



BURLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

LEARNING FRAMEWORK



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Letter to the Community

Dear BSD Educators and Community,

I am deeply grateful to the group of BSD educators who collaborated over the past year to co-develop this Learning Framework. Because of their dedication and thoughtful contributions, this framework is not only practical—it is truly representative of our community.

I also want to extend my appreciation to the many students and educators who participated in empathy interviews. Their honest feedback helped shape a tool that is responsive to the needs of those it impacts most directly. In short, I am proud of the inclusive and collaborative process that ensured this formative tool was created with our community, not just for it.

The Learning Framework is designed to guide and focus our efforts to provide excellent teaching and learning experiences for every student. It offers coherence and a shared language that will strengthen our collaboration as educators and support the creation of deeper learning opportunities across our district.

This work is also a key part of our commitment to our community in Priority Areas 2 and 3 of our co-created Strategic Plan: Deeper Learning for Every Student. I am excited for what we will accomplish together with this framework as our guide.

With gratitude,

Tom Flanagan
BSD Superintendent



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Tom Flanagan
BSD Superintendent

Letter to Educators

Imagine a school district as a ship navigating the vast and ever-changing ocean of education. Just as sailors rely on the North Star to navigate across uncharted waters, school districts can best stay on course with their own guiding light, a learning framework.

BSD began developing a framework in 2019, but changes in leadership direction and the COVID-19 pandemic paused this work until the fall of 2024. A group of educators representing teachers, instructional coaches, building leaders, and central office administrators worked for several months to develop a learning framework for BSD. This learning framework is an important step toward making a district's vision for teaching and learning a reality. The framework provides a common language, establishes shared expectations, and creates an environment where educators can collaborate to share best practices. It also identifies the things that go into excellent teaching, so that teachers, school administrators, and district staff can recognize it and talk about it using a common language.

This isn't just another top-down initiative. It's grounded in our shared values and was built by BSD educators, for BSD educators. It gives us a common language to talk about strong teaching and learning while still allowing space for creativity and flexibility. It's not about evaluation; it's a tool for reflection, growth, and collaboration. The framework centers on what matters most: student-centered learning, equity, belonging, and culturally responsive practices. It's designed to support us, not add extra burden, and to help align our work with the vision outlined in the Strategic Plan in a real and doable way. It's also a living document that will continue to evolve through feedback and use. More than anything, we want people to know their voices and daily practices are at the heart of this work, and we're building something meaningful and lasting together. You may not agree with everything; however, this is not a menu to pick and choose from. It represents what we believe as educators in this district. Embrace it and use it to guide your practice, to grow, to learn to collaborate.

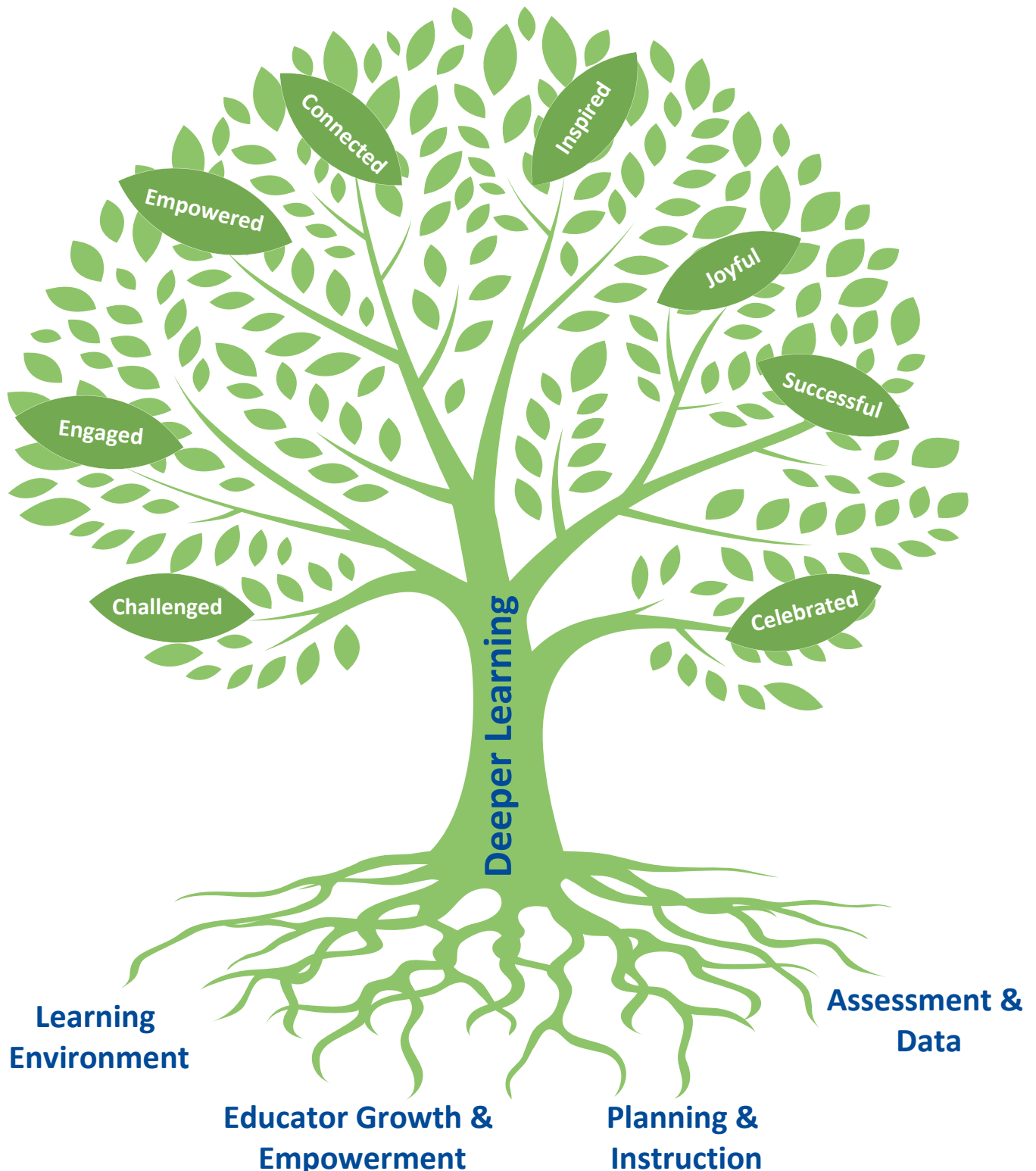


OUR NORTH STAR

EVERY LEARNER IS CHALLENGED, EMPOWERED, AND ENGAGED.

From Vision to Practice: Making Deeper Learning a Reality for Every Student.

With strong support and implementation, the Learning Framework addresses disparities and sets high expectations for every learner. It is a tool that unifies the district's vision, ensuring all learners have access to challenging, engaging, and empowering experiences. The framework drives vertical, coordinated curriculum and aligns professional development. It establishes clear expectations for best practices, ensuring universal access to equitable and inclusive learning experiences.



At the heart of our district’s mission is a shared commitment to deeper learning—an approach that equips all students with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets to thrive in school, career, and life. This Learning Framework serves as our collective guide, weaving together the essential practices and beliefs that bring deeper learning to life in every classroom, every day.

Visualized as a tree with roots, this framework symbolizes the strength and interconnectedness of the four core domains that support deeper learning:

- **Learning Environment**
- **Educator Growth & Empowerment**
- **Planning & Instruction**
- **Assessment & Data**

Much like the roots of a tree, these domains are individually essential and collectively powerful. Together, they ensure that every student experiences a robust education rooted in relevance, joy and relationships allowing students to experience success as represented in the bold leaves on the tree.

This framework is not just a document—it is a shared commitment to deeper learning for all. It invites us, as educators, to collaborate, innovate, and reflect as we align our practices to the aspirations of our students and the mission of our district. In doing so, we strengthen the bonds between our shared vision, our classrooms, and the bright futures of every learner we serve. Let this framework be a tool for alignment, a catalyst for growth, and a source of inspiration as we work together to empower deeper learning across our district.

This framework will be supported into practice by prioritizing these beliefs and aligning actions across the system as modeled below. Throughout this framework the term “educators” is used inclusively to refer to all roles in the system (district leaders, school leaders, coaches, teachers, etc.)

Leaders believe...	Educators believe...	So that learners...
School district leaders believe that fostering a culture of deeper learning begins with creating the conditions for all students to belong and thrive. They are committed to partnering with educators, students, families, and communities to co-create inclusive and equitable learning environments. By keeping student engagement and learning at the heart of every decision, leaders aim to provide rigorous and inclusive curricular materials and professional learning opportunities empowering educators to achieve dynamic outcomes for students.	Educators believe that deeper learning happens when students are empowered and engaged in learning environments that celebrate their identities and provide equitable opportunities for growth. They prioritize building strong relationships with students, families, and colleagues to understand and respond to their needs. Educators are committed to leveraging district adopted curricular materials to support the implementation of standards aligned lessons that are culturally responsive, reflecting students’ lived experiences and beyond.	As a result of this collective commitment, students will feel challenged, empowered, and successfully engaged in learning environments. These environments will co-create conditions that enable students to thrive. Students will experience a strong sense of belonging, build confidence, and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the world.

Domain 1: Learning Environment

Burlington schools are places where students and educators feel safe, supported, and valued. These environments are built upon clear boundaries, consistent routines, and a shared commitment to mutual respect. They emphasize equitable access to resources, inclusive practices, and a growth mindset, empowering all individuals to engage, collaborate, and thrive academically and personally.

Learning environments encompass physical spaces within and beyond school buildings, including:

- Classrooms
- Hallways
- Offices
- Schoolyards
- Field trips
- Sporting events
- The broader community



Domain 1: Learning Environment

Physical Environment

A. Intentional Design

1. Educators' spaces are clean, organized, and flexible to support diverse learning activities while maintaining a structured and functional environment.
2. Educators organize classrooms that implement adaptive layouts and flexible seating options (ex: standing desks, floor seating, ergonomic chairs) that enhance engagement, collaboration, and comfort.
3. Educators create learning spaces that are inclusive, designed to meet the sensory, physical, and learning needs of all students.

B. Well-Being & Inclusivity

1. Educators create learning environments designed to reflect and celebrate the diverse identities, cultures, and histories of students, affirm students' identities and disrupt oppressive narratives.
2. Educators design classroom environments that promote a sense of calm and support learners' mental health and well-being.

Learning Community Culture

C. Relationships & Community Building

1. Educators create daily opportunities for learners to connect with peers and trusted adults fostering trust and belonging (ex: collaborative activities, class meetings, intentional check-ins, restorative circles).
2. Educators consistently model empathy, active listening, and mutual respect, ensuring that all learners feel valued and seen.
3. Classroom expectations are co-constructed with students to emphasize shared power and ownership of the learning environment.

D. Equity, Inclusion, & Support

1. Educators actively disrupt inequitable practices and celebrate learners' strengths. (ex: examine bias, disrupt harmful patterns, provided multiple ways to represent knowledge, etc.)
2. Educators leverage school wide multi tiered systems of support (MTSS) to identify and address the needs of learners requiring additional support, with a focus on restorative practices, re-engagement strategies, and individualized attention.

E. Emotional Well-Being

1. Social Emotional Learning is integrated into daily routines (ex: student self regulation, conflict resolutions, mindfulness, reflective practices, etc.)
2. Educators feedback is specific, timely, and focused on learners' growth, fostering resilience and confidence.

Aligned Student Outcomes

Students actively participate in classroom activities, collaborate with peers, and seek support from trusted adults, demonstrating a sense of belonging.

Students contribute to a positive and inclusive learning environment by following co-constructed expectations and using classroom resources effectively.

Students apply social-emotional strategies to regulate their emotions, manage conflicts, and engage in restorative practices when needed.

Domain 2: Educator Growth & Empowerment

We believe in the power of a collaborative and reflective environment where educators continuously grow through shared practices and mutual support. This domain emphasizes trust and a commitment to collective improvement to enhance instructional quality and student outcomes. Engagement in professional learning communities and instructional coaching cycles allow educators to move many of the following indicators into action. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, educators support one another to meet the diverse needs of students and driving meaningful, sustained improvement.

Educator Growth & Empowerment

A. Collaborative Practices

1. Educators share and seek information to support student achievement, including insights from families and caregivers.
2. Educators collaborate to adapt and implement research-based curriculum in ways that integrate anti-racism, SEL, and content standards, creating culturally affirming and student-centered instruction.
3. Educators independently and collaboratively analyze data through an equity lens to identify disparities, co-develop strategies, and share resources that ensure equitable access to learning.
4. Educators make intentional moves to collaborate with families sharing resources and student progress.

B. Reflective and Supportive Practices

1. Educators engage in reflective practices that examine their own beliefs, biases, and practices.
2. Educators welcome peers and leaders into their classrooms for observation and feedback to foster shared learning.
3. Educators demonstrate a sense of collective responsibility for the well-being and success of the learning community.
4. Teams establish shared agreements, routines, and practices that foster a learner-focused culture, ensuring equitable participation, educator leadership, and a safe space for diverse perspectives.
5. Educators foster trust and respect with peers through empathy, collaboration, inclusive practices, and restorative conflict resolution.

C. Professional Growth

1. Educators, supported by leadership, engage in professional learning that aligns with organizational and individual goals and emphasizes inclusive, high-impact practices.

Aligned Student Outcomes

Students engage in culturally affirming and student-centered learning experiences that reflect diverse perspectives and promote academic rigor.

Students feel safe and supported in their learning community, demonstrating trust in their educators and peers through active participation and respectful interactions.

Domain 3: Planning & Instruction

Educators engage in intentional planning and instructional practices to deliver culturally relevant, learner-centered, and standards-aligned lessons that promote deep learning, equity, and student ownership of the learning process. By implementing district-adopted, research-based, high-quality instructional materials with intention, educators promote consistent, high quality, and accessible learning experiences that support all students in meeting academic expectations and developing critical thinking skills.

Planning & Instruction

A. Collaborative Planning & Standards Alignment

1. Educators collaboratively unpack standards to ensure clarity on expectations for mastery.
2. Educators analyze data and student work to identify strengths, needs, and trends, using this information to inform lesson design and differentiation strategies.
3. Educators design and deliver instruction that is intentionally aligned to grade-level content standards, ensuring clarity, rigor, and relevance in student learning.
4. Educators write and share clear learning targets in student-friendly language, ensuring students understand what they are learning and why it matters.

B. Culturally Relevant & Student-Centered Practices

1. Instruction is intentionally designed to reflect and affirm students' lived experiences and beyond while also incorporating opportunities for student voice, choice, and agency.
2. Instruction is culturally relevant and connect academic content to real-world applications, helping students see the relevance of their learning to their lives and communities.
3. Educators use a variety of instructional strategies scaffolding grade-level content to differentiate instruction ensuring access for all learners, including multilingual students and those with diverse abilities.

C. Evidence-Based Instructional Practices

1. Instruction leverages evidence-based practices, such as explicit instruction, differentiation, modeling, and inquiry-based learning, to engage students and deepen understanding.
2. Lessons prioritize students doing the majority of the cognitive work, with opportunities for student discourse, collaboration, and problem-solving.
3. Educators facilitate meaningful discussions where students explain their thinking, ask questions, and engage with diverse perspectives.
4. Educators integrate frequent, varied checks for understanding throughout lessons, using the data to adjust instruction in real time and ensure all students are engaged and progressing.

Aligned Student Outcomes

Students articulate learning targets and explain how their learning connects to larger outcomes.

Students feel safe and supported in their learning community, demonstrating trust in their educators and peers through active participation and respectful interactions.

Students actively engage with grade-level content, using scaffolds, feedback, and supports to enhance their learning and success.

Domain 4: Assessment & Data

Educators leverage assessment practices to guide instruction, measure learning, and promote equity, ensuring all students achieve academic growth and mastery. Data includes more than standardized tests—it encompasses student work, observations, and formative assessments that provide real-time insights. In professional learning communities, educators analyze this data to refine instruction, identify patterns, and co-develop targeted interventions. When used effectively, assessment fosters responsive teaching, continuous improvement, equitable learning experiences and build a culture of collective responsibility.

Assessment & Data

A. Assessment FOR Learning

- 1. Educators analyze formative assessment data to plan differentiated supports and scaffold instruction to meet diverse learning needs (ex: planning timely and targeted intervention, informing MTSS, etc).
- 2. Students interpret their own assessment data to set, monitor, and reflect on personal academic goals with teacher guidance.
- 3. Educators in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) analyze data and student work to refine instructional practices, address learning gaps, and share strategies for student success.
- 4. Educators engage students in reflective practices, such as revising work based on feedback and tracking progress, to promote a growth mindset and resilience.

B. Assessment OF Learning

- 1. Summative assessments (e.g., tests, projects, portfolios) are aligned with grade-level standards and designed to measure mastery of learning objectives.
- 2. Assessments are culturally and linguistically responsive, providing multiple ways for students to demonstrate mastery.
- 3. Students demonstrate learning through multiple formats (e.g., performance tasks, portfolios, presentations) to reflect diverse strengths and needs.
- 4. Rubrics and performance expectations are clearly communicated to students and families before assessments, promoting transparency and trust.
- 5. Educators regularly share assessment results with students and families, highlighting strengths, areas for growth, and actionable steps to support progress.

Aligned Student Outcomes

Students analyze their own assessment data, set goals, and revise their work based on feedback to monitor progress and build a growth mindset.

Students demonstrate mastery through multiple formats, such as projects, portfolios, and presentations.

Students actively use feedback to reflect on their progress and apply next steps for improvement.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Anti-racism

Active effort to identify, challenge, and eliminate racism by changing policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racial inequalities.

Learning Core

Teachers and students interacting with content.

Formative assessment

An ongoing process of gathering and using feedback to improve student learning.

Inequity

Unfair access to opportunities, resources, or treatment based on differences like race, gender, or socioeconomic status.

Professional learning communities (PLC)

Groups of educators who collaborate to share knowledge, improve practices, and enhance student outcomes.

Social emotional learning (SEL)

The process of developing skills to recognize and manage emotions, build healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Culturally affirming

Recognizing, valuing, and supporting the diverse identities, traditions, and experiences of individuals or communities in a respectful and meaningful way.

Equity

Ensuring fair access, opportunities, and resources based on individual needs to achieve equal outcomes.

Growth mindset

The belief that abilities and intelligence can develop through effort, learning, and persistence.

Inquiry-based learning

A learner-centered approach where learners explore questions, problems, or scenarios to build knowledge through investigation and discovery.

Rigor

Quality of being challenging and thorough, requiring deep thinking and effort to achieve high standards.

Learner-centered

An approach that prioritizes the needs, interests, and learning styles of students, making them active participants in their education.

Culturally relevant

Refers to practices that affirm students' identities, connect learning to their experiences, and promote engagement and equity.

Explicit instruction

A structured, clear, and direct teaching approach that breaks down concepts into small steps with guided practice and feedback.

Inclusive practices

Strategies that ensure all individuals, regardless of background or ability, feel valued, supported, and engaged.

Oppressive narrative

A harmful story or belief system that reinforces inequality, discrimination, or dominance over marginalized groups.

Scaffold

The support and guidance provided to help learners accomplish tasks they cannot complete independently, gradually removed as they gain skills.

Summative assessment

A test or evaluation used to measure student learning at the end of an instructional period.



Thank You!

We would like to express gratitude to the steering committee and workgroup members whose collaboration made this framework a reality. Their commitment to centering learners in the development of the tool and amplifying others' voices through their representation is truly commendable.

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Every learner is challenged, empowered, and engaged.
Join the journey!