



PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

OUR SCHOOLS • OUR COMMUNITIES • OUR FUTURE

Partnership Update for the Burlington City Council Meeting March 18, 2013

The Partnership for Change spent the summer and fall of 2012 building infrastructure and creating systems of internal communication between both school districts and the participants of our Steering Committee, Implementation Teams and staff. Much of our progress has been laying the groundwork to educate the community about our work of remodeling educational systems to align with what our young people will need to thrive in the years to come.

Five Areas of Remodeling:

Through our two year planning grant period, the community helped us identify five key areas for our remodeling efforts of the Winooski and Burlington educational systems. Each of these areas is what research and best practice tell us are the most important “levers” for meaningful change. They are as follows:

1) Building More Robust Teaching and Learning Environments—We are working to create environments that are most conducive to learning, by ensuring that teachers have time to collaborate, share best practices, and bring new instructional strategies into the classroom and beyond. In addition, recognizing that every student learns differently, we are researching a host of strategies to serve all kinds of learners. We are also expanding our definition of where and when learning takes place.

2) Creating Deeper Family School Partnerships—An important finding from research is that children whose families are engaged in their education have better outcomes. We are investigating ways to ensure that families are in authentic partnership with schools, and have a voice in creating high-quality and welcoming schools.

3) Generating Community-Based Learning Opportunities—We know that learning can be greatly enhanced when experiences extend beyond the classroom walls. So that students can develop real-world skills in real-world settings, we are seeking to greatly expand our offerings of internships, job shadows, and other kinds of extended learning opportunities in partnership with local businesses and social service organizations.

4) Enhancing Youth Engagement and Leadership—Studies tell us that students learn best when they are fully engaged in their studies and empowered to take responsibility for their learning. This includes helping young people develop the leadership skills that will serve them well throughout their lifetime.

5) Establishing Personalized and Proficiency Based Learning—Traditionally, schools have measured students primarily through an A-F grading system, with students who receive “Cs” and “Ds” continuing to move from grade to grade with their higher graded peers. In a proficiency-based system, every student must score well on a set of competencies that demonstrate their fully mastery of a subject. Some students may take more time than others to demonstrate mastery, and the classroom is structured to allow for a more personalized approach.

For each of these areas of remodeling, the Partnership for Change has designated a team of instructional leaders and community members who are conducting action research on best practices and beginning to introduce these practices into our educational systems, starting with the two high schools.

Partnering with the City of Burlington:

As we look towards our next year of implementation, the Partnership acknowledges the need to increase communications with local and state government. We also look forward to engaging the city in more specific conversations as new strategies emerge from our Implementation teams and pilot programs. We hope to construct better communication pathways that make it easy to share ideas and get feedback. There is a lot of talent and expertise in our community and we need to channel it on behalf of our young people and our collective future. We ask that you spread the word about our efforts to help build a world-class educational system that become a model for Vermont.