



APPROVED BY THE BOARD ON MARCH 21, 2017

**BURLINGTON BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS  
CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES  
10 January 2017**

Attending Board Members: Commissioners Mark Barlow; Lauren Berrezbeita; Susanmarie Harrington (chair) Other Board: Kathy Olwell

Administration: Stephanie Phillips, Senior Director of Curriculum

Guests: Jocelyn Fletcher Scheuch, PBL Coordinator

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m.
2. Approve Agenda  
*Agenda approved by consensus.*
3. Public Comment: None
4. Report on [Proficiency-Based Learning \(PBL\) in Burlington School District](#):  
Jocelyn Fletcher Scheuch

PBL aims to reframe experience of school: not have winners and losers, but rather have students working toward goals. *A proficiency-based system holds all students to high expectations and provides equal access to a challenging curriculum.* This initiative in our district has been supported and encouraged by Nellie Mae Foundation funding the Partnership for Change, and Vermont's Education Quality Standards and Act 77, which requires systemic shifts toward proficiency-based learning. Since BHS started work on proficiency-based learning before the state began its work, we have developed vocabulary that does not match what the state developed (we use *graduate expectations* to refer to what the state calls *transferable skills*; we use *content area graduation requirements* where the state uses *proficiency-based requirements*, for example). There is no difference, however, in foundational expectations: BHS's work is fully compliant with all state expectations.

This change has been supported by internal and external professional development for BHS faculty and middle school faculty; Jocelyn's position as PBL coordinator; community education; and the partner teacher program. The partner teacher program provides released time for faculty; over time, this

program has moved from attracting enthusiastic early adopters to attracting faculty who were initially more skeptical. This is an important marker of change. Jocelyn Fletcher Spreuch described exciting innovations in assessment developed by participating teachers.

This year, middle school teachers have adopted the graduate expectations as the framework for the PLPs. Middle schoolers are already thinking ahead!

What's next? We looked at Maine's [guidelines for districts transitioning to proficiency-based learning](#) (Maine is the New England leader in this work.). We are doing well with the instructional system; next we need to

- develop system for reporting on the achievement of student learning (including explaining what grades mean)
- develop a process for verifying achievement of content-area proficiency-based graduation requirement and graduate expectations
- develop a record-keeping process, transcript, and report card
- create communication plan for PBL

Discussion of teacher attitudes about this shift: Jocelyn Fletcher Scheuch said teachers were generally positive although some still working toward success. Discussion of ways students can bring out-of-class experiences into their PLPs. There has been a committee attending to how non-course experiences would be evaluated. Discussion of how not all students are psyched about proficiency-based learning; some students focus on grades. Discussion of advisory, which should be a home for work on PLPs on M/F (T/Th for one-on-one check ins). Advisory's primary goal was to ensure that each student would be well-known by one person in the building. Discussion of connections with middle school and connections with work lives and practical critical thinking skills. General interest in how Partnership for Change evaluates.

General consensus: enthusiasm for this work and gratitude to the teachers of BHS.

General interest in the question of how the district and state plan to measure the success of proficiency-based learning.

5. Consideration of future meeting topics: elementary school support? Will confer after board meeting. Planned February topic: Hal Colston and Partnership for Change.
6. Adjournment at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Susanmarie Harrington