



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

To: WSD Board President and Board of Trustees
From: Wilmer Chavarria, WSD Superintendent
Re: **Superintendent's Report for January 2026**
Date: 01/12/2026

Dear Members of The Board,

Below please find my report for **January 2026** 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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Student athletes cheer for their female peers on the field

A FINAL BUDGET

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the budget-adoption process. We are satisfied with the recommendation to the board and are ready to move to the next phase post-adoption, which includes roles for both the board and the administration.

On our end, difficult conversations with our teams are on the horizon. We are partnering with the WEA to carefully engage in the process and to ensure that the rights of all employees are respected.

While we were 'lucky' this year to have a significant positive correction to our long-term weighted membership numbers, the district still had to make a number of reductions to avoid a projected tax increase. We made these reductions after months of careful planning and analysis of our current needs, and we expect to do the same in the next cycle. However, we do not yet know how the landscape will change at the state level, and we are far from being able to predict the funding formula numbers that will impact our ability to prevent future tax hikes.

We must keep our expectations in check; it is unlikely that next year will bring another boost in long-term weighted ADM. Between the increasing difficulty of reducing positions, a likely lower Common Level of Appraisal (CLA), and additional cost pressures, next year may be our most challenging yet. Ultimately, the board will decide on the best course of action, and our team will be ready to present you with options.

During the last special board meeting the question was asked about compliance with legal requirements, including class size minimums. Three days later, on Friday January 9th, the Secretary issued the following communication:

“Update on New Class Size Minimum Requirements for the 2026-2027 (FY27) School Year

Act 73, Section 6 established new class size minimums for grades 1-12, beginning in the 2026-2027 (FY27) school year. The intent of this section of legislation is, “...to transform education in Vermont by leveraging attainable and research-based scale to increase equity of opportunity and promote efficiency and affordability.”

To support districts in implementing these new standards, the Agency of Education has convened a small working group made up of Superintendents, Business and Data Managers to establish clear definitions, data collection methods and an accountability and reporting framework that aligns with budget development processes.

The Agency intends to release working definitions by the end of January and, working with the group through the spring, will produce a clear set of guidelines, data collection timelines and accountability processes that meet the requirements of Act 73 by June 30, 2026.

The Agency recognizes that districts are in the process of developing and approving budgets for FY 27 and that the discussion of the new class size minimums has implications for staffing and scheduling. As part of their obligation to follow state law, district leadership should present budgets to school boards that comply with the class size requirements outlined in Act 73, Section 6, to the best of their ability. The Agency recognizes that the responsibility for passing a budget lies with school boards and that some districts will need time to make progress towards these new minimum standards.”

Unfortunately, this statement does not reconcile the fact that their timeline for clarity is substantially misaligned with boards' timelines for passing a budget. The last paragraph is unclear about the intentions of the Agency in relation to what they call “accountability” for the upcoming school year. As mentioned during our board meeting, Winooski's proposed budget considered these requirements, nebulous as they presently are, and took considerable steps toward compliance. However, full compliance will be a multi-year process that will require final definitions from the AOE.

CLASS SIZES



SAFETY TEAM UPDATE

- District Safety Coordinator has partnered with Vermont Intelligence Center to forward any threatening emails, letters or phone calls for analysis.
- Two individuals who sent threatening communication to WSD were contacted by School Liaison Officer (SLO) Saja Almogalli.
- SLO Almogalli & District Safety Coordinator Craig Dwyer addressed a HS student who sped out of the front parking lot during the fire egress drill.
- District Safety Coordinator addressed MS students who were talking & eating during the last egress fire drill.
- District Safety Coordinator provided the picture & name of a parent/guardian with a no trespassing order to the front office, facilities, and afterschool staff.
- District Safety Coordinator and Facilities members collaborated to remove boxes and chairs stored in the High School & Middle School vestibule to ensure safety during dismissal, placed a lock on the 2nd floor stairwell door in the high school to prevent the public from entering during basketball games, and placed permit parking only signs in the parking lots so spaces can be available for WSD staff.

GENERAL AND OPERATIONAL:

Update on our student who was detained with his mother: Our second grader and his mother remain in detention. The district had a difficult time finding quality legal representation but we were ultimately able to send help to Texas to explore whatever options were at the family's disposal. Understandably, the mother chose deportation due to the torturous conditions migrants are subjected to at times for an undefined period of time. At this point, the best outcome would be for the family to be deported to their country of origin and for it to happen as soon as possible, rather than to remain in detention in their present sordid conditions. Additional cruelty can be described in this case, but much of it is strictly tied to information that is personal and private.

Another unfortunate barrier has been created by the Gofundme organization. While grassroots efforts took place to raise money for legal fees, Gofundme representatives have denied the district access to that money even after their requests have been met. We are beginning to understand that there may be other motives at play here and that supporting efforts by a district like ours are not currently in the best interest of companies. People who donated will be getting an update from the organizers soon, especially if Gofundme continues to deny access to the money.



Rehearsing for the winter concert.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

- **In December, the Flexible Pathways and Work-based Learning Program** advanced high school students' career readiness in collaboration with on-site community partners Hireability, Spartan Advance, and the UVM Pathology Department. Having learned about roles in Pathology at the on-site panel, we then visited them in their real-world settings for a tour. Other off-site activities included a visit to our robotics mentor, UVM Electrical Engineering & Robotics Professor Luis Duffault Espinosa, and his engineering students with members of our robotics team. Last, to close transportation and access gaps – and to strengthen our students' applications for the summer programs – we offered the Governor's Institutes "Youth Leadership One-Day Adventure" at the VT Statehouse as a school-sponsored field trip.
- **Select students** within the Winooski School District will participate in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) which had a testing window of March 9th through April 24th. The MSAA is designed to assess students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and measures academic content that is aligned to and derived from Vermont's content standards. The MSAA acts as an alternative to the Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP).
- **As Vermont implements Act 73**, our Early Learning Department has stayed closely informed and engaged from the beginning to understand proposed changes and their implications. It remains critical to maintain access to prekindergarten for 3-year-olds while exploring increased hours for 4-year-olds within a mixed-delivery model, consistent with recommendations from the Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee (PEIC). Education transformation efforts should also include appropriate pre-K weighting in the state funding formula to reflect the true cost of high-quality early learning, inclusion, and family engagement.

LOCAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY

- After School Updates: Mr. Argraves, who started teaching afterschool string classes to 5th graders in 21C afterschool for the first time last year, has noticed an increase in the number of students interested in taking string classes during the school day as 6th graders. The 21C Afterschool Session 2 will feature a WHS Jr. Iron Chef team for the first time ever! There will also be a new WMS team working together with Waterworks Chef expert Adam Raftery and Cristine Martin. WMS student leader James Emery is excited to use his critical thinking skills to introduce a Warhammer Club during afterschool on Thursdays. And students in the JFK 21C Afterschool program will dive into yoga-inspired games, explore culture, engage in sport stacking, music, dance and building activities, practice self-awareness, empathy and more!

- The winter sports season is underway at Winooski High School, with student-athletes off to an energetic and promising start. Early practices and competitions have reflected strong commitment, teamwork, and pride in representing the Winooski community. Middle school winter sports begin in December and we are excited to welcome students in grades 6–8 into the season. This marks an important opportunity for students to build skills, teamwork, and positive relationships through athletics. Boys' sessions will be held in the Old Gym and girls' sessions in the New Gym throughout the week. As we move deeper into winter, we are proud of how our athletes are representing the school both on and off the court. There is a strong sense of commitment to team, growth, and community that continues to show up each day. We are looking ahead to a busy stretch of games and continued development throughout the season.

The Wellness Leaders are planning two staff breakfasts, one on January 23 and another in April, as an opportunity for staff to bring something to share, connect with one another, and build meaningful relationships in a welcoming, low-pressure setting that strengthens community, morale, and collaboration. Additionally, our annual K–12 Staff Wellness Day will be on March 2, with a focus on promoting mental, physical, and emotional well-being, encouraging self-care, and bringing staff together across schools and roles to recharge and feel supported



Enjoying an art activity at the elementary school.

HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL LIVES

- **Updates & Progress on MTSS for WMHS:** We are seeing steady positive growth in strengthening our MTSS at Winooski Middle and High School. Teacher Talks happen and document a clear focus on first instruction, UDL, accommodations, and environmental modifications across learning environments. These goals are progress-monitored and adjusted as needed, ensuring we are actively trying, supporting, and teaching students who are struggling in our classrooms. Our EST teams have been working to simplify EST plans so they center on a clearly defined goal or area of concern, paired with the most effective intervention in addition to core instruction. Branching Minds (our new online digital platform) is being used effectively by a few educators, allowing teachers to see progress monitoring data for students receiving interventions. Through a system built on clear documentation and aligned supports, we are ensuring that when a disability is suspected, we are well-positioned to partner with special education in a thorough evaluation process.
- **Part-Time SAP Counselor:** Winooski Middle and High School is pleased to welcome Almina Kadric as the new Riverstone Counselor and SAP Counselor. Ms. Kadric holds a Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and brings experience supporting children and adults with a range of needs, including substance use, anxiety, depression, and trauma. She is committed to creating safe, supportive spaces for students and to building strong relationships within the school community. Her addition strengthens our student support services and reflects the district's continued commitment to student well-being and mental health.

ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

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

Item	Board Direction	Status
Student Board Representative	The board decided to bring back a question and potential action option for the next board meeting regarding the possibility of student representation.	Agenda item created and potential policy language provided in packet.
Per Pupil Spending and other comparatives	The board wants to see whatever is available in terms of comparative data with other districts at this point in the budgeting process.	The administration is still gathering numbers but will have an additional slide or two to provide during the meeting