



PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

OUR SCHOOLS • OUR COMMUNITIES • OUR FUTURE

Re-application for NMEF Grant Funding Winooski and Burlington, VT

April 2015

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This is a completely new experience; I have never felt such respect, autonomous power, and positive, transformative power as a student and young person. I've never felt like my ideas have been so valued and sought out before -- I've always felt inadequate and distrusted because I was a high school student. This combined with having the time and resources to create my own goals and then accomplish them in a supportive setting is completely amazing.

-a student

Student Centered Learning is the best way to make sure all students are receiving the education they deserve. As a parent, I think most of us embrace this vision.

-a Steering Committee Member (parent)

Systems Change is relational. People are able to engage at their fullest when they believe that change is necessary, possible, and benefits all. The community engagement work that the Partnership did helped build these relationships.

-a Steering Committee Member (community partner)

It is great to have the opportunity to share with my Winooski colleagues and receive support from across the river, to know that we are facing many of the same challenges and tackling them together.

-a teacher

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1. Referring to the SCL logic model and Putting Students at the Center, Nellie Mae's reference guide for SCL, share the vision for SCL in your district. To what extent is this vision shared by the community?

Over the past two and a half years, Winooski and Burlington have embarked on an aligned effort to reimagine a vision for SCL in both our districts. Creating a shared vision under which the Partnership for Change can support this work is our North Star:

The Partnership for Change supports the Winooski/ Burlington School District to be an innovative, collaborative, and equitable learning organization that inspires all learners to lead their communities to a dynamic and sustainable future.

Our leaders strategized on how to shift a deeply entrenched system to one that strongly supports this new vision. Our educators dove into professional development to learn new ways of teaching. Our students took on leadership roles in the process. Our parents were supported to engage as partners with schools to reimagine their child's education. And our public was educated to understand and support this work. The shared vision of SCL that has emerged from this work includes the following critical elements:

1. Schools in which students graduate by demonstrating proficiency in our Graduate Expectations
2. Schools that offer flexible, personalized pathways for students to reach these Graduate Expectations (including a variety of independent, student-designed, community-based, and technology-supported learning experiences)
3. Classrooms in which students learn and advance via proficiency-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment
4. Significant student voice and student ownership in the school redesign process itself

As a learning organization, we began by asking ourselves the fundamental question: what will it take to ensure that all learners are civically engaged, economically self-sufficient, and committed to lifelong learning? To address this question, we asked our respective communities, through a multi-step process, to help determine what skills our graduates need to be successful. We call these our Graduate Expectations (GXs). This process helped us strengthen public understanding for both the need for change and the growing body of research that supports it. Identifying our shared values was paramount to discerning what SCL means in Winooski and Burlington. In both communities, the GXs are the foundation for shifting to student-centered, proficiency based learning, in which students take much greater responsibility for their learning experience, and the walls of the school become far more permeable.

Through small and large Learning Conversations, we brought together approximately 2,000 people to help develop the GXs for both districts. The community, having had the chance to help shape the next generation of learning in a meaningful way, has set the stage for educators and students to develop a new system of teaching and learning. Our collective vision, along

with the establishment of clear tenets for what constitutes SCL, are guiding both districts and serve as a solid foundation upon which to build in the months and years ahead.

Specifically, the Winooski School Board constructed an “Ends Statement,” that aligns with the larger shared vision for SCL and the GXs. It reads:

All students will graduate from the Winooski School District (WSD) college and career ready at a cost supported by a majority of the Winooski community. WSD students will lead healthy, productive and successful lives and engage with their local and global community.

The Winooski Ends Statement, and the shift in 2013 to a School Board policy governance model, allows for SCL to drive the vision, via the GXs:

<i>Winooski Graduate Expectations</i>	
<i>Critical Thinking and Problem Solving</i>	I ask challenging questions, examine complex problems, and propose possible solutions
<i>Persistence</i>	I commit to learning even when challenged or outside of my comfort zone, and push myself to reach my goals I accept the challenge of difficult or long-term problems, and I push myself to reach my goals.
<i>Cross-Cultural Understanding and Community Engagement</i>	I know and appreciate different people, cultures, and perspectives; and participate in the life of my community and the greater world.
<i>Effective Oral and Written Communication</i>	I am skillful at taking in, and expressing, ideas in multiple ways.
<i>Physical, Social, and Emotional Well-Being</i>	I identify my strengths and weaknesses, and take intentional steps to grow.
<i>Creativity</i>	I am creative, curious, and committed in my learning.

In every step of the process towards creating a new vision for SCL in Winooski, the students, teachers, parents and community were authentically engaged as partners in the work. Because of this, the vision is not only shared, but widely understood - especially among teachers implementing the work every day. These processes also laid a clear foundation for continuing to share each step of the journey with our community. Even now, as student-owned Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) are being developed by educators, input from parents and community mentors continues to be built into the process.

When we started this work, many of the concerns in Winooski stemmed from NCLB “failing school” labels and low standardized test scores. Now, the community strongly believes that the school cares for the students, wants to help improve the quality of life in the community and is working in everyone’s best interest. There was an honest acknowledgement that the status quo was not working, followed by a genuine commitment to a process of change that all feel is necessary. Mutual trust between the district and the board has continued to grow, and with it, a tolerance for the inevitable messiness of the change process. Educators have been empowered to shift their instructional practice, and as a result, student achievement is improving.

In Burlington, there has been significant movement forward at Burlington High School, where a new vision and mission have taken root. We consider this a major victory, given that the district as a whole has been struggling with its leadership. Burlington High School’s Vision and Mission in the 2014-15 Program of Studies read as follows:

***Burlington High School** is an innovative, equitable, and collaborative community of learners inspiring and shaping a dynamic and sustainable future for Burlington. We build on the diverse cultures, experiences, and interests of our students and community to support student-centered learning and foster intellectual growth. We partner with families and the community at large to help our students develop the skills to become independent, self-directed, and lifelong learners who contribute responsibly to our world.*

*Our **mission** is to challenge all students to achieve at their highest levels. We believe every student must demonstrate the following graduation expectations:*

*§ **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** Ask challenging questions, examine authentic problems, and analyze possible solutions.*

*§ **Effective Communication:** Use a variety of methods to express, receive, and respond to information and ideas.*

*§ **Cross-Cultural Understanding and Civic Engagement:** Actively seek to learn about and to understand peoples, cultures, and perspectives and engage in the life of the community and the greater world.*

*§ **Personal Development:** Identify strengths and weaknesses, advocate for health and well-being, make positive choices, and take intentional steps to grow.*

*§ **Curiosity and Creativity:** Explore ideas with an open mind and try new and different ways to approach life and learning.*

These vision and mission statements grew out of a rigorous process of community engagement, along with a survey that reached more than 500 parents. Through community engagement and growing teacher engagement in the philosophical underpinnings of SCL, we believe that BHS is now primed for a new era in teaching and learning. This is being demonstrated by the fact that

more teachers are pursuing proficiency-based learning and other student-centered strategies that align with best practice: skill-based course work, community partnerships, summer and afterschool opportunities, and a more authentic kind of collaboration between parents and educators.

That said, in Winooski and Burlington, we are continuing to find evidence that our readiness levels for learners of color, low income learners, English Language learners and other underserved populations are below the readiness levels of all other students. Despite the districts' best efforts to provide support and enhance access to services for the growing number of New Americans arriving in our communities, we must continue to personalize and customize the learning so that everyone can meet the high standards demanded by our rapidly-changing and global society. We take seriously the fact that the future of Vermont's economy and civil society relies upon our ability to get this right. Systemic change is hard, and it takes time, but we believe that the conditions are prime for positive change.

2. Referring to the Systems Level Logic Model, share your aspirations for systems change to support the shift to SCL in your district.

With the Partnership for Change as a catalyst, Winooski and Burlington have developed a shared mission, vision, and values that embrace teacher learning, proficiency-based systems, personalization and supports for all students, data driven decision making, distributed leadership structures, and community engagement. The makeup of the student population is similar between the two districts, with New American and low-income families accounting for a total of approximately 50% in Burlington and 70% in Winooski. However, because of the vastly different sizes of each school, the implementation goals, strategies and tactics have necessarily varied. Nevertheless, through the Summer Development Institute and other shared professional development and coaching opportunities, faculty and administration in both districts lean on one another as members of a learning community that continues to grow in strength and sophistication.

In both Winooski and Burlington, a systemic shift in the way teacher learning happens has already begun. Through the piloting and evaluation of the Fellowship model, as well as through the identification of best practices in the field, we have created the Partner Teacher Program and are in the beginning stages of implementation. Research of effective professional learning initiatives suggests that the following elements are related to successful change efforts centered on teacher practice: compelling, shared, positive vision; leadership and distributed leadership; cultivating a professional community; opportunities for practice, coaching, and feedback; sustainable, formal and informal training.¹ Over the course of last year, the Partnership for Change worked with teachers in both districts to develop a system that would incorporate these principles into a yearlong professional development model with the goal of shifting teacher practice to be proficiency based, with a strong focus on differentiation, interdisciplinary teaching, co-teaching, and personalization.

¹ Tompkins, P. (2013). *Conceptual Framework for Effective Professional Learning and Change Initiatives: A Summary of Research into Best Practices*.

The Partner Teacher program has found many successes through its first year, and the early feedback from people in the program is extremely positive. In both districts, we have reached a “tipping point” of teachers who want to shift to proficiency-based practices and who recognize that the system must change if we want to see improved student outcomes for all learners. In Winooski, conversations around the expansion of the program to support all teachers are evidence of its initial success and the right structure for next year is being collaboratively developed with the Teacher Learning Coordinator, the administration and the teacher leadership team. In Burlington, the success of year one is clear based on the applicants for next year’s program. Out of 16 applicants, we selected 10 new partner teachers, including members of all core academic departments (English, math, science, history/social studies, and ELL), to be released for 20% of their time in the 2015-16 school year. These 10 teachers represent a new and extremely important demographic: they are seasoned veterans who have been in the classroom for at least 10 years and will continue as teachers at Burlington High School for a number of years to come. They are department leaders with a lot of important, unofficial relational power within the faculty. We see this as a solid demonstration of the fact that we are moving toward full-scale implementation. We expect 2015-16 to be a pivotal year in implementing the tenets of SCL and spreading the learning, the knowledge and practice so it becomes further embedded in the school.

Distributed leadership is also a goal within the two districts. Winooski is currently operating with a teacher leadership team that is the research, planning and decision-making body of the faculty as they move to proficiency-based learning. Leaders of this team helped craft the Partner Teacher program, drafted the Winooski Middle/High School Vision and Action Plan², and are leading the GX faculty meetings every other week. They are facilitating teacher groups as they embark on the messy work of aligning content standards from the local, state, and federal level with the GXs. They have also been instrumental in aligning the state and federally mandated work with SCL.

In Burlington, a school leadership team, comprised of eleven teachers representing the various disciplines, have been critical players in decision-making and managing school initiatives, including the work with Green Mountain Star (the AOE school improvement work). This team is working hard to make SCL the connection between all of the mandates and initiatives so that everything is aligned with the North Star. In the 9th grade, teachers are leading through practice and implementation of an interdisciplinary, cohort model team that shares teaching practice and uses reflection and student work to coordinate curriculum, instruction, and student projects on an ongoing basis. Through that model, the development of heterogeneously grouped classes for 9th grade humanities and some math is now being implemented. Also at BHS, a committee-based model is taking shape with individual faculty “bought out” for .2 of their contract to lead SCL-based initiatives. An example of this that was teacher-led is the Year End Studies (YES) program, led by co-coordinators (two teachers each bought out for .2) and a faculty committee of 14 teachers that meets monthly. A similar structure is currently in place for

² See Appendix A: Winooski Middle High School Vision and Action Plan 2014-2018 and Burlington High School Common Priorities 2014-15

a new advisory system at BHS, with one teacher contributing 40% of her time to collaboratively plan, design and implement advisories for the 2015-16 school year. For next year, another teacher leader will be supported through district funding to focus on aligning teacher learning around Proficiency-Based learning through the PLC structure. These teacher-teachers are supported by a teacher work group and a student group, both of which meet regularly to support the design and roll-out of the advisory program.

We view these teacher leaders in both districts as the catalysts and drivers of change³. Their most important work is creating the organizational, cultural, and developmental conditions that foster continuous improvement.⁴ Collective responsibility is at the heart of these efforts and the change that has occurred at the classroom level, in individual practice and in increasing collaboration is the best indicator that true systems change is taking root.

Motivated in part by state legislation (Act 77), and by a strong commitment to create personalized learning environments that support all students to succeed, both Winooski and Burlington plan to have PLPs for all learners 6-12 (WMHS) and 7-12 (BHS) beginning in the Fall of 2015. Planning and professional development are currently underway to ensure all faculty are ready to support students using these new tools. The fact that both schools are 1:1 technology environments will make the work highly accessible and an access point for parents and community mentors to partner with the schools to support students. At BHS, a new advisory system is being implemented next year to ensure every student has an adult in the building that knows them well. This work is supported by many of our marginalized communities due to the Lead Community Partner organizing that led to a Public Action around advisory last June. In Winooski, a multi-tiered system of supports is in development. At the middle school, a robust advisory system is being created; at the high school, they are still identifying a structure that they believe will ensure success. This work is being led by the Tech Integration Specialist - another example of distributed teacher leadership at work.

While PLPs will help nurture student voice, both schools are working to deliver student-owned learning in other ways as well. A system where all students develop their learning paths and increasingly take responsibility for their middle and high school years is crucial to their post-secondary success. In Winooski, the iLab is helping to nurture this. Through passion driven learning, self-regulation, and assessment and reflection, students are gaining content credits, engaging with the community, and learning how to own their learning. As the iLab expands and iLab instructional practices spread into traditional classrooms, we are confident that authentic student-owned learning will result. In Burlington, the School Innovation Seminar is a course that gives students the opportunity to study the school change process itself and gain the knowledge and understanding to participate as true collaborators with teachers and administrators on school redesign. An outgrowth of that course being piloted this year is the Student Consultant

³ Bryk, Sebring et al. (2010). Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

⁴ Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (2011). School leadership: A key to teaching quality. A policy brief on the role of principals in strengthening instructions. Santa Cruz, CA., Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning.

program, in which students earn credit as they pursue year-long school change projects and collaborate with Partner Teachers to give student voice to the shifts in instructional practice. Additionally, a new Senior Seminar course at BHS will give every senior the opportunity to pursue an independent study, internship, or other off-campus learning experience before graduation. Burlington is also considering a system of restorative justice for discipline issues that is student-led. These strategies, when coupled with PLPs and increased student representation on boards and committees, will help drive student-owned learning.

A few other systemic goals are driving the work in Winooski. The superintendent has been reaching out to local business owners with the goal of forging relationships that might help sustain community based learning in the future. That outreach, along with iLab and senior project community connections, are laying a strong foundation for a future where all students are learning authentically in their community. Winooski has also been increasing capacity through new positions. In the past year, they have hired a Wellness Coordinator, Data Manager, and Director of Curriculum--to provide new programs that ensure students are ready to learn, to align learning vertically and horizontally, and to track student outcomes toward data driven decision making. In essence, Winooski is building a system that relies upon continuous improvement through cycles of innovation, experimentation and a clearly supported culture of change.

In Burlington, the Human Resources office is working with the Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR) to promote innovative hiring practices moving forward. The department is also supporting a process of position analysis to rewrite some of the professional and paraprofessional positions in the district to align with the demands of a student-centered system in a 21st century society. This process began in September of 2014 with a community forum on a Saturday morning that allowed stakeholders to guide the development of the job description for the next superintendent. Position Analysis will continue over the next two years under the leadership of the new superintendent so that jobs in the district have state-of-the-art job descriptions that are SCL-aligned.

In addition to the changes taking place at the school and classroom levels, there has also been substantial progress in engaging our community and its wide array of stakeholders. Our Lead Community Partner has engaged parents in an ambitious action research model culminating in two parent-led public action meetings. Our neighborhood learning conversations--in people's homes--were highly successful in bringing people together for study and dialogue. They laid out the rationale for *why* change is happening, which we have learned is a fundamental step in the engagement process. Our larger events--the Community Learning Conversations and end-of-year events--have begun to reinforce to the community that their participation is essential to our progress and that community partners have a new role in a student-centered system. We believe strongly that, with the continued investment of time and resources, community engagement can sustain this work over time. In moving the lion's share of our funding toward transforming instructional practice, however, the funding for some of the above-described efforts has decreased. Currently, we are relying upon the Agency of Education, our community partnerships, and our parent networks to get out the word--but we realize that these efforts are

insufficient to the task. Our two districts have great stories to share that could help shape the way other districts embark upon a redesign process; we hope to receive outside funding to continue this important work.

3. For questions 1 & 2, provide an analysis of the most pressing catalysts that need to be enhanced and barriers that need to be minimized to accomplish your goals. What data supports your analysis? How do your current patterns, structures, positions, contracts, budgets, and policies support this vision?

Change takes trust, vision, understanding, and, most of all, time. Time to build a foundation, time to grow capacity, and time to enable the public and community leaders to fully grasp what we are doing and why. As the “backbone organization” of this effort, the Partnership for Change is a strong catalyst for the work in Winooski and Burlington. As a research and innovation arm of the two districts, the Partnership serves as a bridge between the districts, an incubator of ideas, a disseminator of best practices, and a convener. Schools are asked to do a lot for kids and the community these days and the workload of teachers, principals and students continues to mount--with federal mandates of a previous era to be followed, new state mandates to be implemented, along with our ambitious redesign efforts. By providing extra capacity, the Partnership keeps both internal and external pressure on the districts, through a variety of means and stakeholders to ensure that our SCL vision will be realized.

Before analyzing the strategic changes necessary to support our vision, the foundational change involves developing a culture that provides a more fertile ground for growth and change. Luckily, this process has already started in both districts. There is a shift from hierarchical power to more distributed and collaborative through the Winooski teacher leadership team and the Burlington Central Office restructuring. Knowledge was once closely held and now there is more sharing across the organizations through increased internal and external communications. Both districts understand the importance for a strong sense of ownership and responsibility at all levels and how that can foster integrated K-12 instruction and operations. Vertical curriculum work in both districts aligned under a common and fully shared vision make this possible. There are a few other areas that are key to shifting our culture to support the work: role clarity, widely shared norms, consensus-based politics, full integration of our equity work, and clear superintendent and board alignment. Each district is at a different place in each of these areas, but each continues to focus on shifting the culture to help move our strategies forward.

Another key catalyst is an entirely new structure for teacher collaboration and learning, moving away from the “one-and-done” workshop model. With the grant funding, we are able to “buy out” teachers’ time to do this important work. Because of this, we have reached a critical mass of teachers who have a strong understanding of proficiency based learning, authentic and formative assessment practices, and personalized learning and PLPs. This time and understanding has produced great results as we work to implement proficiency- based learning. Through the Partner Teacher Program, Professional Learning Community (PLC) time, the Summer Development Institute (SDI) and GX-specific faculty meetings, patterns and structures that determine teaching and learning are supporting SCL. Through both the EDC teacher and

student surveys and feedback forms from the SDI and Partner Teachers, we are hearing clearly that this vital support must continue.

In Winooski, the current 9th grade class will graduate with proficiency-based graduation requirements. This year, teachers in the Middle School and High School are focusing on two of the GXs, Effective Oral and Written Communication and Critical Thinking and Problem Solving. After a critical week of collaboration last June at the SDI, teachers established Expo Week-- one week in June where all 6-12 graders will demonstrate their proficiency in the two GXs. This will expand the following year with two more GXs, and the third year with another two. In four years, all 6-12 graders in Winooski will have to demonstrate proficiency in all six GXs in order to graduate. Without this structure to support teacher leadership, collaboration and understanding, this work would not take hold.

In Burlington, teachers are collaborating through the Partner Teacher Program, but also through PLCs. Every Wednesday morning, the high school begins classes one hour later and teachers work together. This year, through the PLC work, all BHS teachers will have developed four units of study that incorporate proficiencies and will have continued a discussion on student achievement using common assessments and how that data drives change in their classrooms. This work began at the SDI this past June. As teachers develop units based on proficiencies this year, there is a common understanding that proficiency-based assessments and data collection are imperative to determining the success of the work. At the end of this year, teachers should be able to report how many students met proficiency and can use their experience and data to continue building an effective system.

The other main catalyst for our work is state policy. Neither the school districts nor the state have any policies in place that are a barrier. In fact, the opposite is true. With Act 77 providing "legs" for PLPs, proficiency-based graduation requirements and many of the strategies that help kids succeed (ie: Dual enrollment, Virtual High School Seats), our state policy is helping catapult this work forward. Even naysayers are swayed by law.

Another important condition for success in school change is having a supportive school board. This is proving to be a strong catalyst in Winooski, where the school board was just awarded the VSBA Award for Exceptional Board Leadership. After adopting a policy governance model in 2013 and embarking on a community engagement campaign to develop the Ends Statement, the Winooski School Board continues to be a strong supporter of the Partnership for Change and the redesign efforts.

The Burlington School Board is moving in a positive direction. This March, the Burlington Board went from fourteen members to twelve and there is a strong commitment to student-centered learning, adopting a clear model of governance, and finding transparent ways to work together. Five of the new board members attended an introductory workshop offered by the VSBA on policy governance and look forward to learning more at the joint board retreat in May. Over the past year, the Partnership has worked hard to educate the Burlington Board members on SCL, including hosting a joint district board retreat at which teachers and students spent a Saturday

sharing their work with board members in a highly interactive way. We are planning our second annual joint board retreat for May 30 and hope to continue to build on the good work that happened last January. The Partnership has continued its efforts to build bridges between the district and the Board, and we have been working diligently to continue to foster positive relationships.

The conditions are ripe for major change to continue to occur over the next three years in both school districts. Winooski has a strong, aligned leadership team, a highly competent and engaged school board, a supportive community, a high level of teacher understanding, and the motivation to do things differently on behalf of all students. In Burlington, there is now a critical mass of teachers who are shifting their instruction to align with SCL. The parents and community continue to be vital external drivers for change. Moreover, there has been a silver lining in the cloud of the current leadership vacuum, with Burlington High School administrators and teachers stepping up to create a strong culture on behalf of our students. With a strong new superintendent coming on board this July, their work will be reinforced, supported and expanded upon.

4. Describe the high leverage strategies you will continue to employ to achieve your vision for the systemic change in each strand of your Logic Model.

- Address the three strands in the NMEF Systems Level Logic Model: Creating a New Systems Paradigm, Shaping and Strengthening Public Understanding and Support, and Building a New System of Learning Opportunities.
- Include why the strategies you name are high leverage for your district.
- What needs to change in your district's strategic plan to implement these strategies? Be specific about factors that are important to closing gaps and accelerating the pace of achievement.
- Explain necessary changes in culture and/or new roles needed in leadership (school board, central office, school and classroom, and the community).
- Cite the board policies and budget commitments that are catalysts or barriers to the envisioned change.

High Leverage Strategy #1: Support faculty, administrators, staff, and board members as learners in order to shift teaching and learning to a personalized, proficiency-based system.

Essential to “Building a New System of Learning Opportunities” is developing capacity of those who can deliver upon this learning. Over the past two years, we have seen the power of engaged, prepared, supported teachers on supporting positive student outcomes. When teachers are on board, the change process moves more quickly, the needs are more clearly articulated, and a culture that supports the work emerges. That is why the Partner Teacher Program, the Summer Development Institute, and the Teacher Investment Fund are such important drivers of this strategy.

In Winooski, capacity has already expanded to include a teacher leadership team, new district Curriculum Coordinator, and Data Manager. This will help support the GX assessments that all middle and high school teachers are currently developing and the creation of Expo Week.

Having data more readily available will help drive instruction. Monitoring student progress throughout the year as they work towards proficiency through personalized learning opportunities will produce a wide range of cohesive instructional practices in support of SCL.

The Winooski administrative leadership has created a new systems paradigm by allocating key faculty meeting time and summer institute time to develop the GXs rubrics and assessment systems. Through this dedicated time, there is a continuous cycle of creation, experimentation, reflection, and improvement--as the work is embedded in the life of the school and teachers get real-time feedback from students. Moreover, the administrative leadership team is shifting to a clearly articulated method of strengths based leadership⁵.

In Burlington, the strategy of teacher learning is paramount to the success of creating true systems change. BHS is a large high school with many mid-career faculty members who were educated in a traditional system and came of age in the traditional classroom. We have been impressed with the fact that many of these teachers, recognizing why school redesign is necessary, are asking for support in their learning and instructional practice. The initial feedback from the Partner Teacher Program is immensely positive in both schools, thanks, in part, to the new Teacher Learning Coordinator (TLC), a highly experienced and highly respected professional.

The TLC is a cross-district position that supports all teacher learning in Winooski and Burlington. The TLC is 'on the ground' supporting teachers in their planning, researching, implementing, observing, reflecting and reformatting. The TLC also engages with the BHS PLCs, the WMHS GX work, the SDI, and a number of other conferences and learning opportunities. This grant-funded position will slowly become cross-district funded over the next three years and is a critical new instructional support role.

Because both Burlington and Winooski have the common priority of implementing a proficiency based system⁶ as number one on their strategic plans, the importance of providing board education to help them become drivers of this work will be key. In Burlington, the school budget passed by a comfortable margin. A new board was seated in March and held their first meeting on April 7. The Partnership supported interim superintendent Howard Smith and BHS principal Amy Mellencamp to present the vision to the new board and outline the district's commitments to student-centered learning. This presentation provided context for board education that has been ongoing in the form of monthly Partnership updates at board meetings this year. These have included presentations by BHS Partner Teachers on the proficiency-based learning happening in their classrooms, which board members have received with enthusiastic support. The cross-district board retreat will provide another opportunity for shared learning, especially in the area of policy governance.

⁵ Rath and Conchie. (2009). *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow*. Gallup Press: Washington, DC.

⁶ See Appendix A: Winooski Middle High School Vision and Action Plan 2014-2018 and Burlington High School Common Priorities 2014-15

In Winooski, the budget also passed by a comfortable margin and the shift to policy governance over the past two years has provided a process for the board members to help lead the change. After creating an ends statement that relied upon the foundation built through the GX process, the board is holding forums to define the elements of the ends statement. They have completed “college and career readiness” and are moving ahead with “local and global community engagement” and “healthy, successful, productive lives”. After this process they will embark on clarifying how to measure each element and begin to operate through ends monitoring statements.

High Leverage Strategy #2: Create personalized learning environments that foster positive, meaningful adult relationships for students and nurture student voice.

Personalized learning environments are key to ensuring that student outcomes produce readiness for college, career, and citizenship. For both Winooski and Burlington, this is another shared priority as outlined in the strategic plans in Appendix A and Appendix B. Both schools are interested in students’ readiness to learn and are implementing strategies to ensure that all learners step into the classroom prepared to take advantage of these new learning environments.

In Winooski, a focus on Wellness (through the hiring of a new Wellness coordinator) and on partnering with the community to tackle social issues like opiate abuse are helping to build students’ social and emotional development. Through policy governance and the Ends Statement, the superintendent is responsible for developing metrics, supported by the new data manager who will look at graduation readiness. Winooski is beginning to collect K-12 data in reading and math - through Reading Plus, Read 180, and locally developed math assessments that align with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) - that will be analyzed by the leadership teams, grade level teams and vertical teams. Support for navigating this new data and responding with shifts in curriculum and instruction will be key to ensuring students are graduation-ready.

In Burlington, research into best practices around the state by former fellow Beth Brodie, as well as parent and student interviews have shown us that a strong advisory program will be a crucial element of a personalized learning system at BHS. The advisory program is currently being designed by a multi-stakeholder group, with implementation planned for the 2015-16 school year. An advisory coordinator will be responsible for developing an advisory curriculum and training teachers to deliver the curriculum, support students’ development of PLPs, and engage with families. The goal of the new system is to ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult in the building.

In both districts, implementing PLPs for every student 6-12 (WMHS) and 7-12 (BSD), will help to nurture student voice and ownership of learning. Student-led conferences will ensure that students see a new way of doing “education” where they are in the driver’s seat and can pursue passions in alignment with the GXs. In Winooski, this work has already started with the 6-12 iLab - an incubator for innovation in personalization, community engagement, and project based

learning. In the middle school, student voice and ownership is promoted through Team Journey, which allows middle-schoolers to spend afternoon time in the JiLab. JiLab is a two-hour block of time in the afternoon organized by advisories where students can work on project-based learning and gain the skills they need to ensure personalization of learning in high school. At BHS, a group of educators is developing PLPs in tandem with the Advisory Design Team to ensure multi stakeholder buy-in for personalizing learning.

The continued support of 1:1 technology environments at both schools is vital to the development of student voice and ownership of learning. A continued grant from the Tarrant Institute for Innovative Education has provided additional support for middle schools in both WSD and BSD. At the high school level, the tech integrationists have been critical in providing teachers with the supports they need to integrate technology with instruction in new ways. Both districts are very close to being able to provide local funding for these efforts, but another cycle of support, albeit at a decreasing level, will be important for continuity's sake.

High Leverage Strategy #3: Facilitate real-world, relevant community based learning opportunities through personalized learning plans and by building and expanding relationships in support of anytime, anywhere learning.

Over the past two years, the districts of Winooski and Burlington have worked hard to identify the habits, skills and dispositions we value for our students. Now that each district has had some time to incorporate these GXs into curriculum and instruction, it is time to evaluate the structures that allow for real-world, relevant learning supported by our community. Much advancement in the area of Work Based Learning has been made at the state level over the past three years. There are now revised Work Based Learning Standards and a manual for businesses and schools published in 2013. That, coupled with the clarity around GXs, creates an environment ripe for experimentation and innovation in community based learning. Help in identifying the new roles or changes in culture needed to support this will be the work of the next grant cycle.

In Winooski, the iLab has been forging new relationships in the community to provide mentors for students' independent learning projects. They have also been supporting teachers at the elementary level through training in project-based learning. In high school, the Senior Project requires a community component. The work now is aligned, through a clear and well-publicized system, so that all students get a community based learning experience that helps them develop the skills they need to demonstrate proficiency in the Graduate Expectations.

In Burlington, the Year End Studies (YES) Program has been a tremendous success in helping teachers and students see the value of learning that is passion driven and connected to the community. There have also been some great pilots, supported by the Innovative Programs Fund, that have connected the community with the school. One success was a partnership with all the BHS physics classes and Burlington Electric and Efficiency Vermont. By identifying what made these examples successful, we can begin to implement system wide supports for this learning. For example, we worked with a 25 member team of community partners, students,

parents and teachers in the fall of 2014 to help design 4-6 week independent and personalized learning opportunities (ILOs) for all senior seminar students that embody anywhere/anytime learning within our community.

In the domain of family-and-school partnerships, we've had many wins and some frustrations. We consider the work with Parents and Youth for Change, our lead community partner, a rousing success. Using the PICO organizing model, they have convened two successful Public Action meetings in Burlington in which organized parents, specifically New American and low-income parents, and students have asked the schools to commit to this work. The first public action was to support ELLs; the second was geared toward developing an advisory system. With continued, albeit decreasing, funding, we will be able to continue our partnership with the Lead Community Partner and further engage our most marginalized populations.

In contrast, the Family School Partnership (FSP) was a disjointed effort in Winooski, although Foundation funding enabled them to identify the highest impact strategies (Family Back to School BBQ, Share It Nights, Learning Walks) and continue to help parents feel comfortable in the schools. In Burlington, FSP teams (supported by Joyce Epstein's work) have been cut, due to budgetary constraints. Through the work of the lead community partner⁷, the most critical type of engagement identified from our community is building personal relationships and trust between students, teachers, and families. We look forward to building on the best of what we've accomplished in this domain through the creation of our new advisory/PLP system, which will be a highly organic way of building relationships. In the near future, student-led conferences will do the same, helping parents gain a deep understanding of student progress, goals, and proficiencies.

To facilitate systemic family involvement, the Partnership has supported two critical programs this year, whose success will allow them access to sustainable, community funding in the future. Parent University is an education program for parents of children in the Burlington Afterschool program. Similar to the Parents as Educational Partners (PEP) program Winooski started last year, parents participate in classes taught by community partners that allow families to achieve more parental involvement in their child's education, and acquire additional skills for raising their children. The Moving Forward Workshop series is aimed at our New American families; through a high degree of language translation and hands on outreach, the program brought over 150 people to interactive workshops with service providers like DCF, the Police Department, and mental health providers. Communication through interpreters made it possible for families to ask questions and give invaluable feedback. Building on the success of the event, future events will be planned to continue to empower New American parents to support their children.

High Leverage Strategy #4: Support the development of infrastructure that promotes student centered learning.

⁷ Burlington Parents and Youth for Change - Students Who are Known Well & Ready for the Future. Full Research Report on Advisory: June 4, 2014

One important lesson we've learned is the importance of establishing a sound infrastructure for student-centered learning; it is one of the most critical aspects of the change process. Because it's not as visible as what's happening on the ground, it can often be overlooked. But without proper infrastructure, a system cannot flourish. Over the next three years, we hope to build on and solidify our student-centered infrastructure in the following areas:

Data Management and Reporting

In order to assess whether we are reaching our targets, we need more robust data management and reporting systems. We appreciate, now more than ever, the critical role of the Data Manager in helping the district make data-driven decisions and foster a culture of change. Recognizing this, Winooski hired a full time data manager for the first time this year. Burlington has two, locally funded data managers for the district. As we look at the best ways to assess the new systems for teaching and learning, our data managers will be helpful in collecting, reporting, synthesizing and disseminating information that can have a direct impact on student outcomes.

Communications

In the realm of public understanding and engagement, the Partnership is absolutely central to the continued building of public will for change. This requires capacities that the two districts do not currently possess. The Partnership has provided an indispensable service to the districts in this regard.

Currently, as requested by the Foundation, we have not budgeted for communications. However, much of the work of the Project Manager over the past two and a half years has been experimenting with systems of communication and engagement and identifying the most high impact strategies. This work will continue into the 2015-2016 school year, but capacity will be reduced thereafter. Further communications support from the Foundation to document successful innovations, like the iLab, or to commission a case study for others to learn from our work, would be highly desired. In addition, we will need time to determine how we might creatively sustain a capable and permanent communications infrastructure for the two districts going forward.

Position Analysis and Support for Labor Relations

Finding new ways of "doing business" relies heavily upon role clarity. Through a process known as "position analysis," BSD professional and paraprofessional job descriptions will be revised to be more aligned with the demands of a student centered system. In Burlington's recent transitions, the Partnership has been a strategic advisor in personnel matters. We had multiple representatives on the Superintendent Search Committee that produced the hiring of Yaw Obeng. We also played an important communications role through the creation and dissemination of a voter education guide for the March school board elections.

In the area of labor relations, our support of unions and management working collaboratively with Adam Urbanski continues to pay off. During Adam's most recent visit this March (2015), he noted improved relationships in Winooski and was very excited about the progress made in a

day of meetings with union, school board, administration and then a collaborative session with all three. They focused on strategies around teacher retention to ensure that the current teachers we are investing in will stay in the district and continue to support the student-centered direction. They discussed the role the state could play in a switch in health care systems that would support local relationships and the legislation around taking the option of teacher's strikes off the table. They are excited to be on the same page and working together to support a strong move toward a more progressive delivery system of education for all students.

In Burlington, Adam's visit helped set the stage for strong relationship building to take place with the new superintendent and the union and school board. Each group was able to brainstorm priorities to move forward with next year. Specifically, the school board had a lot of questions around negotiations and the "benchmarking for competitiveness" salary schedule that was implemented three years ago. The union is interested in how to use the vehicle of instruction, by supporting the teacher learning strategies within the district, to support its members and show priorities around equity. As we approach negotiations in the coming year, union/board relations work in both districts will take seriously the movement toward a student-centered, 21st century system of education.

Backbone Organization⁸

The Partnership has become a "weaver" --in bringing together the two districts, in convening people at the appropriate tables, and in sharing the "proof points" of student-centered learning in Burlington and Winooski. All of these disparate pieces must cohere into whole cloth by a skilled staff and strong, transparent leadership. We believe that a full-time director is essential to advancing the change process. We have seen that investment pay off many times over.

Similarly, supporting processes that allow this alignment to occur will be key to sustainable practices. In Burlington, monthly district administrative meetings will allow for continued middle/high school collaboration about teacher learning around PLPs and proficiency-based learning. In Winooski, weekly all-administration meetings with shared meeting minutes and bi-monthly leadership team meetings will keep internal communication strong. Both districts have committed to bi-annual, cross-district all-administration meetings to continue growing our strong, shared vision and to find opportunities for more collaboration.

The Partner Teacher program in both districts offers another opportunity for convening teachers to share their work. Each district cohort meets bi-monthly and the cohorts convene quarterly cross-district. They have also shared out more broadly through the Steering Committee meeting, the Partnership for Change blog, and department meetings. Next year, the opportunity to disseminate their learning will be woven into PLCs, faculty meetings, and cross-district in-service days.

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Turner, S. et al. (2012). *Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 2*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Found at: http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_2

5. For each strand of your own systems logic model, name indicators and milestones that your district and the Foundation will use on an annual basis to assess progress over the next three years.

- What is the expected student impact resulting from SCL approaches, including those for students at risk of not being college and career ready? What are your leading and lagging indicators of readiness for postsecondary success?

Since the inception of the grant activities, we have been working cross district to develop indicators that will help measure student, teacher, community, systems and parent outcomes that are necessary for realizing effective, student-centered teaching and learning. The old standards for measurement include standardized tests, like NECAPs. But as the new Vermont Secretary of Education, Rebecca Holcombe, published in a letter to parents on August 6, 2014:

*It is not realistic to expect every single tested child in every school to score as proficient. Some of our students are very capable, but may have unique learning needs that make it difficult for them to accurately demonstrate their strengths on a standardized test. Some of our children survived traumatic events that preclude good performance on the test when it is administered. Some of our students recently arrived from other countries, and have many valuable talents but may not yet have a good grasp of the academic English used on our assessments. And, some of our students are just kids who for whatever reason are not interested in demonstrating their best work on a standardized test on a given day.*⁹

As Secretary Holcombe goes on to outline, key to assessment in a new age of teaching and learning is matching our measures of assessment to our learning. In Winooski and Burlington, we have created the Partnership for Change Indicators. Our indicators¹⁰, which are aligned with the outcomes we want to see for each of our engaged stakeholder groups, (including “systems”) also align with the logic model¹¹. Our baseline data is nearly complete and will provide an annual assessment of progress towards our goals. Please see appendix C for a list of indicators and baseline assessment data.

There is no single measure that accurately represents our desired outcomes, hence each outcome will be tied to multiple measurement tools. Currently, our measurement tools are limited by what we have available to us: attendance data, standardized tests, graduation rates, and surveys (including the EDC surveys and the statewide Youth Risk Behavior Survey). But we also acknowledge that much of the work moving forward is in identifying how to measure new ways of teaching and learning without relying on the old methods of assessment. For example, how will we measure the spread of teaching and assessing based on proficiencies without putting in place a reporting system for proficiency-based teaching?

⁹ Holcomb, R. (2014). *Memorandum on Vermont’s Commitment to Continuous Improvement*. http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Letter_to_parents_and_caregivers_AOE_8_8_14.pdf

¹⁰ Appendix C: P4C Indicators and Data 10-30-14

¹¹ Appendix D: Partnership for Change Student and Systems Level Logic Models

What we have developed are the outcomes we are interested in measuring, the current tools we have to assess them, and the areas in which we need to develop new methods. Those are:

The **student** outcomes we will measure include:

- Students are engaged in their learning
- Student learning is connected to the community - anytime/anywhere learning that is applicable to relevant, “real-world” situations
- Students are contributing members of their school community and improve their school by developing leadership, confidence, enthusiasm, and passion for lifelong learning.

The **teacher and instruction** outcomes we will measure include:

- Teachers are engaged and supported in learning about and implementing student centered approaches.
- Teachers are engaged and supported to shift their practice to be more proficiency-based and technology-supported

The **school system** outcomes we will measure include:

- Our schools engage and support our students to learn about and prepare for post-high school opportunities
- Our school systems promote opportunities for all students to experience student-centered learning

The **community** outcome we will measure includes:

- Community stakeholders will play an integral role in the Partnership for Change’s support of the school districts

The **parent** outcome we will measure includes:

- Parents will be active partners with students, teachers, and administrators in advocating for successful student learning and achievement.

Additional milestones of success include how well board members can articulate our vision, how fully the teaching staff participates in our Partner Teacher Program, the continued success of our annual cross-district board retreat, and how regularly we can schedule cross-district administrator meetings. As we utilize data consistently and continue to establish quality standards for new programs, we will assess readiness for postsecondary success by looking at engagement, non-traditional learning opportunities, and mastery of proficiencies. When students graduate with a proficiency-based diploma, we will know we have reached an important milestone.

Measurement of educational change also requires longitudinal data collection, a clear system of common assessments delivered at regular intervals, and the time to analyze and course correct based on data. Both Winooski and Burlington are primed and ready to move into the second stage of implementation. Showing progress on our indicators is important to garnering continued support from our community for our redesign efforts.

6. How and in what years of Implementation Phase II will the work of remodeling education at the high school and district levels supported by the Partnership for Change transition to being sustained entirely by the districts. Please be specific as to:

- job functions and responsibilities;
- where and with whom the responsibility for this work will live in each district; and,
- timeline for the transition

When we were first awarded the grant monies in 2012, the Partnership for Change launched a strong branding campaign across the Winooski and Burlington community in order to invite people into our change efforts. This worked very well externally--with businesses, nonprofits, and with some families as we held a space for innovation and “doing school differently”. Internally, teachers and school leaders were confused about the ownership of the student-centered direction and the specific role of the Partnership. This led us to a very intentional framing shift from the big “P” Partnership for Change to the small “p” partnership between the many stakeholders in our school systems. As a result, student-centered learning is now increasingly seen as the work and vision of the Winooski and Burlington School Districts, supported by the Partnership.

This shift is in full alignment with the work on the ground, which is now spearheaded by district leaders and teachers through a model of distributed leadership, with support from the Partnership for Change. Both Winooski and Burlington are clear on the direction their schools need to go in order to serve all students well; the Partnership has helped create and maintain processes to ensure structural integrity for doing this work in an effective and sustainable manner. As we enter Phase II, the “test-phase” of pilots and rapid-prototyping of ideas is transitioning to full-scale implementation.

In Winooski, the School Board is charged with monitoring and evaluating the work, supported by policy governance and the process of ends monitoring. The Superintendent is responsible for realizing the vision through his administrative leadership team. He is also responsible for ensuring that connections with families and the community remain a high priority. Similarly, the Middle/High School Principal, as guided by the teacher leadership team, holds the responsibility for personalized and proficiency based learning. His work on establishing PLPs and a proficiency based graduation system, driven by multi-stakeholder support, is in its first year of implementation through the GXs. The teacher leadership team is responsible for engaging their colleagues in school redesign, by leading the development of GXs, content-level proficiencies, and complex assessments.

In Burlington, the Phase I work lived at the high school level and with the superintendent. Efforts were made to support other key stakeholders, such as district-level administrators and school board members, but stronger alignment and distribution of resources is needed moving forward. Phase II will bring a district-based, committee-run, distributed leadership approach to ensuring an aligned K-12 system of student-centered learning. The next step is to create strong processes between the middle and high schools to guide the grade-level proficiencies, develop and align PLPs, and support teachers under one vision. It is also critical to bring the elementary schools into this work at key alignment points to ensure a consistent K-12 experience for our students.

We are delighted to report that work has already commenced this spring with a common agreement among a taskforce that represents all levels (high, middle, and elementary school) and the curriculum office. The agreement establishes student-centered learning as a primary district goal, and commits to developing proficiency-based learning and personalized learning plans (PLPs) supported by advisories as key strategies in achieving a student-centered system. This taskforce has set the stage for the full secondary level administrative team to meet monthly with the sole focus being student-centered learning. In addition, central office directors will have direct responsibility for connecting the big picture conversation of the taskforce to classroom level work in each school building. For example, with advisories as a primary focus for 2015-16, the curriculum coordinator will participate in all administrative-level conversations and bringing the new learning and information to bear on the work being done in each school.

The responsibility of a personalized and proficiency-based system starts with the curriculum coordinator, but rests largely on the alignment of the principals. Currently, the GXs at the high school differ from some of the “collective commitments” made in the middle schools. This is one of several instances in which alignment will be necessary. Big picture responsibilities around governance and vision will continue to rest with the superintendent and the school board, but will need to be strongly supported by the new administration in the coming year.

Educating new school board leadership about student-centered learning will be an important task in the weeks and months ahead. At the first meeting of the new school board on April 7, that work began in earnest. The high school principal and superintendent took the lead on introducing and updating the board on the current progress towards student-centered learning¹² and clarifying the supporting role of the Partnership.

Partnership for Change Staff Positions:

The more straightforward response to this question has to do with the Director, Project Manager, and Teacher Learning Coordinator roles that have been created with Foundation funding. From a funding vantage point, the role of the Director will transition from full-time in 2015-16, to half-time in 2016-17, to non-existent in 2017-18. Much of the Director’s governance and community relations work will live on in the role of the superintendents. They will build on already existing processes, such as the joint school board retreat and strong relationships with the city and local businesses.

The Project Manager will be employed full-time in 2015-16, and then reduce to half-time for the following two years. In addition to the role of “liaison” to the Foundation, evaluators and TA providers, the Project Manager serves as a bridge between the two districts in the areas of logistics and communications. Much of the work that relates to administering the grant will continue to fall to the Project Manager for the entirety of the Phase II grant. In the other areas, the Project Manager will slowly shift to a support role for district-based staff, who will assume responsibility for new leadership structures, systems, and processes. For example, this year in

¹² See Appendix F - BHS School Board SCL Update April 2015

Burlington, the Partnership has supported teacher leaders in designing, planning and implementing a new advisory process. This has included enhanced transparency, teacher engagement, student participation, and communication with the community. It serves as a model for how to implement innovation in the future. We hope to replicate pieces of the process that support creating new teacher leaders next year to help align the middle and high school PLCs around professional development in proficiency-based learning.

In Winooski, the administrative team and the teacher leadership team have implemented processes to increase the transparency and internal communications around district work. All meeting minutes from the two teams are distributed district wide. In addition, the distributed leadership model has allowed more teachers to find an entry point into the work of implementing the GXs. The work of engaging families and the business community are going to become higher priorities over the Phase II grant cycle. An example of recent success: the Family Learning Walks -- which started as a mini-grant and are now a part of the Winooski administrative team work and family engagement plan. The Partnership's Project Manager will continue to support the increased human capacity need in this area.

The Teacher Learning Coordinator is currently funded 100% by the Foundation grant. Over Phase II, the districts will take on the cost of this position and it will continue as a full-time role, shared between Burlington and Winooski after the grant monies run out. The responsibilities will be focused on supporting teacher learning across both districts, but the way in which this happens will constantly be evaluated to ensure that it is working efficiently and effectively, and reaching all teachers.

7. How will both districts create and coordinate sustainable structures to continue access to equitable high quality SCL for all students and to the systematic sharing of resources and supports as was contemplated in the original grant application? See text below from original proposal.

- ***The Transformation Academy: A Shared Asset to Support Student-Centered Learning:*** *In our design, a new body called "The Transformation Academy" becomes the creative engine driving the design and implementation of a new system of student-centered learning. The Academy has two chief functions: 1) to establish and facilitate an ambitious model for teacher learning and career development; and 2) to support and coordinate stakeholder engagement in the inquiry-based work needed to generate the practices and policies of a student-centered learning system.*
- ***Resource Sharing and Allocation:*** *While the path to fundamentally changing patterns in resource allocation is still somewhat gray, Transformation Academy Implementation Teams will work in concert with district administrators and board members to explore, evaluate and implement alternative funding scenarios.*

As was originally proposed, Burlington and Winooski have built a system of support and professional development for teachers, as well as an intentional effort to engage all stakeholders in authentic ways. The concepts behind the "Transformation Academy" were

developed over Phase I through our fellowship program and now through our Partner Teacher model. Simultaneously, graduate level courses on Proficiency-Based Learning offered through the University of Vermont, Summer Development Institutes, and work-based committees on GXs and advisory that grew out of the Implementation Teams have been driving the design and implementation of a new system.

In Phase I, we cast a wide net with our research and programmatic pilots to seed innovation. The efforts that proved successful are now being brought to scale and integrated into the district's portfolio. The wide net has also allowed us the necessary time to build sufficient understanding, buy-in and ownership of student-centered learning, such that we reached a critical tipping point of "bought-in" stakeholders. This development bodes well for whole-district change. To ensure sustainability, it will be important to develop a realistic timeline for rolling out aspects of student-centered school redesign. Each district has focused on one of the tenets of student-centered learning as its "keystone". But there is also a 3-5 year vision for scaling up and scaling out.

WINOOSKI¹³: Central to Winooski's progress are the theories of action and change that have been widely disseminated among faculty and school personnel. They include:

- Identify and Build on Strengths:
Asset-based observations recognize abilities, not weaknesses
- Rapid Prototyping of Solutions:
Don't wait for the 'perfect', try out the 'good', then adjust
- Collaborative Reflection:
Include authentic voices from groups affected by or implementing change
- Emphasize Keystone Habits:
Choose fewer initiatives but ones that have impact in more areas

Having identified the implementation of the GXs and the switch to proficiency-based graduation requirements as the "keystone," the roll out plan targeted for 2018 provides a clear, coordinated, and sustainable path forward.

Proficiency-Based Learning: Winooski High School students will graduate based on the completion of six GXs. Carnegie units will no longer be used. Each GX will be evaluated by its own complex assessment. The relationship between the GXs and the content standards is currently the focus of the middle and high school faculty work being led by the teacher leadership team. The only requirements outside of GXs will be two concrete testing requirements to assure basic skills in reading and mathematical computation. Except for participation in Expo demonstrations and presentations, there will not be other required experiences unless they are embedded as part of a GX assessment. For example, community service will need to be embedded moving forward.

¹³ See Appendix A: Winooski Middle High School Vision and Action Plan 2014-2018 and Burlington High School Common Priorities 2014-15

Winooski has also implemented the GX Champion of the Day, which is building a culture of celebrating success, focusing staff and students on learning through GXs and their dimensions. The purpose of the GX Champion of the Day is to:

- Raise the profile of the Graduate Expectations (GXs) within the school
- Acclimate teachers to using the GXs and their dimensions
- Orient students toward these essential graduation / middle school completion requirements
- Celebrate student success as a driver of change in our culture
- Have fun and create community while collectively examining student learning

Below is the timeline for implementation of the GXs into the curriculum between now and full-scale implementation in 2018.

GX Implementation Timeline

Graduate Expectation	Development Year (Pilots)	Implementation Year (Required)
Effective Oral and Written Communication (EOWC)	Pre 1998	1998
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (CTPS)	2014-2015	2015-2016
Physical, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing (PSEW)	2015-2016	2016-2017
Cross-Cultural Understanding and Community Engagement (CCUCE)	2016-2017	2017-2018
Creativity	2016-2017	2017-2018
Persistence	2016-2017	2017-2018

Multi-stakeholder & Community Collaboration: In Winooski, a multi-stakeholder approach to new work in the district has been adopted over the past two years in the hiring practices. Students, teachers, parents, community members, and administration all give feedback and are decision makers at different points in the process. This approach has also created stronger ties between the school with the city. There is a collaboration with Winooski Parks and Recreation to create more active opportunities for students in city programming, the school and city collaborated and received a Promise Community Grant, and there are city representatives on school hiring processes for the new Century 21 Director and the superintendent helped the Police Department with the new SRO hire. In addition, the city and school are collaborating on the development of a joint evening learning program for adults in the community.

Family School Partnerships: Strong lines of communication with families is a foundational lever for change that the Partnership has focused on over the past few years. These efforts have produced new practices within the district. A kick-off BBQ for all families, students, teachers, and community at the beginning of the school year is now embedded in the district budget and family learning walks that produce greater understanding and access are scheduled and managed by the superintendents office.

BURLINGTON:

Advisory: Over the 2014-15 school year, Burlington High School has been creating a new advisory system to implement in the 2015-16 school year. This work has been robust in its inclusion of multi-stakeholder groups, reliance on teacher leadership, collection of data to drive decisions, communication efforts, and thoughtful rollout of a big systems change. This process is a model for how we can continue to make changes at the district level.

The purpose of advisory is to provide a group of students with an advisor who knows each advisee well and helps each to achieve personal and educational goals. The purpose and goals were created with a team of parents, community members, teachers, administrators, and students at the high school. Simultaneously, a teacher advisory committee met all year in order to take on the logistics work. As the committee began to uncover anecdotal concerns from faculty about a new advisory program, our Lead Community Partner, Parents and Youth for Change, was engaged to conduct one-to-one interviews with 86 teachers at the high school to better understand the needs and concerns. This data drove the communication rollout with the faculty, led by a teacher leader funded for 0.4 FTE. Once the multi-stakeholder team completed their task, they turned over the design and implementation to the teacher committee and a newly formed student group. This group gave input to the teachers throughout the decision making process on schedule, curriculum, and communication. The students began planning for student assemblies scheduled for the end of April to communicate to the student body about advisory. There has been consistent communication with the Lead Community Partner back to the multi-stakeholder team and a current effort to use their support to begin the rollout to parents.

While the above-mentioned information seems detailed, it does not include other key stepping stones such as conversations with the union about contractual implications, research on other schools around the country doing advisory with similar student populations to Burlington, and communication with the school board. As we bring due diligence to our efforts, we are confident that, with advisory as the “keystone,” BHS will make a giant leap forward in creating a student-centered system.

In Phase II of the grant cycle, we are enthusiastic about integrating student-centered learning in general and advisory in particular into the district as a whole, especially with the middle schools. Edmunds Middle School (EMS) has a 10 minute homeroom four days a week and a 30 minute advisory for one day. This model came out of faculty led committees. Hunt Middle School (HMS) is planning to implement advisory next year as they work to align their schedule with Edmunds. Opportunities for teacher professional development around advisory at the middle

and high school level are being explored to ensure a consistent experience for our students throughout their Burlington School District career.

Personal Learning Plans (PLP): Advisory gives the district a platform for deepening the adult-student relationships, with the Personal Learning Plans as a salient tool for supporting students in identifying, planning for and achieving their personal and academic goals. Currently, there are small teams at EMS, HMS, and BHS working on PLPs. In March, members of each team came together under the curriculum coordinator to work towards an aligned effort. This team will continue to meet to assure district alignment.

Graduate Expectation Planning: This June, teachers at the high school plan to continue GX Planning to focus on developing rubrics that clearly define and make as usable as possible these expectations for students and teachers. The intended outcome is working graduate expectations rubrics for use in the 2015-16 school year.

This offers another opportunity to engage the middle schools and possibly the elementary schools in conversation around vertical alignment of values and grade level expectations relative to the GXs. The district curriculum coordinator has already started convening vertical content groups for math, science, and English.

Proficiency-Based Learning (PBL): Shifting from a traditional classroom teaching and assessment model to one that is proficiency-based requires a lot of support. We have learned through our Partner Teacher Program and the other offerings (like the UVM graduate class on PBL) how labor intensive and risk-taking this work is for teachers. While most teachers at the high school have had some level of support for learning about or implementing PBL, we need to figure out ways to support the middle level teachers as well.

Lessons learned from the Partner Teacher Program and the Advisory process have led us to use teacher experience and leadership to support other teachers within an already existing and effective structure of **Professional Learning Communities (PLC)**. All schools in the district have a PLC structure in place and at the Middle/High School level, this structure offers a place to align foundational understandings of proficiency-based learning. There will be a teacher at the high school level released for 40% time next year to begin this work. This teacher leader will be a member of a district team, along with a new half-time middle level curriculum person and teacher leaders at both middle schools. The new PBL team will work under a common vision to create and align appropriate supports for middle/high school teachers to learn and implement PBL.

This team will also work with teachers and their summer work around planning how course and graduate expectation proficiencies can drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in courses and/or subject areas. An outcome of this team will be an implementation plan and related work products for moving to proficiencies to support innovative ways for students to engage in curriculum and instruction and for students to demonstrate and track what they know and can do.

Professional Development for Administrators: In order for the administrative team to capably align district work around student-centered learning, they have requested their own professional development. This summer, the admin team has committed two days to gaining a common, foundational understanding and approach to continuing to lead this work within the district and in their buildings.

7. What are plans to ensure that the newly constituted school board, a new superintendent in Burlington and school and community leaders in both districts are in agreement about the direction of the district, and have discrete and complementary roles to drive the results you seek?

The Winooski School Board made the shift to policy governance last year and created an ends statement based upon the work done to develop the graduate expectations. As mentioned in question 4, high leverage strategy 1, the Winooski board is in the process of defining the pieces of the ends and moving towards a process of ends monitoring. This year, they have also had a “focus on learning” at each school board meeting where they have learned from those in the field about city/school collaboration, early learning, student leadership, parental involvement, ELL programming, wellness, and project-based learning.

Since the joint board retreat in January 2014, only 1 new member has joined the board. All members are excited to engage in another retreat on May 30. Additionally, the board was able to engage with Adam Urbanski and the WEA at the end of March and make tremendous progress towards identifying common priorities that should lay a great foundation for entering into teacher negotiations next year.

As we look ahead, the Winooski board, in tandem with the Superintendent, are focused on communication with families and the community for the purpose of family retention in Winooski and increased family school partnerships and engagement. This work aligns with the role of the school board, drives the student-centered learning direction, and gives district faculty and staff a clear vision and direction to continue moving their internal work around GXs forward.

The work of bringing the new school board and the new superintendent up to speed in Burlington has already begun in earnest. During election season, the Partnership helped shape the public dialogue by partnering with the local cable station. By asking the candidates pointed questions, the Partnership articulated some of the priorities of the district in a way that had not happened during previous election campaigns, particularly around the vision of a student-centered system. The election results are a positive step forward for the district, and bode well for a climate of professionalism to take root.

Similarly, the multi-stakeholder process for hiring a new superintendent was very productive for the community, particularly the community forums that helped create the job description for a 21st century school leader. The process built bridges across constituencies, and with the help of external consultants, people learned about the core knowledge, skills, and talents required of a

leader who can move the district forward. There is a tremendous amount of excitement about the new hire. Our current interim superintendent will have a small amount of overlap time to help bring him on board.

Soon, the new superintendent and the new school board will be getting to know one another. It will be important for them to put a set of behavioral norms in place, and to establish together a set of core values by which they will operate. They will also work with an outside consultant to develop a school board member job description, which will provide much-needed role clarity. There was interest expressed at last year's joint School Board Retreat in moving toward a policy governance model similar to the one employed by the Winooski School Board. In March, five Burlington School Board members attended a workshop on Policy Governance sponsored by the Vermont School Board Association and returned to their new board excited about moving forward. At the upcoming joint School Board Retreat on May 30, the BSD School Board will deepen their knowledge about policy governance and continue the conversation about adopting this model.

The new superintendent was hired based on a job description created with the support of CSSR that is completely student-centered, and his successful candidacy reflected his strong commitment to this work. Consistent in the commitment from all the administrators is to share the plan and the importance of district alignment, especially around SCL, PBL, and PLPs. These administrators will use materials that they have created, as well as examples from teachers and some of the Partnership's communications documents, to further introduce him to this work and to our community.¹⁴ There are many advantages to having a new face lead the Burlington School District. There is opportunity to more deeply engage with the city and community groups, talk about and emphasize SCL as a district priority, and find new ways to improve the climate in the schools. The Partnership looks forward to supporting our new superintendent's transition and introducing him to the community in a variety of ways.

¹⁴ Examples include BHS Proficiency Resources website: <https://sites.google.com/a/bsdvt.org/bhs-proficiency-resources/> and Appendix F - BHS School Board SCL Update April 2015