

# BURLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

Building a Learning Community

November 29, 2008

**SCHOOL BUDGET  
HEARINGS**  
Tuesday, Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 7pm  
Tuesday, Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 7 pm  
Burlington High School  
Come give your input!

Dear Burlington Families,

We have been working on many fronts to continue to increase excellence and equity in all Burlington Schools. ***Your input and involvement is of great importance as we continue to improve our schools and opportunities for all of our students.*** You can contact me at [superintendent@bsdvt.org](mailto:superintendent@bsdvt.org) or 864-8474

Please take a few moments to review this letter about our progress, including an update on the process to improve our school buildings.

In August, the School Board took action on **Excellence and Equity** initiatives and improving our school buildings. Several resolutions, specifically related to excellence, equity and magnet schools, are part of **Our Schools: Our Future plan**, but do not rely on bond funds. These are happening now!

- 1. The school board passed resolutions to enhance and evaluate educational programs in all of our schools to help prepare students for our rapidly-changing world.** Our teachers are continually learning and adapting instruction to meet the needs of all of our students.
- 2. The school board also passed a resolution to create two magnet schools in the Old North End, which will open in the Fall of 2009.**

## **Increasing Excellence in Every School**

Through research nationally and within our community, we have defined our vision. You can read the full vision at [www.bsdvt.org](http://www.bsdvt.org). Here is what we are doing to reach our vision:

- Teachers are working together in professional learning communities in every school within and across grade levels to assess how each student learns best and use new teaching methods.
- We are increasing programs to prepare our students for their future.
  - **ELEMENTARY (Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade):** We have a new elementary math program. We've also successfully introduced Spanish, and we are increasing hands-on science programs with partners like Shelburne Farms, ECHO and Audubon.
  - **MIDDLE SCHOOL (6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade):** Our approach in middle school continues to focus on project-based, hands-on learning teams and community partnerships, and we have increased support for math instruction. We anticipate instituting a new middle school math curriculum next year, if the budget allows.
  - **HIGH SCHOOL (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade):** We continue to offer a challenging and diverse range of academics, college prep, technical education, and extra-curriculars.

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BHS offers comprehensive choices to students at every level to further develop their interests, skills and abilities, supported by teachers, advisors and counselors.

- The Burlington School Board also adopted the following **hallmarks of excellence** to be emphasized throughout our schools and programs, and requested an administrative report on current and planned efforts in each of these areas:
  - rigorous academics
  - supporting and challenging students to achieve high expectations
  - more hands-on multi-disciplinary real-world learning
  - enriched arts, math, science and sustainability experiences
  - technology-integration
  - expanding community partnerships and parent involvement
  - welcoming diversity and teaching global languages

## Development of two elementary magnet schools

In August, the Board also directed the administration to form Vermont's first two magnet schools at Lawrence Barnes and H.O. Wheeler. The goals of these schools are *excellence* – to be incubators for innovative ideas – and *equity* – to balance demographics (also known as socio-economic integration) in every classroom.

- The administration is working now to draft student application procedures for the magnet schools.
- New student application procedures will apply to incoming students only.
- Neither the student application procedure nor teacher assignment has been finalized yet. The table below lays out our process and timeline.

We have worked to create a great foundation for the success of Vermont's first magnet schools. They have grown out of local community conversations, national research, and an independent, professional survey of preschool and elementary parents. Please visit the district website or [www.bsdmagnet.com](http://www.bsdmagnet.com) for information about the magnets.

## Description of Elementary Magnet Schools

- **The Academy for Integrated Arts at H.O. Wheeler (pre-K – 5)** Each teacher will use the arts – theater, dance, visual art, and music - to support and engage students in every subject studied – math, science, reading, writing and social studies. All teachers will be fully trained in this program. Art, music and P.E./movement teachers will work closely with classroom teachers. The Flynn Center and St. Michael's College are providing training to teachers and Very Merry Theatre is an active partner within the school. Additional relationships with Burlington-based artists and arts organizations will be developed.
- **The Academy for Sustainability at Lawrence Barnes (K-5)** The sustainability magnet school will focus on hands-on learning connected to our community and the world. The environment, global connections, and community service are key themes this program will use to engage

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students in learning science, social studies, reading, writing and math. The Burlington School District will build upon its partnership with Shelburne Farms, a national leader in sustainability education, to bring the sustainability magnet school to life.

## **Magnet Development Timeline:**

November, 2008:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administration reviews student assignment and application procedures</li><li>• Meetings with Barnes and Wheeler faculties to discuss staffing</li><li>• Professional development for integrated arts magnet teachers begins; Sustainable schools teachers continue work in study circles</li></ul>
December, 2008:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teachers and principals provide input on student assignment options</li><li>• Letters of interest on magnet school assignments due from teachers</li></ul>
January, 2009:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parent input on student assignment and application procedures</li></ul>
February-March, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Board reviews completed student assignment plans</li><li>• Parent Information Meetings on magnet schools begin</li><li>• Application Process Begins</li><li>• Magnet websites launch, if not already done</li></ul>
April-May, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher assignments complete through teacher contract process</li></ul>
Summer, 2009:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Added professional development continues for magnet faculty</li></ul>
September, 2009:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Magnet schools open for their pilot year.</li></ul>

## **Next Steps on Facilities Improvements**

I would also like to update you on the next steps for the school facilities improvement master plan.

- As we move forward, our facilities team is working with the facilities audit engineers to clearly identify and develop a plan to address the projected safety repairs identified within the report. Health and safety issues that were identified in the facilities audit are given top priority within the constraints of current funding levels. The facilities audit helps us to identify future issues, plan ahead, budget, and address repairs more thoughtfully and cost-effectively.
- In addition, we are working in partnership with the city to move forward on the comprehensive facilities improvement master plan. The city council passed a resolution in early October committing the City to work collaboratively with the schools in a team comprised of the Superintendent, School Finance Director, School Facilities Director and the Mayor, City Treasurer, City Public Works Director to review infrastructure priorities and the city's borrowing capacity. We anticipate bringing back further recommendations for public review in January. More information is available at our district website or [www.bsdplan.com](http://www.bsdplan.com).

I post regular updates at [www.bsdrv.org](http://www.bsdrv.org), to every neighborhood Front Porch Forum, and monthly in the North Avenue News. School Board meetings are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month at 7pm at BHS.

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School board members provide monthly updates at NPA meetings and a monthly “Commissioner’s Corner” show on Channel 17. Working together, we can ensure that every child receives the education they need to be ready for the future.

Thank you,

Jeanne Collins

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