

Report Date:	February 3, 2016
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Site Visit Date:	February 2, 2016

Site Visit Logistics:

Essex North Supervisory Union/District Overview		
Schools & Enrollment		
School	Approximate Enrollment	Grade Span
Canaan Schools	200	K-12

Essex North SU volunteered to participate in the Agency’s Integrated Field Review (IFR) pilot. Essex North was the fourth IFR site visit conducted in the second pilot.

Following a brief introduction from the Superintendent, the Review Team divided into four sub-committees and engaged in a series of activities at the central office and school.

The Visiting Team participated in interviews involving the Superintendent, Business Manager, Counseling Staff, Special Education Director, Central Office Administrative Staff, students, teachers and parents. In addition, the Review Team observed classroom instruction in the preK-12 classrooms and the CTE programs both on and off site, and the facilities including the library, gymnasium, arts and music rooms, and cafeteria available to students through classroom observations and a facilities tour led by the principal.

The Review Team gathered data regarding the implementation of Education Quality Standards in 2016



Integrated Field Review Report

Essex North Supervisory Union

Agency of Education

Visiting Team

Name	Role	Organization
Amy Fowler	Deputy Secretary	Agency of Education
Debi Price	Director of Educator Quality	Agency of Education
Megan Grube	School Effectiveness Coord.	Agency of Education
Lori Dolezal	Literacy Assessment Coord.	Agency of Education
Josh Souliere	Education Prog. Manager	Agency of Education
Patrick Halladay	Preservice Ed Quality	Agency of Education
Trista Hutchins	Math Specialist	Orleans Southwest SU
Madison Rodrigue	Student Part	Canaan Schools Student
Zachary Brown	Student Part	Canaan Schools Student
Merrick Marchesseault	Student Part	Canaan Schools Student
Kara Greaves	Business Manager	Essex-Caledonia SU
Kristen Neumayer	Jr High Language Arts	North Country SU
Sarah Silva	Math Teacher	North Country SU



Academic Achievement

The Vermont Education Quality Standards prioritize a coordinated curriculum in all subjects for each Supervisory Union/District that is aligned to the standards adopted by the State, instruction in all subjects and the transferable skills, a local assessment system for determining student achievement, multi-tiered systems of support for learners in meeting those standards and participation in the State assessment system.

Findings:

Full Breadth of Courses

1. Students report that the high school provides them with a full breadth of classes, which are frequently accessed through blended learning/online/dual enrollment options.
2. In elementary grades we observed ELA, math and specials and students told us about their experiences in science and social studies.
3. In each classroom, we saw standards-driven work related to the curriculum; we did not see transferable skills explicitly mentioned or taught in classrooms, but we did see some activities provided experiences in the transferable skills such as communication and problem solving.

Proficiency Based Learning

1. There was some evidence, at all levels, that students re-take assessments after additional practice if they are not successful.
2. High school students and the documents related to graduation requirements do not mention proficiency based graduation requirements, which must be in place for the class of 2020 as required by EQS.
3. Reading instruction for students in the elementary grades is leveled from grades 2-6 to provide opportunities for proficiency before progressing.
4. A handful of teachers are developing and implementing proficiency based assessment and reporting models.

Instructional Strategies

1. Instructional strategies vary by student age--primary students were most frequently working in stations, upper elementary in independent practice or whole group, and secondary students in whole group work. We observed limited activities that would be considered cooperative learning experiences.
2. Technology was integrated into the lessons of 2 classrooms we observed (Kahoot It and Smartboard); students reported that technology is frequently used during the day.

Curriculum Coordination

1. There is evidence that teachers plan for instruction within their classes, but little evidence exists of vertical articulation or cross subject planning.



2. Common instructional strategies such as vocabulary instruction and “Walk to Read” suggest cross-level planning at the elementary level.

Local Assessment System

1. Student report cards use a similar grading scale by level.
2. At most elementary and some secondary levels, common math and ELA assessments are given multiple times a year and are considered in guiding instruction and intervention.

Commendations

1. The “Walk to Read” program provides a coordinated, collaborative approach to providing reading instruction at the level students need for progressing in their learning.
2. Considering the size of the school there is a large variety of course offerings.

Recommendations

1. Develop and use vertically aligned, proficiency based curriculum that leads to proficiency based graduation requirements.
2. Greater coordination between assessment data and instruction may be needed.

Personalized Learning

The Vermont Education Quality Standards prioritize development of personalization through the creation and use of Personalized Learning Plans, flexible pathways to graduation, Career and Technical Education and instructional strategies that personalize learning for students.

Findings:

PLP- Personalized Learning Plans

1. Students prepare and submit PLPs via Naviance.
2. Staff hoped that WIN would provide time to develop and implement PLP work with students; students do not report WIN as being helpful in developing PLPs especially if they have conflicting activities during that time.
3. Students indicated that the idea of a PLP is helpful to set goals, but that Naviance is not user friendly or engaging.

Flexible Pathways/CTE

1. Students report four options for courses: honors, standards level, CTE, and dual enrollment as options for pathways to graduation. Students also have the option to take online courses if the topic of interest is not available at Canaan.
2. The CTE programs are highly valued by students and some parents. Students are able to describe in great detail the wide variety of learning experiences they have had.
3. CTE programs are linked to subject area credits; it is not clear to students, parents, and staff which particular content standards are met through participation or how this will function in a proficiency based system.
4. The school community expressed pride in the Running Start Dual Enrollment Program.

Differentiation

1. In the vast majority of classrooms, students were engaged in the same learning task as other students; differentiation appears to occur through grouping strategies and broad course offerings more than through adaptations of learning activities or assessments.
2. Some classrooms made “challenge problems” available to students.

Student Choice/Voice

1. Students report multiple opportunities to participate in school leadership (student council, steering committee).
2. Few opportunities for student choice in learning activities were observed; exceptions to this are projects where students choose their topics or in the CTE courses where students work with instructors to plan projects.

Commendations

1. Students and parents feel ownership of the school and that they have a ‘say’ in many SU decisions.



2. Students' voices are being heard and they have a say in what areas they want to pursue academically as well as with extracurricular activities. This is illustrated particularly in high school through independent study courses, CTE, and dual enrollment courses.

Recommendations

1. We would recommend developing opportunities for personalized learning that increase student choice within core instruction from PreK through 12th grade.
2. We recommend that CTE courses be mapped to the specific content competencies that are met through participation; e.g. rather than stating that ½ year of science is earned for 1 year of forestry, name the specific biology standards met.

Safe School Climate

The Vermont Education Quality Standards prioritize the establishment of learning environments that promote the social and physical health of students, facilities that promote learning and security, support for preventing disciplinary infractions and responding appropriately when transgressions occur and engaging in inter-agency work to support students beyond the school day.

Findings:

MTSS

1. MTSS discussions focused primarily on Tier III interventions; little evidence was collected to support implementation of Tier I instruction for all students or offerings for Tier II interventions.
2. It appears there is a very low “caseload” for people who support students in special education.
3. Staff report uneven or disjointed formal interventions in literacy and none in mathematics.

Social/Emotional Health

1. We observed healthy, respectful relationships between teachers and students.
2. We observed students consistently meeting behavioral expectations in all settings.

Physical Well Being

1. It's evident there's a strong commitment to the physical well-being and health of students through healthy meals/snacks, extracurricular activities, and access to in-school services.

Physical Environment

1. Most classrooms offered a variety of seating options for students, including traditional seating, stand-up stations, and balance balls.
2. For having an older campus the structures are in good repair; however, there are areas such as the locker room that could use updating and some repairs in the industrial arts rooms.
3. Rooms were largely decorated with “store-bought” or teacher-made materials with limited displays of student learning. There were some displayed in the hallways.
4. All of the buildings are secure and provide for student and plant safety.

Commendations

1. Across the classrooms- from PreK to CTE placements- students are well aware of behavioral expectations and meet them with little redirection.
2. Staff, students and parents all describe their school as a place of high value and are deeply appreciative of staff efforts to meet student needs



Recommendations

1. Continue the work of developing and articulating your MTSS framework with a particular focus on:
 - a) Using assessment data and high-impact, evidence-based practices, such as differentiation and Universal Design for Learning, to strengthen core instruction.
 - b) Developing and formalizing Tier II supports in ELA, Mathematics and behavior that are aligned with assessment data to support students in need of intervention.
 - c) Continue with your work aligning the formal assessments and interventions in literacy and begin that same work with mathematics.
 - d) In an MTSS framework, develop academic supports for students who are in need of intervention but do not qualify for special education through the development of an MTSS framework.

High Quality Staffing

The Vermont Education Quality Standards prioritize the role of all school leaders in improving student learning and establish the expectation that school leaders will have sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities in order to focus on improving student learning by ensuring that professional staff are appropriately licensed, a system of appropriate needs-based professional learning is available and aligned with staff evaluation and supervision policies, continuous improvement.

Findings:

Leadership

1. Leadership team is the primary body responsible for implementing the “Design It” plan and includes the principal, superintendent, teachers who volunteer, and the special education director.
2. Staff were particularly appreciative of the effort central office makes to work with CTE teachers to secure grants for work projects.

Staffing

1. We observed an extremely low student to adult ratio; staff suggested that there are not enough para-professionals to support teachers.
2. Most teachers are “departments of one” with no exact partner--for example, one 3rd grade teacher, and one business teacher. As a result, elementary teachers have formed larger groups for collaboration, and secondary teachers sometimes have multiple levels/courses at the same time.

Professional Development

1. Staff report strong professional development from external experiences such as BEST Institute, vtMTSS Cohort, etc.
2. Formal mentoring services are available to new teachers.
3. Local professional development plans privilege teacher-proposed learning. No evidence was gathered of identified system-wide priorities that drive professional development.

Staff Evaluation

1. An evaluation system for teachers is in place and is based on the Danielson model and includes regular walk-throughs and electronic feedback.
2. The superintendent reports a willingness to not renew contracts during probationary period to maintain high quality staff for students.

Commendations

1. Despite the small staff size, teachers have found ways to form collaborative groups to support one another in their work.
2. Both the mentoring and teacher evaluation suggest a strong commitment to developing educators in ENSU.



Recommendations

1. PD
 - a) There needs to be an SU goal from the Leadership Team to guide professional development. Priorities will help the school system to move more efficiently and collectively. Needs based, articulated
 - b) Provide systematic professional development for staff in the area of proficiency based learning and personalized learning plans.

Financial Efficiencies and Statutory Regulation

The Vermont Education Quality Standards require that Supervisory Unions carry out their work in accordance with the fundamentals of accounting procedures, provide the full range and breadth of resources, and facilities to support student learning while doing so at a funding level supported by the local community and conduct the business of schooling in accordance with laws that govern education.

Findings:

Reporting

1. ENSU publishes an annual report that informs the community of financial spending and updates on policies and procedures.

Instructional Materials

1. Most classrooms visited had a smartboard or other type of projector; however, it was unclear how often teachers use them for instruction.
2. Students have in-school access to computers through high school and elementary computer labs. In addition there is a netbook for every student grades 4-11 that some teachers allow them to take home (teacher preference). Maintenance is a challenge overtime with devices.
3. Students are able to access additional classes via polycom; students report the technology/internet access is not always reliable to support the lessons.
4. Instructional materials beyond technology are available, including library, art, CTE supplies, and play-to-learn materials.

Budget/Decision Making

1. The ENSU budgets are affected by tuition revenue, student ratios, and grant funding; as these vary the budget is adjusted accordingly.
2. ENSU applies for grants to supplement their local budget.

Staffing Ratios

1. It is evident teacher to student ratios are low: The annual report cites a 7/1 student to teacher ratio, which is consistent with what the visiting team observed.
2. Teachers and students appreciate the small classes and how it facilitates learning.

Statutes/Compliance Items

1. Staff reports that a recent special education audit helped determine roles and responsibilities of special education staff to improve outcomes for students.
2. Act 77 has been well received by; Act 46 is more challenging for Essex North.

Commendations

1. ENSU has done an excellent job in securing grants to supplement the local budget and meet student needs.
2. ENSU has provided ample hardware and software to support technology in the classroom.

Recommendations

1. ENSU should develop professional learning or sharing techniques to increase the use of technology in classrooms.
2. The low student teacher ratio while appreciated by many, may result in limited resources for other services like a curriculum director, more literacy coach time, math intervention, etc. It would be worth having a conversation about the trade-offs.