



# SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

**To:** WSD Board President and Board of Trustees  
**From:** Wilmer Chavarria, WSD Superintendent  
**Re:** **Superintendent's Report for September 2025**  
**Date:** 9/8/2025

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Dear Members of The Board,

Below please find my report for **September 2025** and refer any questions about a given item directly to me during the regularly scheduled board meeting or to the Board President and me if your inquiry is prior to the meeting.

Thank you for your work in advancing the Ends Statement of our district to form students who will "lead healthy, productive and successful lives and engage with their local and global community."

Respectfully Submitted,

**Wilmer A. Chavarria, NBCT**  
Superintendent of Schools  
Winooski School District  
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It has been exciting to see our students back in our classrooms.

## WELCOMING BACK OUR STUDENTS

The schools are now officially open for the 2024-2025 school year. I am thankful for the incredible amount of work that went into preparing for a successful launch and for the dedication teachers and staff are showing every day.

Our back-to-school community celebration was a great success and set the tone for the spirit of the next 10 months: togetherness, laughter, learning, initiative, and keeping our young people at the center of our work. Thank you to Board President and Vice President Robert and Nicole who joined our other administrators and wonderful volunteers in the serving line. I know you were not planning to have to work, but you stepped up when you were needed.

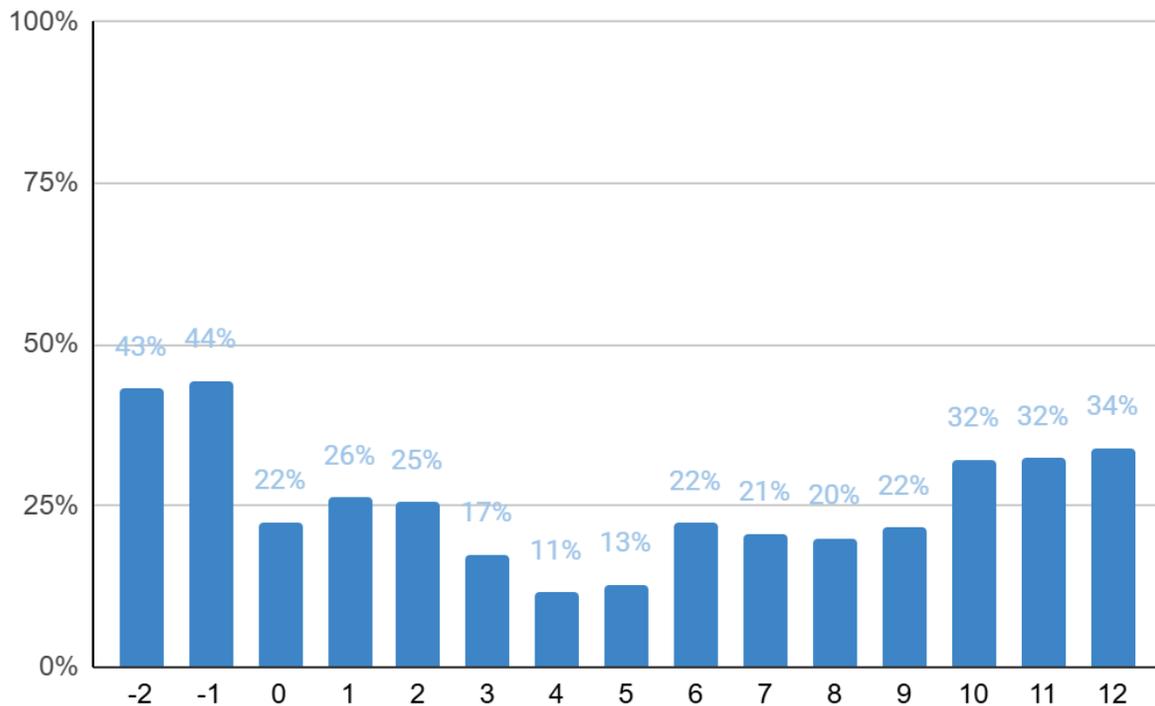
## ENDS MONITORING: INDICATOR OF COMPLIANCE 1

26% of our students are chronically absent, meaning that over the past year, they have missed at least 10% of their required days of school. This includes all reasons, whether excused or unexcused, medical or otherwise.

While a 26% absenteeism rate is unacceptable, it is important to note the following:

- It is consistent with Vermont's overall absenteeism rate of 25% post-pandemic.
- It is at or below the national average.
- Pre-K data may not be comparable to other grades due to different attendance requirements.
- Removing Pre-K from the chart, our rate drops to 21%, which is well-below state and national benchmarks.
- It is lower than observed averages expected for our demographics.

## Percentage of Students Chronically Absent (10% or more)



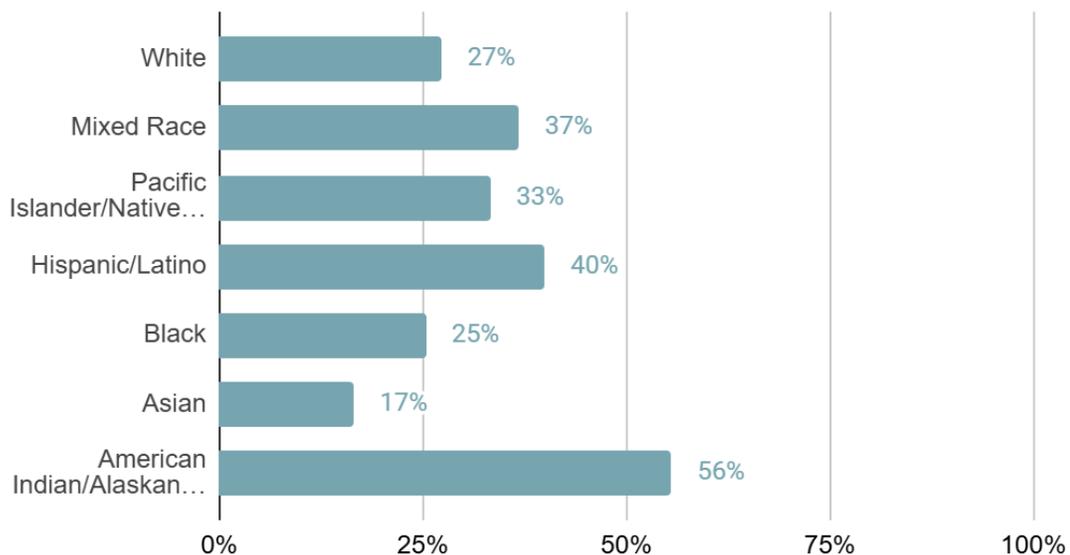


After the “Asian” category, self-identified Black students have the second lowest absenteeism rate despite it being the opposite nationally. The chart below includes PK numbers, which bring everything higher.

Breaking down chronic absenteeism by race is tricky due to the subjectivity and inconsistency in racial self-selection. For example, we speculate that a significant number of Hispanic/Latino students may select options such as “Mixed Race” or “White” because nationality, more than race, matters to Latin American immigrants, and these questions are not usually asked of us in our home countries.

Additionally, some numbers should be carefully considered in analysis when they are too small for conclusions. The American Indian/Alaskan Native number, for example, is 10 students, while “White” is close to 400.

## Chronic Absenteeism by Race





## GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES

- **Our dismissal procedures have changed.** We have a different way for buses to pick up students behind the facilities and the upper grades are picked up separately and last to avoid congestion, confusion, and to keep the youngest children well monitored. I appreciate everybody's open mind and active help in making these past couple of weeks as smooth as possible. As with any new procedures, we learn as we implement, but this has proven to be a lot less chaotic than it could be. In general, people have been patient, respectful, and helpful. Our facilities team and the rest of the public safety group have been actively answering questions and being present outside. There are factors beyond our control, like road construction or city ordinances, but we are managing to keep the flow as efficiently as possible.
- **Email fraud and other suspicious email-related incidents** have been increasing recently. Concerningly, the sophistication of these attacks makes it so that they can be effective quickly and not allow our teams to react on time and have tested our screening configurations. Our IT department is currently reviewing an email sent out on Friday to all staff from an email address apparently identical to mine and with a message carefully crafted to sound like it is legitimately coming from me. Our staff are trained to double check the email address before opening any attachments, so this case was incredibly frustrating for everyone involved because people did double check the email address and there was no way for them to know that it was indeed a false account. Since this should not have been possible in theory, we are looking into what allowed for that not to be recognized by our existing protections. We will be releasing additional information to staff as soon as we have more answers. We will share this with the board as well.

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**Our leadership team and licensed administrators** have had two calibration sessions to ensure that teachers and licensed staff are observed and evaluated consistently using our current tools. Teachers and staff have provided feedback in the past relating to the danger of potentially inconsistent ratings in teacher evaluations even when using the same measures. In addition to calibration, our improved evaluation model involves classroom observations by administrators other than the main evaluator, which will hopefully add an additional layer of objectivity to the process.



Students arrive for their first day of school and get reacquainted with friends.

## GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL UPDATES (CONT.)

- **The Fiscal Services office** is actively focused on key priorities to ensure a successful start to the school year. We've started preliminary work on the FY27 budget and are beginning to prepare for the upcoming budget season. Our immediate priorities also include completing the FY25 Audit and ensuring all our staff, including new employees, are well-equipped to support the district's financial needs.
- **I want to extend my sincere thanks** to Isaiah Donaldson for his important contributions to our district as a board member during key transitional years. His service will be missed but the board is stronger because of his work and dedication. During the next board meeting, Board President Robert Millar will lead a discussion about the replacement and recruitment process, as well as setting a date for a potential special meeting where applicants will be interviewed in public session. Some potential interview questions have been included in your packet.

## COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

- **We were thrilled to welcome our preschool students** this past Tuesday. Our program continues to offer a full school-day option from 8:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with priority given to our 4-year-old students in order to best support their kindergarten readiness and continued growth. This year, all four of our classrooms are at full capacity, serving a total of 65 preschool students.
- **The JFK year has started positively**, with staff re-engaging in solid Layer One practices and the First Six Weeks routines already taking hold. Teachers and support staff are focusing on building strong classroom communities, implementing consistent expectations, and creating a positive and inclusive environment that sets the stage for student success.
- **21C Afterschool programs will begin** the week of Sept 22nd with some old-time favorites and some new offerings. We are excited to bring back the Violin program as an offering for 3rd-4th graders along with some nutrition, wellness, fitness, cultural, STEM and literacy programs. Check out the Session 1 flyers on the WSD website under the parent and family tab.

Our student athletes are hitting the ground running.



## HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE, AND SUCCESSFUL

- **We're pleased to welcome** two new faces to our Spartan coaching staff this fall. Chris Flaherty has joined us as the head coach of the Girls Varsity soccer team, bringing both experience and passion to the program. In addition, Carlos Spigel has come on board to assist with the Middle School girls' soccer team, and his energy and commitment have already made a positive impact. We're excited about the leadership they bring and look forward to a great season ahead.
- **Fall sports are off to a strong start**, and it's great to see the energy back on our fields. One of the most exciting signs of growth continues to be in our Middle School soccer program. When we implemented a no-cut policy four years ago, we hoped it would open the door for more students to participate, and it has. This year, we have approximately 65 middle schoolers playing soccer, a testament to the enthusiasm of our students and the supportive environment we've created. It's been inspiring to watch so many young athletes get involved, develop their skills, and represent our Spartan community with pride.
- **The MHS Instructional Leadership Team** has leadership teams with evidence-based feedback and thought partnership to help improve, no matter where they are in their continuous improvement journey.
- **Our Early Learning classrooms were fortunate** to receive a generous donation from Hydro-Québec. On September 11, they will be providing back-to-school supplies for our preschoolers. This remarkable gift not only supplied our students with art materials, writing utensils, books, and other learning tools, but it also fully covered the supplies that families would have otherwise needed to provide for children enrolled in the full-day program.

The Veggie VanGo initiative has launched and will be coming twice every month, in partnership with the Vermont Foodbank. This program provides fresh vegetables to students, families, and community members. It officially began this Friday, September 5, 2025, and the next distribution will be on September 19.

Due to limited funding this year, the Necessity Store will be open three times a week for students only. At this time, we are unable to extend food distribution to families and community members. We truly appreciate your understanding and support, and we look forward to being able to serve families and the wider community again in the future as resources allow.



- **The MHS Pre service connected** learning from our School Development Institute last June to our new school year. Teachers (re)read professional readings, had collegial discussions, and were informed of our new procedures for the 25-26 school year. The JFK PK-5 pre-service, focused on connection, collaboration, and alignment with district priorities. Staff engaged in team building, cross-classroom planning, and professional learning centered on key instructional practices, inclusive planning, and building a strong foundation for the first six weeks of school. Each day balanced structured professional development with classroom preparation, ensuring educators had both the tools and time to prepare for students. The schedule also included opportunities for family engagement, including Open House and BBQ, reinforcing the importance of partnership between school and community.
- **Positive Apprenticeship Outcomes:** Overall, the summer apprenticeship program was a great success. We were especially impressed with the contributions of our apprentices and are excited to continue building on this momentum. One of our summer apprentices at Husky and recent graduate was offered a full-time position, which has been accepted. Another apprentice at Husky (current senior) did very well and is eager to continue with us during the school year. Once schedules are finalized, we will align a work schedule to support this ongoing role. The Winooski Career Café held last May created meaningful connections. A student connected with PCC at the event, applied for, and successfully completed a summer internship. Jess Handrik, Work-Based Learning Coordinator, is preparing an article about this collaboration for the next community newsletter.



## ADMINISTRATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

- 8/15 I attended the CVSA retreat in South Burlington
- 8/19 I gave a talk at UVM's College of Education
- 8/20 I gave a speech in Middlebury during the ACSU's all-staff convocation
- 8/23 I attended the Teej celebration being hosted in Winooski
- 9/9 I attended the Vermont Pride parade and festival, where I was honored as Grand Marshal
- 9/11 I will be attending the VSA All Members Meeting in Killington
- 9/12 I will be attending the Regional Standards Board meeting
- 9/15 I am meeting with the City Manager
- 9/18 I am attending a follow up session of last year's Leading During Turbulent Times at Harvard
- 9/24 I am speaking at the Vermont Council on World Affairs' Annual International Day of Peace Summit.

## KEY DATES

- 9/10: Boys Soccer at 4:30
- 9/12: Veggie Van Go
- 10/1: No evening Activities, Yom Kippur/Dashain
- 10/2: No School | Yom Kippur/Dashain
- 10/8: WSD Board Meeting

## ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Below are a few items the board assigned to management along with a status update.

Item	Board Direction	Status
Additional information for second read.	The board requested additional information about policies that were brought for a first read in August.	Additional details were added to the documents for Policies being read for a second time. D8, for example, incorporates language from our former policy while also highlighting what is new from the VSBA. D8 saw no changes except for the board-requested removal of carveouts for family members.