Winooski and Burlington Year One Progress Report
January 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

Executive Summary

The first eighteen months of the Partnership for Change in Winooski and Burlington focused on designing structures, habits and procedures to provide a strong foundation for the Partnership for Change effort in both districts. We worked hard to develop relationships, spark leadership, and gain investment from stakeholder groups to create shared decision-making for authentic engagement and voice from everyone. Our accomplishments and milestones are listed below to summarize the progress from our site.

Project Structure

- Established diverse and multi-stakeholder Steering Committee and Executive Committee that provide governance responsibility and fiduciary oversight for the initiative.
- Created five Implementation Teams - Youth Engagement and Leadership; Proficiency Based Learning; Teaching and Learning Environments; Family School Partnership; and Community Based Learning - whose work is supported by co-chairs and five Fellows providing research and best practices for piloting new educational strategies.
- Partnership for Change staff of communication team, project manager, and director poised to support the Partnership as the innovation arm engaging the community and the Winooski and Burlington School Districts in order to remodel the high schools into student-centered, proficiency-based educational models.

Community Engagement

- Lead Community Partner (LCP), Voices for Vermont's Children, has done significant work to engage our diverse community, specifically New Americans, in the Partnership process. This coming year focused efforts will seek engagement from the communities of color and community members who are economically distressed.
- LCP successfully launched Parents for Change resulting in a public action meeting last fall attended by almost 200 people. The research findings were presented to Burlington School District administrators with the expectation that the concerns raised would be resolved.
- Neighborhood Learning Conversations were held in the spring and fall bringing together nearly 800 community members in small group gatherings to discuss and formulate graduate expectations.
- February 2, 2013 community meeting brought together nearly 350 people to learn about the Partnership for Change, student-centered approaches and proficiency-based learning.
- Burlington Mayor spent a week at Burlington High School to draw attention to the district's remodeling efforts and to build public understanding and support for change.

Teacher Engagement

- 9th grade academies at BHS were established
- iLab at Winooski High School is in the planning stages
- BHS will be piloting proficiency-based student assessment
- Graduate Expectation Teams developed in WHS and BHS
- Fellows provided meaningful research for Implementation Teams.
- Site visits to NYC schools, Noble High School in Maine, the MET in Providence, RI and Eagle Rock School.
- BHS Year End Studies (YES) program – Over 150 courses were offered to all 1200 students at BHS for a 2 ½ week experience to engage in a project that was interest-driven, project-based, and community-connected.

Student Engagement

- WHS senior projects connected students with community mentors and community service
- All 1200 BHS students participate in Year End Studies (YES) program
- Student participation on Partnership for Change Implementation Teams (approx. 40 students) and Steering Committee (6 students)
- Site visit to MET School in Providence, RI by 12 WHS and BHS students to learn about school redesign from student perspective and student participation in site visits to NYC (6 students) and Eagle Rock School (5 students)

School Board and Union Progress
- As of this writing, the Burlington Educators Association and BSD have reached a tentative agreement on benchmarking salaries for competitiveness, integrating the 80/20 MOU language and continuing to protect the PLC time for teacher learning. This systems-level progress is a direct result of Adam Urbanski's work. Votes to ratify this tentative agreement are scheduled to occur prior to August 31.
- The Winooski Educators Association and WSD have reached an agreement on the 80/20 language and will continue the conversation on other ideas discussed during Adam Urbanski's visit

Progress Report Questions:

1. Describe how you used you used your logic model during the first 18 months of implementation.

Our Logic Model was the instrument that generated our comprehensive work plan upon which all of our strategic planning and implementation in the first eighteen months was based. When Winooski-Burlington transitioned from the grant-planning operations team to the structures established in the grant plan, the logic model was a large part of the transfer of knowledge. As we began our early implementation, we brought on many new stakeholders. We hired five fellows, each in an area that aligns with the long-term outcomes identified in our Logic Model. Each fellow created their own work plan that extrapolated the strategies and goals from the Logic Model into a more detailed, yearlong approach. We appointed a Steering Committee of thirty-five diverse stakeholders and ten Implementation Team Co-Chairs. With so many people joining our efforts in such a short time, we needed a way to capture our vision and align our work. By using the long-term outcomes to craft our inquiry areas, we gave a common language to the levers of change in our communities: Community Based Learning, Personalized and Proficiency Based Learning, Teaching and Learning Environments, Family School Partnerships and Youth Engagement and Leadership. With each new individual or team that was created to support the

work, alignment with the work plan, and therefore the logic model, was a key component to keeping us moving in the same direction.

2. From your work turning the Foundation's theories into action, what have you learned about Nellie Mae's *Theory of Change as* represented in the Foundation's Logic Model?

In working with the Foundation's Logic Model, the Partnership for Change identified four main theories that guide our actionable implementation.

Theory 1: *By targeting populations that are typically underserved you will increase engagement and achievement among those populations.*

In Winooski and Burlington we adhere to the strong belief that everyone needs to be represented at "the table" in order to make decisions that will affect the outcomes for all learners. Because the system for communicating is not working as well as we had hoped to encourage participation from our underserved populations, we are focusing on both redesigning the system of participation, as well as building leadership capacity in those populations. One example of this in our first year was the use of Neighborhood Learning Conversations (NLCs) to engage all parents and community members in the changes occurring at the school. A NLC is a small house party that occurs in someone's living room or in a local, community space. There is a host, usually a parent or community member interested or participating in the change work, and the host is responsible for inviting 10-15 of their friends or neighbors. The Partnership for Change provides the content and facilitator for a discussion as well as light refreshments. Over the past year, the Partnership held over 65 NLCs around the topic of Graduate Expectations engaging over 800 students, parents, teachers, community members between Winooski and Burlington. By taking the conversation into the community, instead of expecting the community to come to the school to be a part of the dialogue, the participation of our underserved populations increased. In turn, we will look in year two towards the use of Graduate Expectations to help improve achievement for these same populations.

Theory 2: *By identifying 4-5 main strategies/levers of change according to best practice and research you can structure your data, human capital, infrastructure, management, leadership and new technologies to support implementation of said strategies.*

This theory has provided the foundation for the organization of our work in this first 18 months. During the planning grant phase, five levers of change were identified: Community Based Learning, Personalized and Proficiency Based Learning, Teaching and Learning Environments, Family School Partnerships and Youth Engagement and Leadership. By structuring our fellows and Implementation Teams around these five areas, we began the work of supporting strategies that aligned with what our community, research, and best practice identify as important focus areas for change. These five levers also gave us a common language with which to talk about our multi-layered work in the schools and community. Towards the end of the first 18 months, many of the pilot programs being launched were interdisciplinary between the five areas, making the case for their inclusion in our work very strong.

One example is the Design Thinking for Educators workshop. This was an effort that grew out of our Community Based Learning team. The concept was to bring businesses and community organizations together with teachers to create real world, relevant, problem-based and solution driven curriculum for students. Both the Teaching and Learning Environments team and the Proficiency Based Learning Team found connections to Design Thinking and the event unfolded

in a way that supported the goals of all three teams. There is also continued interest in expanding upon the spring event this fall and bringing more teachers in to receive the training.

It should be noted that the five levers for change we identified at our site are slightly different from the four strategies identified on the Foundation's Logic Model. Our inclusion of Family School Partnerships and Youth Leadership and Engagement as main levers for change, and not just outcomes of other change strategies, have allowed us to include two key stakeholder groups in authentic ways as the schools work towards change. We have discovered that it is crucial for buy-in to have youth and families as a part of the decision making process and not just as the recipients of the decisions. We have also been strategically involving the business community in the decision-making process to tie into our long-term outcome of more Vermont businesses employing Vermont graduates.

Theory 3: *With strong district attention to policy-making, budget reallocation, state-level policy influences and data tracking systems (accountability), Student Centered Learning practices will be sustained over the long-term.*

Our planning grant team structured our Steering Committee with this theory in mind. We have three appointed seats that keep our communications with local and state level government strong: one Burlington City Mayor appointed seat, one Winooski City Government appointed seat, and one seat appointed by the Agency of Education (AOE) in Montpelier. By keeping a strong connection to the policy making at the local and state level, we are able to guide our work in a direction that will be supported by new policy. One example of this is the concurrent work at the state level and in our own two communities around proficiency based learning. The state has convened an Education Quality Standards (EQS) Commission working towards flexible pathways, personalized learning plans, and statewide proficiencies for graduation. The AOE representative on our Steering Committee also sits on the EQS Commission and is able to keep active lines of information flowing to support the work. This also puts Winooski and Burlington ahead of the state curve in terms of preparing teachers, students, parents and the community to understand, embrace and engage with the new Graduate Expectations.

Another important area of emphasis in this theory is budget allocation. In the area of infrastructure and technology, our three-year budget shows funding of innovative practice and programming moving gradually from the grant to the district based on projected needs. It is hard to do this in all areas during early implementation because we are still in the phase of determining need and small pilots that will help guide the larger, budgetary asks. However, the technology budget allocation provides a good example of budget structure for the late stage implementation.

Theory 4: *By utilizing Community Based Organizations to engage, build knowledge among and organize public stakeholders, structures will be put in place to sustain long-term Student Centered Learning efforts.*

The inclusion of a Lead Community Partner in our work has helped tremendously to build leadership and capacity in our underserved populations. Voices for Vermont's Children (VVC) uses the PICO model of organizing which focuses on one issue, within the field of education, that is most important to the people they are working with. This system will help by cultivating leadership and relationships that can help sustain the work, and it can serve as a model for how to engage and organize the public over the long-term.

Over the past 18 months, VVC has organized Burlington New American Community Leaders around the issue of ELL placement. They supported the leaders to receive training, helped facilitate research meetings with top school representatives, helped communications back and forth between the communities and the group of leaders, and held a Public Action Meeting to make the commitment to solutions public moving forward. Over the past six months, the school and New American leaders have been working together on the solutions cultivated during the PICO process. The outcomes, and communication of these outcomes back to the communities, will have a large role in the continued participation of the new leaders moving forward. When the outcomes are positive and the goals set are achieved, the group provides a positive example of how parents can work with the schools to improve efforts for their children.

3.   Reflecting on the work of the past 18 months, who has been involved and what changes would you make in your logic Model and/or work plan? E.g. in the staging of your activities or pace of implementation.

Our work over the past 18 months has significantly widened our circle of stakeholders. Beginning in August 2012 with a 35 member Steering Committee, each stakeholder group has worked hard to engage more members through a variety of learning opportunities. Our focus in recruiting participants is community accessibility and diversity. Because we acknowledge that community involvement is crucial to the success of this work, we work hard to ensure that there are no barriers to participation and that the voices at the table are representative of the people for whom this work is being carried out. Towards this end we hold meetings both during the school day and at night, during the week and on the weekend, in the school buildings, in community locations and in people's homes. Often, when we are looking to gather information or opinions on our work, we follow through with a multi-pronged approach that engages people in school, at home, in person, as well as electronically.

In looking at our Implementation Teams, we had close to 200 unique participants in the first 8 months of meetings. <u>Every teacher</u> at Burlington High School and Winooski Middle/High School has participated through faculty meetings, surveys, site visits and/or learning conversations. We also bring information about our work to public forums such as the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, print publications like the Winooski Community Newsletter or the Burlington Free Press, and other media outlets like WCAX and Vermont Public Radio.

Below is a list of changes specific to our work plan that have developed based on our experience over the past 18 months:

- Change the name of the Effective Teaming Fellow/Implementation Team to Teaching and Learning Environments
- BHS and WMHS started down different paths in implementing the redesign process. Instead of applying one method to both schools, the strategy has been uniquely tailored to each based on the needs of students, staff and community. In the original grant work plan we anticipated BHS moving to 10th grade teams in the 2013-14 school year. Instead, teachers are interested in exploring 10th-12th grade innovative, interdisciplinary, technology-rich programming for a pilot the 2014-15 school year. At Winooski, their small size makes it difficult to have traditional teams. Instead, they have created the iLab for grades 7-12 in the 2013-14 school year to deepen collaborative practice among interdisciplinary teams and support personal learning plans for students. At both schools, the end goal is common planning time for teachers, which supports multi-grade and/or interdisciplinary learning structures.

- Due to the changes in plans for teaming moving forward, the professional development plans have also been altered to support teacher needs. 9th grade teachers at BHS will continue to receive PD in differentiated instruction as they move towards heterogeneous grouping while the PD time for grade 10-12 teachers will focus on the desired redesign of programming and then shift to the support needed for implementation. At WMHS, continued PD support for 9-12 grade will continue throughout the year with a strong focus on implementing the Graduate Expectations. The 6-8 grade teachers are shifting to a new, two-team structure and will be focusing their PD on implementation. At both schools, we will work towards whole school integration/evolution of pilot programs and practices.
- Our timeline to have all students on PLPs linked with the rollout of 1:1 devices will be altered based on the need to provide additional technology trainings for teachers in a manner that supports classroom integration and learning. Also, Winooski and Burlington will pilot different PLP strategies prior to full implementation, which was not initially planned. At Winooski, each high school teacher will select one Graduate Expectation to pilot in their classrooms. At Burlington, members of the Graduate Expectations Team along with SDI participants will be piloting the graduate expectations in their classrooms. In the 2013-14 school year, select teachers at both schools will also be piloting different Learning Management Systems to assess the best options for tracking students' PLPs over time.
- Implementing a new advisory structure will align closely with the plan for implementing PLPs for each student. The BHS PLP implementation will depend upon the redesign for 10-12 graders which relies heavily upon the development of the Graduate Expectations. All of the work builds upon itself to create a robust system of student centered learning. By allowing best practices and large community engagement to help us determine next steps, we ensure an aligned structure.
- Most of the work planned will be rolled out in phases, beginning with the 9th graders at BHS and the 9/10th graders at Winooski. The slower rollout allows for adjustments to be made as we learn what works best for our students and community. Because of this, the class of 2018 will be the first full class for which graduate expectations, advisories and PLPs will be required.
- The first year of our Implementation Teams taught us a lot about the structure and leadership needed to operate multi-stakeholder teams in a productive, inclusive, and fiscally responsible way. To improve these teams for year two, we have changed our funding structure to integrate the five team funds into one fund that will allow for more interdisciplinary work. We also created two other funds based on the findings of the Implementation Teams: the Teacher Investment Fund and the Innovative Programs Fund. This will facilitate more teacher and student involvement in piloting innovative work during the school day that can connect with the work of the Implementation Teams as well.

4.   Has the baseline data in your EDC Report caused changes in your approaches to Professional Development (PD), distributive leadership, teacher and/or student engagement? If yes, please describe these changes.

There has been a lot of data, research, and feedback in the first year that has helped us improve our implementation strategies. When speaking specifically about the EDC Report, we have used their analysis of our strengths and challenges as further evidence towards the refinement of our strategies. EDC observed our strengths to include a strong sense of willingness to engage in the change process among a variety of stakeholders, strong teacher collaboration within both schools, solid 1:1 technology rollout plans and integration, and a strong focus on community outreach.

Our challenges were listed as a lack of clear indicators or measure of success, including clear expectations for cross-district collaboration, and a need to be clearer about the "how" of our vision and mission.

Supporting teachers to implement change was identified after the first six months of the school year as a crucial focus to move this work forward. We used the teacher feedback from the 2012 SDI, along with the EDC report observations, and best practices research to help develop a 2013 SDI that met the needs of all teachers. The process was also inclusive of the teacher leadership teams that were developed at both schools to continue implementing a distributive leadership model. The BHS "think tank" team and the WHS "hub" team helped gather information from their colleagues as to potential themes for the SDI, and each teacher filled out a collaboration form outlining their needs prior to shaping the agenda for the SDI. Our weeklong structure was re-organized, our goals focused on student learning and improved instruction through proficiency-based learning, and we worked hard to take the next steps towards cultivating a strong professional community amongst colleagues of both schools. New additions included a "conference" day of keynote speakers and workshops, a book choice selection with cross-district book talks, individual coaching for groups based on their needs and requests, and flexible space and resources.

Our research indicated that "many teacher learning/change oriented learning initiatives fail to penetrate the "black box" (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010)[1] and affect instruction in the classroom with students (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003)."[2] So we worked with teachers to acknowledge the ongoing nature of the work they began at the SDI in 2013. They were asked to create products that could be implemented in the fall and then told that there would be an opportunity to report out and receive feedback in the winter. This structure will provide sustained measures for continued teacher learning.

As we approach our challenges, we enlisted the help of Oldham Innovative Research to assist in creating more realistic and manageable indicators. Oldham conducted their first session with us this summer and we will continue this collaborative work to help define how we measure success and how we communicate those successes with our community.

5. How are you using your indicators? Please describe your data collection and analysis process. Are there changes or modifications that you want to make to these indicators for the next grant period?

We still consider our indicators to be in draft form and have been struggling to find authentic ways to measure our success. After acknowledging that the expertise we needed to create proper indicators did not exist within either of our districts, we enlisted the help of Oldham Innovative Research. After a few discovery phone calls, Erin Oldham came to Burlington and conducted the first indicator refinement session with Burlington and Winooski educators, administration and

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[1] Bryk, A. S., P. B. Sebring, E. Allensworth, S. Luppescu and J. Q. Easton (2010). Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

[2] Ball, S. (1987). Resources and relationships. The micropolitics of the school: Towards a theory of school organization. London, Methuen & Co: 212-246.

Partnership staff. We discovered that many of our indicators are not actually indicators, but rather items on a checklist. These items demonstrate progress, but they cannot be measured over time.

We are currently evaluating all of our indicators in an effort to pare down to the essential and meaningful pieces. We also used the work session with Erin to identify what was missing from the original draft. We plan to have a new draft by mid-August and hope to use our new indicators to communicate to our community and to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation how we are measuring success.

6.   In addition to the Student Engagement Survey administered by EDC, are you generating your own information? If yes, what are you learning?

The Student Engagement Survey was administered in late April and early May and we have not seen the results yet. However, there are other measures that we are using to evaluate our sites' student engagement: keeping attendance records with stakeholder information for our Implementation Teams, identifying how many students apply for and participate in site visits and big events, surveying 9th graders about one to one iPad, and surveying BHS students about the YES program.

This year we have engaged over twenty Winooski and Burlington students as regular members of the Implementation Teams. A majority of these students participated in the Youth Engagement and Leadership Team. We offered three major site visits this year: New York City, The MET School in Providence, RI, and Eagle Rock School in Estes Park, CO. We took a total of 23 students on the three site visits, but had over 50 students apply. The iPad survey was taken by a total of 178 9th graders who gave us information on how they use their iPad, how often, for what types of applications, and when they are most engaged with the iPad. The BHS YES survey results are not yet available, but will be able to tell us what students thought of the YES program and how engaged they were in interest-driven, project-based, community-connected programming.

A number of lessons that have emerged from our work with students this year and are informing our process for year two:

- Incentives Matter - they are just as important for students as they are for everyone else, but class or college credit seems to be the most popular incentive.
- Timing Matters – students are busy with sports, work, clubs, and family. After school and evenings are not the best time to engage them. Try to meet them where they are during the school day and integrate this work into their day.
- Advertising Matters – but not the same way you advertise for adults. Word of mouth works best. Students want to do what their friends are doing, so get a few students who are passionate and more will follow.
- Personal Investment Matters – have students organize and plan the site visits, events, meeting agendas, etc. Not only are they more engaged but the adults are too.

There are some great examples of when student engagement worked and did not work over the past year. At Burlington High School, a group of students organized Art and Peace Day. They planned the entire day from beginning to end and managed all the communications with administration, teachers and students. Because both the concept and the planning were all student driven, the day meant more to the students. It was authentic student engagement and leadership in a very authentic way and sparked a student StoryCorps booth and multiple follow-up projects.

In comparison, the Implementation team meetings were nighttime events, planned by adults, and we had trouble engaging students. When we specifically invited groups of students and asked them to present on topics and experiences that mattered to them, they engaged more authentically. This continues to be a major focus for our next year.

7. What and who do you anticipate will be essential in sustaining your work beyond the Nellie Mae grant funding?

We have identified many essential needs to sustain the work of the Partnership for Change past the grant funding. All of them require strong, collaborative structures, processes and communication that are aligned with district philosophy and vision. Clear structures for sustaining partnerships past individual relationships will reinforce that it's not the "who" that is important but the "what" that will sustain this work. That being said, leaders within the school and community will need some time to fully embrace this way of doing business. It will take constant learning on everyone's part to ensure that our schools are meeting the demands of our rapidly changing world.

One positional recommendation is a district Director of Communications and a comprehensive communications plan for each district. We have found that the success or failure of so much that we do relies heavily upon how well it has been communicated. Consistent messaging and framing for district administrators and spokespeople (including the school board) is paramount for building community support. Ongoing relationships with local media with a constant feed of stories highlighting the great work being done in schools will help build goodwill and public understanding

The collaboration between district administrators, teachers and students has sparked many innovative projects and collaboration. This continued collaboration, even after the life of the grant, is going to be important to sustain the work. The input and connection with families and the community is a big asset to our work. Finding and establishing clear structures for sustaining these partnerships long past the grant funding and past the individual relationships that created them will allow for a continued focus on Student Centered Learning.

8. What research from Nellie Mae has been particularly helpful to you? What other research would be useful?

The pre-readings for the cross-site meeting in November 2012 were the most useful research that Nellie Mae provided to date. Our participants noted that the Executive Summaries were extremely helpful and that the articles helped spark great conversation, specifically about brain-based practices as they apply to the fixed vs. growth mindset concepts.

Other research that would be beneficial at this time would include information on implementing a proficiency-based learning system, other schools regionally or nationally that are doing this work well, and identified experts in the area who may be able to support our efforts.

9. Since the beginning of the grant period, have any new resources beyond those provided by the Nellie Mae grant been devoted to the work of the grant? Have any resources (including personnel) been reallocated for this purpose? If so, please describe.

Since being awarded the grant, the Tarrant Institute for Innovative Education (TIIE) has provided a grant of $250,000 for one to one technology devices and support at the middle school level in

Winooski and Burlington. TIIE has also provided practical and strategic support for the Tech Integration Specialists in Winooski and Burlington

Another personnel change has been in our Lead Community Partner. Voices started off with two full-time community organizers and now they have one full-time and two part-time organizers. Each part-time organizer is focused on a different underserved population: New Americans, communities of color, and families living in poverty.

Lastly, there has been a concerted effort over the first 18 months to align the work of the Partnership with the other initiatives occurring in both districts such as the Diversity and Equity work in Burlington and the Green Mountain Star process in Winooski. Through this strategic alignment, administrators and team leaders have worked to help everyone see this as "our work." We have held monthly, cross-district alignment meetings to ensure this. These meetings are facilitated by a coach that is helping the Burlington School District build collaborative capacity and integrate the Partnership for Change work. This coach is funded by a three year grant to the Burlington School District from the Bay and Paul Foundation.