

The Inside Story



CVSU Superintendent Susette L. Bollard

November 2019

The Superintendent's Mission

As someone who taught multi-age classes for a number of years and one who truly believes in the philosophy behind multi-age classes, I failed to recognize that merging ONSU and WSSU was much like starting a new year with a multi-age class - half of the "students" were fully aware of my expectations and philosophies and the other half were not. I planned explicitly for the transition of new students entering and leaned heavily on those experienced with having me as a teacher to help the new students learn how business was done - everything from how to access the bathroom pass to how we took care of each other and everything in between. Although some of my expectations and philosophies as Superintendent of CVSU have trickled out, I am sorry that I have not been more purposeful in my communication.



During the transitional year the members of both the Paine Mountain and The Echo Valley Community School Boards worked together and authored the Central Vermont Supervisory Union Mission Statement. It's final draft dated April 4, 2018 and was adopted at the April 4, 2018 meeting of the CVSU Board. (See last page.) This document guides our decision making and the CVSU Board is looking to adopt a series of metrics they will use to measure our progress toward meeting the mission.

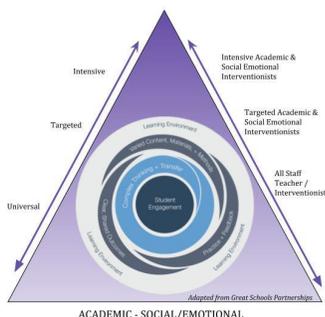
In addition to the CVSU Mission document I have a personal vision for the schools in CVSU that will establish systems that will assist us meeting the Boards' mission. I'd like to take this opportunity to share this vision.

VISION for ALL SCHOOLS IN CVSU

To develop, implement and maintain a fully-integrated multi-tiered system of supports in service to all children so they all can meet their greatest potential.

What does that mean?

Fully-Integrated: It means no silos. There is no such thing as "my kids" and "your kids". It means that all roles (regular ed, special ed, student support, WCMH, admin, etc.) are at the table to work collaboratively to provide the best education and opportunities for all our students.



Multi-Tiered: It means, based on data, we work collaboratively to implement a structure where the universal, targeted and intensive "tiers" are equally important, as well as interdependent. We take purposeful actions based on data to improve the social, emotional and academic experiences for all students. We take collective responsibility for all students.



Central Vermont Supervisory Union
111B Brush Hill Road
Williamstown, VT 05679

802-433-5878
www.cvsu.org

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System: This means we establish and follow protocols to ensure student and staff access to appropriate supports. The expectation is that teams collect and share relevant data that will inform decision-making with regard to providing supports to students. The teams are established through our distributive leadership model. They review data and determine actions. Actions might include changes in overall approach or practice as directed by the universal team or providing supports as determined by the target/intensive teams. The protocols include progress monitoring and a regular review of data to ensure a student is making appropriate progress.



Service: All of our roles are, above all, in service to all our students and families.

Supports: Interventions can range from a simple check-in and check-out to intervention 5 days per week IN ADDITION TO a student's universal instruction. They are targeted, include specific goals and are generally provided for six to eight weeks. At the end of this time period, teams review data created by the support and determine next steps. All teachers are considered interventionists.

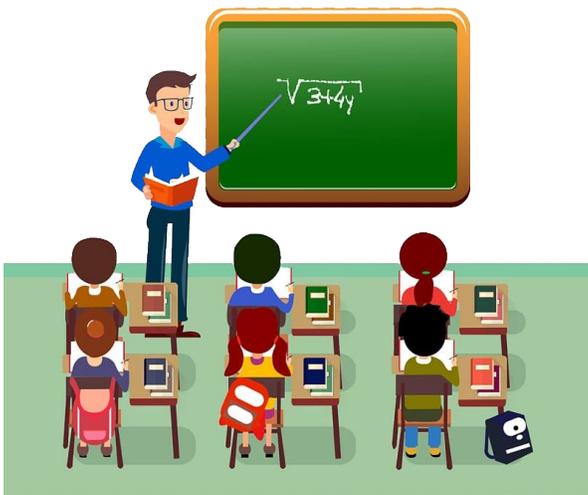


All Children: All children means all children regardless of circumstance or ability. The system is based on a belief that early intervention is crucial to a student's success. In the event a special education referral might be considered as a next step because a student is in need of services that cannot be delivered within the continuum of services and supports offered to all students in general education, the expectation is that the vast majority of testing and other relevant data will have already been completed/collected in search of an appropriate intervention.

Greatest Potential: Our students come to us in all manner of readiness or lack of readiness to learn. We have fourteen short years to ensure they master the knowledge and skills to be successful in whatever route they choose for themselves. I feel a constant sense of urgency. There is no pause button.



This mission has driven much of my work both in the former ONSU and now CVSU. It is an honest reflection of what I believe about schools and children and our responsibility to them. It also reflects what I know to work for not just kids and their families, but for all of us. As I said at this year's opening day Inservice, education has become a team sport. I believe in collective efficacy and know that when we put our heads together to solve challenges we do some of our best work. The fact that as a result of the merger we, for all intents and purposes, have doubled the size of our staff, I believe we have doubled our resources. To me, that means we have doubled our ability to do great things for students and I get genuinely excited at that prospect. Being an educator in any capacity is hard work and there is no doubt we all work hard. Being held accountable for someone else's learning is unique to this work but key to our meeting the mission the Board's have set for us. I look forward to our continuing to increase our trust in each other and therefore, our capacity to join together and make a bigger difference.



To Close or Not to Close

I can't believe that we have already had two days when school has been closed and sincerely hope we are not going to have a similar winter to last year. Having the responsibility of deciding whether or not to hold school is one of those responsibilities that NOBODY wants, including me, but it comes with the job and I thought you might want to know how I come to the decision to hold, delay or close school when the weather is not cooperating.

In most cases it begins at around 4:45AM. I check the list of school closing/delays compiled by the Vermont Broadcaster's Association and published on WCAX to see if anyone made a decision the night before. I call Bill Kirby, Facilities Director for the Northfield Schools, and we discuss any NOAA (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration) alerts and their radar available online. Bill then calls road crews across the supervisory union to get a report on our area's road conditions and any recommendations they might have. He might also, check in with the bus company. In the meantime, I join an email thread that includes all of the area superintendents to see what their road crews and weather resources are reporting and check in with a couple of employees who I know are on the road by 5AM. The goal is to make a decision by 5:30AM so I spend the rest of the time circling back to all my resources, trying to get the best picture of not only what the weather and road conditions are at 5:30AM but also what they will be at 6:45AM when buses start their routes. With more about 180 miles of dirt roads and about a 1200 foot difference between the lowest and highest points in the supervisory union (which accounts for the variance in weather conditions in different parts of the towns) the final decision is not always easy but we make what we believe are the best decisions we can considering the conditions and circumstances of the moment. Once the decision to delay opening or to close schools is made, a message is sent to you and our families via *Blackboard Connect* and local radio and TV stations are notified. When the weather requires the decision to be revisited, the process is identical and again, we make what we believe to be the best decision we can considering the conditions, circumstances and information we have. The process for early dismissal is similar but also includes making certain students have lunch before being returned home.

I know that not everyone agrees with my decisions regarding schools being open, delayed or closed, but I do want you to know that your and our students' safety is always at the heart of the decision. Unfortunately, I have to consider first and foremost, the weather and road conditions within the supervisory union and not the weather in other parts of the state where some of you live. If you ever feel that my decision is in conflict with the condition of the roads in the area of the state where you live and you do not feel it is safe to travel, please call your principal and arrange to take part or all of a personal day. I want you to be safe.

Central Vermont Supervisory Union

Mission Statement

The CVSU community of schools is committed to cultivating within all our students the knowledge, skills, and character essential to becoming purposeful, productive and engaged members of their world.

To achieve this mission, the Central Vermont Supervisory Union will uphold a united culture across the communities of CVSU and coordinate services to:

- Ensure a physically and emotionally safe learning environment that fosters mutual respect and the creation of healthy relationships;
- Provide high-quality learning experiences that authentically engage all students;
- Develop and support creative and resilient thinkers and problem solvers;
- Foster opportunities for members of the CVSU family to meaningfully contribute, individually and collectively, to school and community life;
- Foster an understanding of and engagement in the democratic process of local, state, and national government as citizens committed to positively affecting their society;
- Develop in our schools, habits of leadership and ethical decision-making;
- Inspire students to confidently advocate for and design growth experiences that help them define who they are and where they are headed as individuals;
- Provide opportunities for students to acquire the essential skills they will need to lead independent and productive lives;
- Craft learning opportunities that nurture environmental stewardship;
- Ensure that our students meet or exceed state and national academic standards;
- Hire and cultivate a team of compassionate, creative, and innovative personnel;
- Foster leadership that promotes innovation, equity, sustainability, and the responsible use of all available community resources.

April 4, 2018