders, religious leaders, community organizers, community service providers, business leaders and other community members. According to one administrator, “The feedback we got was it was the best in-service that anybody had ever attended” (BW12SD3). As a result, teachers started to develop relationships with community members. One administrator explained,

Teachers have started to connect with people within the community who have either a set of skills or an interest area or something that they’re doing that connects to what they’re working with students on, so teachers are starting to kind of access those resources more. It really is just at the starting level, but at least it’s happening. (BW12SD5)

Public Demand

When asked whether the community and the school share the same goals, community members believed that the goals are the same but the pace of change has been a source of frustration among some in the community. Others imagine that prioritizing as the work gets underway could present sticking points. For example, according to one community member, both groups seek improvement in the school system so that all students get the skills they need to succeed after graduation. What has been difficult for some community members is the pace of change: many want the changes to happen quickly. The changes, however, take time. Another community member explained, “Parents want their kids to have access to skills and opportunities and be prepared for the future and for their learning to be individualized and their individual child to be challenged and supported so they can reach their goals.” Another community member agreed, saying:

I think at the hundred thousand foot level where we all want all of our young and not-so-young people to not only succeed, but be prepared to succeed - I think at that level the shared vision is pretty good. I think the particulars and the specifics of

what that looks like is where the interpretation begins. So the vision is fairly clear. The how is what will remain unclear. I think in some ways wisely and maybe in some ways a little less wisely we postpone some of those deeper, harder, specific related community questions until after some participatory research. I think the hope is that that work will give us more clarity, which allows for a better sharing of the how and the vision of that. (BW12CL2)

There have been great efforts to reach out to the community and examine the goals, wishes, and desires of the community for graduates. This has been particularly challenging in Burlington and Winooski where there are so many diverse groups speaking many different languages. The Partnership for Change has worked hard to tear down these types of barriers to participation. More work is certainly needed, especially in terms of reaching out to generational poor populations and continuing to engage immigrant groups, but, as one community member explained, “I think the schools and the districts and the agencies in the community actually have a very good relationship. There is good collaborative work and the quality of work” (BW12CL2). The quotes from community members above highlight the importance of monitoring the work as it unfolds to see how potential divergent priorities are managed.

Collaboration Across the Districts

This DLSC site is unique from the others given that this is a partnership between two districts. Collaborating across districts brings added challenges as well as benefits to the work. For example, fellows and administrators voiced that both schools are working to address similar challenges and the partnership provides an opportunity to learn from one another. For example, Winooski was able to learn from Burlington in terms of rolling out the 1:1 initiative because Burlington distributed their technology devices in the fall, prior to Winooski. Winooski also stands to gain from Burlington’s experiences implementing the YES program.

There was a sense, however, that collaboration across schools has been limited and that expectations for collaboration are not clear. Several of the fellows teaching at Burlington said one of their goals is to reach out to Winooski High School and spend more time there. Fellows admitted that they have to remind themselves that this is not just a Burlington High School initiative. Administrators explained that they are in conversation about how to build collaboration between the two districts: “It’s recognizing what we can do together and what has to be separate [due to contracts, SIG status at WHS, etc.] and then really being conscious about the potential of Burlington overshadowing Winooski and talking about it” (BW12SD2). One administrator voiced that the two schools are largely working as two separate entities with the Partnership for Change working to coordinate efforts. Strides have been made to bring the two districts together, especially in terms of capitalizing on the long-term professional relationship between the two superintendents who have been working together for many years. This will likely shift as Winooski seeks to hire a new superintendent. Some structures and activities have been created that bridge both districts, including the fellows (which includes teachers in both districts), the Steering Committee and implementation teams (which draw members of both communities), and the Summer Development Institute. These structures are new and are just beginning to gain traction. While there are some opportunities for collegial sharing between staff in the two districts

through these activities, there does not appear to be more formal plan beyond the structures already in place to promote learning through collaboration between the sites or guidelines for how to share resources. One administrator commented,

I don't think that there is a real comprehensive plan at this point for what that is going to look like between the two schools but there are a lot of opportunities right now for us to be working and thinking together. It's not clear to me what it's going to actually turn into....where it's leading is not as clear. (BW12SD5)

It will be important to track progress on how these structures aid in collaboration between the two schools as the work continues.

Conclusion

Strengths

- Throughout interviews with teachers, administrators, and community members there was a strong sense of willingness to engage in this change process. The majority of teachers (88%) believe that the Partnership for Change initiatives will have a moderate or substantial impact on their instruction in the next two years. Teachers reported that they would like more professional development opportunities to support student-centered learning practices. Both of these responses from the teacher questionnaire indicate a willingness on the part of teachers to engage in the Partnership for Change efforts. Administrators and teachers embraced that these changes will take time. There was a sense of willingness from administrators, teachers, and Partnership staff to develop goals as the work unfolds – and patience with this grassroots approach. For example, the committee work in WHS was not especially clear to some teachers, but they were excited about the work. Community participation in meetings, including the Burlington Public Action meeting and Community Learning Conversation, and on the implementation teams and Steering Committee demonstrate a willingness to engage in this process. It will be important to maintain this sense of commitment over time. Burlington and Winooski have been working closely with EDC staff to administer the student questionnaire, making them the first of the DLSC sites to use the student questionnaire. This again highlights a sense of willingness to engage in these change efforts.
- Both schools have a strong foundation for teacher collaboration. PLCs have been up and running for several years in both schools with dedicated time for teachers to meet within subject areas. Teachers received training and there are norms of practice in place to help ensure that PLC time is used effectively. This reflects a significant effort among administrators and teachers to build trust and improve practice. The committee work in WHS and Freshman Academies in BHS introduce new ways for teachers to collaborate across disciplines.
- The implementation of 1:1 technology devices in both schools provides opportunities for increased personalization of learning, flexibility in the use of time during class, and other student-centered learning instructional practices. Observation and interview data from BHS demonstrated that some teachers have incorporated iPads into their instruction with these results: increased personalization of instruction, creative use of

class time, collaboration between students, and opportunities to build knowledge and problem solve. Students view this as a powerful learning tool.

- Outreach to the community and efforts to break down barriers for participation (e.g., translation services, LCP members consulting with Partnership staff to strategize on how to engage community members) have led to strong community engagement as well as the development of leadership capacity among community members. This is especially impressive given the diverse needs of these two communities.

Challenges

- Thus far, the focus of the work in Burlington and Winooski has been on developing and populating structures (i.e., Steering Committee, implementation teams, fellows) that will engage and empower community members in a grassroots effort to establish goals and drive change efforts related to student-centered learning. Data collection indicated an absence of specific goals, indicators of success, and measurable outcomes for the work. The emergent nature of these goals presents both strengths and challenges. The effort to involve multiple stakeholders in this process could lead to greater public demand and ownership of the change. It also ensures that the objectives and outcomes are specific to these two unique school settings, possibly leading to a greater chance of these changes gaining traction and meeting the needs of students. Without clearly identified goals, outcomes, and indicators of success, however, it is difficult to determine how to measure ways in which the work is impacting students. The Partnership staff recently generated a set of indicators. These measures are important for continuing to guide the work and making decisions based on data on the progress of the change efforts. Measures are also important for keeping momentum going. Monitoring progress and demonstrating an impact is extremely powerful in engaging constituents, especially when so many are working hard to implement these changes. If the community does not see how their work is improving student learning, then the effort could lose momentum. Leaders are aware that as the work moves forward the next important component will be identifying clear objectives. This is a vital step.
- While there are activities and structures that involve both sites and lead to collaboration across the sites, including the Steering Committee, implementation teams, the SDI, and fellows, the nature of collaboration and how the two sites should share resources have not been explicitly established. This lack of clear understanding of cross-site collaboration has made for some challenges; for example, the 2012 SDI workshops focused on the use of iPads when WHS had invested in MacBooks. Many of the sessions were not applicable to WHS teachers. The fellows are left to determine how they will apply their time between the two sites without clear guidelines. Establishing clear expectations about cross-site collaboration is needed to ensure greater effectiveness of current efforts and in identifying new ways in which the schools can learn from one another.
- Many changes were implemented this year, including the 1:1 technology device initiative for freshmen students at both WHS and BHS. In addition, BHS implemented Freshman Academies, compression of class levels (college prep and honors), and the YES program. At BHS, the changes are particularly concentrated and impacting ninth

grade teachers. This has placed great demands on these teachers and there was a sense that some of these teachers are overwhelmed. Teachers we spoke with could see how these changes are positive for students, but also reported that further support is needed. Monitoring and ensuring that “change fatigue” does not set in will be important as the work continues. This roll-out process also means that not all teachers and students are effected by the changes taking place. Data collection was limited in BHS to the ninth grade, so it is unclear whether teachers and students across the school are knowledgeable of the efforts underway.

- While the vision for change seems to be clear and shared between the school and the community, the “how” has not yet been determined. This could present potential challenges if groups have differing opinions on how to move the work forward. There is also a tension between the grassroots approach for creating direction and the desire for authentic community input. Without clear goals, community members might not understand the work and why their participation is needed. For example, it is difficult to recruit community member participation in the implementation teams when it is unclear what the work will be. Many in the community come from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds, which can add to the need for clearly articulated planning and goals. Partnership and LCP staff are aware of this tension. Finding ways to resolve this issue will be important as the work continues to maintain strong community involvement.