

Slate Valley Unified Union School District

Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, Hubbardton, Orwell, and West Haven



2022-2023 Annual Report & FY24 Proposed Budget

For this report and additional information, please visit the
Slate Valley Unified Union School District website: www.SlateValleyUnified.org



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District Officers

| | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Moderator | Vacant |
| Clerk | Elisabeth MacKay, Castleton |
| Treasurer | Dawn Custer, Hubbardton |

Board of Directors

Benson

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Patricia Beaumont-Stannard | patricia.beaumont@svuvt.org |
| Rebeckah St. Peter | rebeckah.stpeter@svuvt.org |
| Open Seat | |

Castleton

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Julie Finnegan | julie.finnegan@svuvt.org |
| Toni Lobdell | toni.lobdell@svuvt.org |
| Tim Smith, Chair | timothy.smith@svuvt.org |

Fair Haven

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Tara Buxton, Clerk | tara.buxton@svuvt.org |
| Christopher Stanton | christopher.stanton@svuvt.org |
| Richard Wilson | richard.wilson@svuvt.org |

Hubbardton

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Christine Pouliot | christine.pouliot@svuvt.org |
| Christina Ryan | christina.ryan@svuvt.org |
| Open Seat | |

Orwell

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Glen Cousineau | glen.cousineau@svuvt.org |
| Peter Stone, Vice Chair | peter.stone@svuvt.org |
| John Wurzbacher | john.wurzbacher@svuvt.org |

West Haven

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Tanya Tolchin | tanya.tolchin@svuvt.org |
| Open Seat | |
| Open Seat | |

Administration

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Superintendent of Schools | Brooke Olsen-Farrell |
| Director of Special Services | Kristin Benway |
| Director of Operations | Christopher Cole |
| Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment | Casey O'Meara |
| Director of Finance | Cheryl Scarzello |
| BVS Principal | Amy Roy |
| CES Principal | Kim Prehoda |
| CES Assistant Principal of Student Services | Bonnie Lenihan |
| FHGS Principal | Deborah Infurna |
| FHGS Assistant Principal | Jennefer Paquette |
| FHUMHS Principal | Benjamin Worthing |
| FHUMHS Assistant Principal | Kate Leathe |
| FHUMHS Assistant Principal | Gwen Hagenbarth |
| FHUMHS Assistant Principal of Student Services | Margaret Hayward |
| OVS Principal | Patrick Walters |

W A R N I N G
ANNUAL MEETING

SLATE VALLEY UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

(Towns of Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, Hubbardton, Orwell, West Haven)

FEBRUARY 27, 2023

The legal voters of the Slate Valley Unified Union School District (SVUUSD) consisting of the towns of Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, Hubbardton, Orwell and West Haven are hereby warned and notified to meet at Fair Haven Union Middle High School Band Room on Monday, February 27, 2023 at 6:30 PM to conduct the following business:

VIRTUALLY CONNECT BY GOING TO <https://meet.google.com/ojq-okkg-med>
OR BY CALLING (US) +1 352-800-6514 PIN: 943 590 076#

Anyone who attends virtually will be seen as a “passive participant” meaning they can ask questions and comment but cannot vote from the floor.

Article 1: To elect the following officers to serve for a term of one (1) year:

- A. Moderator
- B. Clerk
- C. Treasurer

Article 2: To hear and act upon the reports of School District Officers.

Article 3: To approve annual salaries for the School Directors and other elected officers of the School District.

Article 4: Shall the voters of the School District authorize the Board of School Directors to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes in excess of anticipated revenues for the next fiscal year.

Article 5: To have the Board of Directors of the School District present the proposed school budget for the ensuing year.

Article 6: To transact any other business that may come before the meeting.

MARCH 7, 2023

The meeting shall then be recessed to Tuesday, March 7, 2023 for the purpose of voting on the following articles at the usual polling places in the member districts by Australian ballot, said ballots being brought to Bomoseen Fellowship Bible Church following the closing of the polls in the member districts where they will be commingled and counted by the Board of Civil Authority of the constituent districts.

The Town polls will be opened as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Town of Benson | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM | Benson Community Hall |
| Town of Castleton | 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM | Castleton Fire Station |
| Town of Fair Haven | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM | American Legion Post 49 |
| Town of Hubbardton | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM | Hubbardton Town Hall |
| Town of Orwell | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM | Orwell Town Hall |
| Town of West Haven | 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM | West Haven Town Hall |

Article 7: Shall the voters of the School District authorize a transfer from the general fund surplus balance in the amount of \$250,000 to the capital improvements and repairs reserve fund?

Article 8: Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend Twenty-Eight Million Fifty-Six Thousand Four Hundred Dollars \$28,056,400.00 which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?

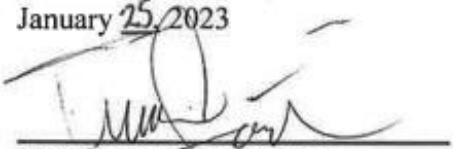
Article 9: To elect the following officers to serve from their election and qualification until March following the election and qualification of their successors:

- A. School Director, Benson for a term of three (3) years
- B. School Director, Castleton for a term of three (3) years
- C. School Director, Fair Haven for a term of three (3) years
- D. School Director, Hubbardton for a term of three (3) years
- E. School Director, Orwell for a term of three (3) years
- F. School Director, West Haven for a term of three (3) years
- G. School Director, Hubbardton for a term of two (2) years of three (3) years
- H. School Director, West Haven for a term of one (1) year of three (3) years
- I. School Director, West Haven for a term of two (2) years of three (3) years

Informational Hearing:

Said persons and voters are further notified and warned that the meeting on Monday, February 27, 2023 at 6:30 P.M. at the Fair Haven Union Middle High School in Fair Haven, Vermont will also serve as an informational hearing to discuss Articles 7, 8 & 9 which will be voted on by Australian ballot on Tuesday, March 7, 2023.

Dated at Fair Haven, Vermont
January 25, 2023


Timothy Smith, Chairman
Slate Valley Unified Union School

Received and Recorded
January 25, 2023


Elisabeth MacKay, Clerk
Slate Valley Unified Union School

Slate Valley Unified Union School District Annual Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2022

Fair Haven Union High School

5:30 p.m.

Administration Present: Brooke Olsen-Farrell-Superintendent; Casey O'Meara-Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment; Kris Benway-Director of Special Services; Chris Cole-Director of Operations; Cheryl Scarzello-Director of Finance

SVUUSD Board Members Present: Tim Smith, Mike Bache, Peter Stone, Julie Finnegan, Glen Cousineau, Rick Wilson, Christie Pouliot and Pat Beaumont, Toni Lobdell, Rebeckah St.Peter, Tanya Tolchin, John Wurzbacher Local Administration Present: Ben Worthing-FHUHS Principal, Kate Leathe-FHUHS Assistant Principal, Margaret Hayward-FHUHS Director of Special Education, Amy Roy-BVS Principal.

Others Present (that signed the attendance sheet): Liz MacKay, Curtis Hier, Ceil Hunt and RoseAnne VanLew People Present via Zoom: Makayla Ackert, Helen Alexander, Rebecca Armitage, Katie Crowley, Krista Grover, Phil Hall, Colleen Howard, Rebecca Hitchins, Deb Infurna, Bonnie Lenihan, Sara Mason, Theresa Nolan, Jen Oberkirch, Jennefer Paquette, Kim Prehoda, Walter Ripley, Sharon Ryan, Glen Traverse, Patrick Walters, and 4 others

Call to Order: The annual meeting of the Slate Valley Unified Union School District was called to order by Ceil Hunt at 5:33 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance: Ceil Hunt led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance. Tim provided the meeting participants with an overview of how the Annual Budget Informational meeting would be handled as this is the first time during an annual meeting that it was necessary to hold a virtual meeting. Tim will present the articles to be voted on, Board Chair, and Board Finance Committee Chair will present the budget, there will be a short message from Slate Valley's Principals and then there will be questions from the participants of tonight's meeting. Tim asked that all questions be held until the end of the presentation of information. He stated he would allow as much time as necessary to be sure all parties have their questions answered.

Article 1: To hear the Board of School Directors of the SVUUSD present its estimate of expenses for the ensuing year Board of School Directors Budget Presentation Tim Smith shared and spoke to the audience about the Slate Valley mission statement, enrollment, and projected staffing changes (reductions). Tim asked several administrators to speak. Kris Benway shared about special education. She spoke about changes in special education funding and the variety of social emotional needs that our district is experiencing. Casey O'Meara said that we need to meet the needs of all learners. That means providing the necessary support and creating programming. He talked about how resources will be shared in the future when we have a 7-12 school. Tim shared that there are many uncontrollable costs that affect the budget. These costs include insurance, utilities, and pensions. He spoke to the audience how the ESSER funds (emergency aid to help schools recover from Covid-19) were being used. Brooke Olsen-Farrell spoke more on how these federal ESSER funds that were received were and are being used. A large portion is being used for the new Fair Haven Middle School renovation project. Chris Cole shared with the audience that approximately 12 million dollars of maintenance is needed in the district over the next 5-10 years. Ben Worthing spoke about the ways that the high school is getting ready for the arrival of the middle school children. Tim Smith explained how the expenditures in this proposed budget are \$10,000 less than the budget from the previous year. The voters should not expect that type of decrease to continue. He mentioned that over 75% of the budget goes to salary and benefits. Benefits are not determined by the Board any longer as they are negotiated at the state level. He also mentioned that the pension system has placed further restrictions on our budgeting process as this is determined at the state level also. He spoke to the audience about the amount of ESSER funds that the district had received and the restrictions for the spending of these funds that come with it. There is a very strict application process and accountability process as to how these funds are utilized and that these monies can not just be turned over to the public to reduce the tax burden. Brooke Olsen-Farrell also talked about transportation issues and the increase in costs of our bussing. Cheryl Scarzello spoke about the surplus funds that we had from last year. These funds are mostly due to things that could not be done because of Covid-19. It is not predicted that there would be such surpluses in the future. Tim Smith ended

the presentation of the FY23 budget by sharing that our cost per equalized pupil is \$2000 less than the state average. Tim opened up the meeting for questions regarding the presentation or concerns about the budget. He also thanked the community for their continued support. He noted that Slate Valley is very proud of the work the Board has done and the Administration and Staff in adapting to this year of COVID and for ensuring that our children are able to attend school safely every day. Link to Board Presentation here.

<http://www.slatevalleyunified.org/o/svUSD/page/budget>

Ceil Hunt read article 2 into record Article 2: To elect the following officers to serve from their election and qualification until March following the election and qualification of their successors:

- A. School Director, Benson for a term of three (3) years
- B. School Director, Castleton for a term of three (3) years
- C. School Director, Fair Haven for a term of three (3) years
- D. School Director, Hubbardton for a term of three (3) years
- E. School Director, Orwell for a term of three (3) years
- F. School Director, West Haven for a term of three (3) years
- G. School Director, Benson for a term of one (1) year of three (3) years
- H. School Director, Hubbardton for a term of one (1) year of three (3) years
- I. School Director, West Haven for a term of two (2) years of three (3) years

Ceil Hunt read article 3 into record Article 3: To elect the following officers to serve for a term of one (1) year:

- A. Moderator
- B. Clerk
- C. Treasurer

Ceil Hunt read article 4 into record Article 4: Shall the voters approve the following compensation to be paid to Slate Valley Unified Union School District Officers?

- A. School Directors - \$1,200 per person per year
- B. School Board Chair - \$1,500 per year
- C. Treasurer - \$1,200 per year

Question: RoseAnne VanLew asked if the school board chairman gets \$1500 in all or on top of the \$1200. Tim answered that the chairman gets \$1500 in all.

Ceil Hunt read article 5 into record Article 5: Shall the voters authorize the Slate Valley Unified Union School District to borrow money pending receipt of payments from the State Education Fund or Town Tax Funds by the issuance of its notes or orders payable not later than one year from date provided, however, that the Slate Valley Unified Union School District is authorized by Vermont Statutes to borrow sufficient funds to meet pending obligations?

Ceil Hunt read article 6 into record Article 6: Shall the voters of the School District authorize a transfer from the general fund surplus balance in the amount of \$820,000 to the capital improvements and repairs reserve fund?

Question: Curtis Hier asked what a No vote to this article would mean? Cheryl answered that the money would remain in the general funds surplus.

Ceil Hunt read article 7 into record Article 7: Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend Twenty-Six Million Two Hundred Seventy Thousand Forty-Seven Dollars \$26,270,047.00 which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$16,983.43 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 2.94% greater than spending for the current year.

Adjournment: The annual meeting of the Slate Valley Unified Union School District recessed at 6:30 PM to Tuesday, March 1, 2022 for the purpose of voting on the above articles at the usual polling places in the member districts by Australian ballot, said ballots being brought to Fair Haven Union High School Library following the closing of the polls in the member districts where they will be commingled and counted by the Board of Civil Authority of the constituent districts.

Superintendent's Report

This year we have focused on our new District Goals and the opening of our middle school. During the Spring of 2022 we worked with committees to revise our District Goals. The following represent Slate Valley's area of focus over the next 5 years.

1. Develop College and Career Readiness by ensuring equal access to academically-rigorous curriculum and instruction, closely monitoring individual student progress, and attending to the social and emotional needs of all students
2. Establish Community Engagement, Service, and Partnerships by providing valuable, relevant, engaging and inclusive learning experiences for a global economy
3. Proactively Manage Productive School Environments continuing fiscal accountability for operational efficiencies and the alignment of human, financial, and physical resources throughout the District
4. Maintain a focus on recruiting, developing, and retaining exemplary educators and leveraging their expertise throughout the district

While all of our goals are important, this year we are hoping to grow the relationship between the school and community. That is why we have asked all staff in the organization to find ways to engage the community with our learners. You will see these efforts reflected in the Principal Reports contained within this report. We also welcome the community to share opportunities that our learners can participate in.

In addition, we opened the "new" Slate Valley Middle School this year! An infinite amount of time and effort was, and continues, to be expended by many to make this "new" middle school work for all of our students. There have certainly been some bumps in the road and there will continue to be as our students and staff adjust. We thank everyone for their patience and commitment to this project.

All of our elementary schools now serve students PreK through Grade 6. This has been an opportunity to redefine an elementary school experience in Slate Valley schools and our staff have embraced the challenge.

With each school year comes uncertainty as there will be events we could not predict. As we have emerged from the pandemic we have noticed an increase in student misbehavior and overall student need. We have responded to this with the reteaching of our expectations, reinforcement of our codes of conduct, and additional academic support. We have added more mental health support using federal grants funds as well.

Like families, schools are contending with inflation. We are seeing an increase in costs of supplies, fuel oil, food, electricity, and health insurance (which is state negotiated) to name a few. Additionally, our enrollment has increased which has led to an increase in three positions reflected in this year's budget.

Thriving schools lead to thriving communities. We have a promising future ahead of us and it continues to be my great honor to serve as your superintendent. Thank you for your patience, collaboration and support as we continue to work hard for our students.

Respectfully submitted,
Brooke Olsen-Farrell
Superintendent



SVUUSD Demographics

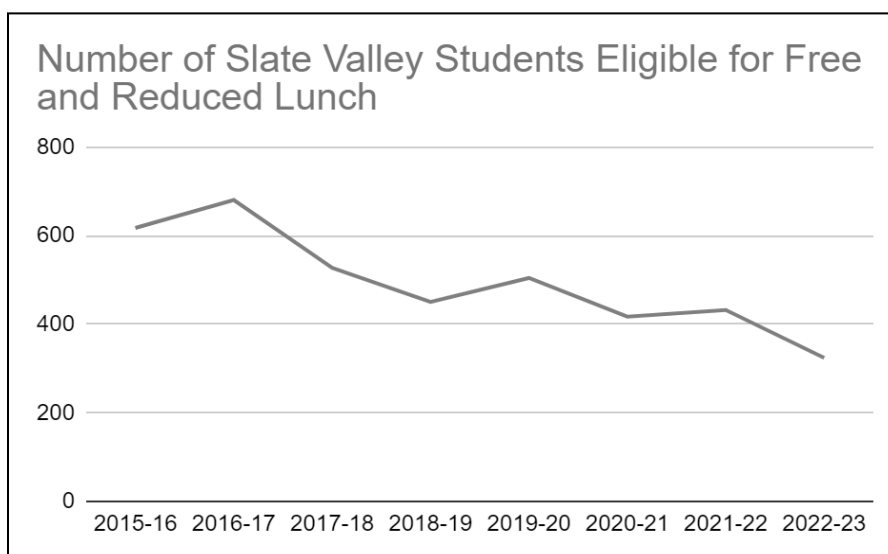
Slate Valley Enrollment Summary

| School Year | Student Enrollment as of Dec. 1 | Number of Students Eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 2017-18 | 1350 | 527 |
| 2018-19 | 1310 | 450 |
| 2019-20 | 1259 | 504 |
| 2020-21 | 1174 | 417 |
| 2021-22 | 1242 | 432 |
| 2022-23 | 1277 | 324 |

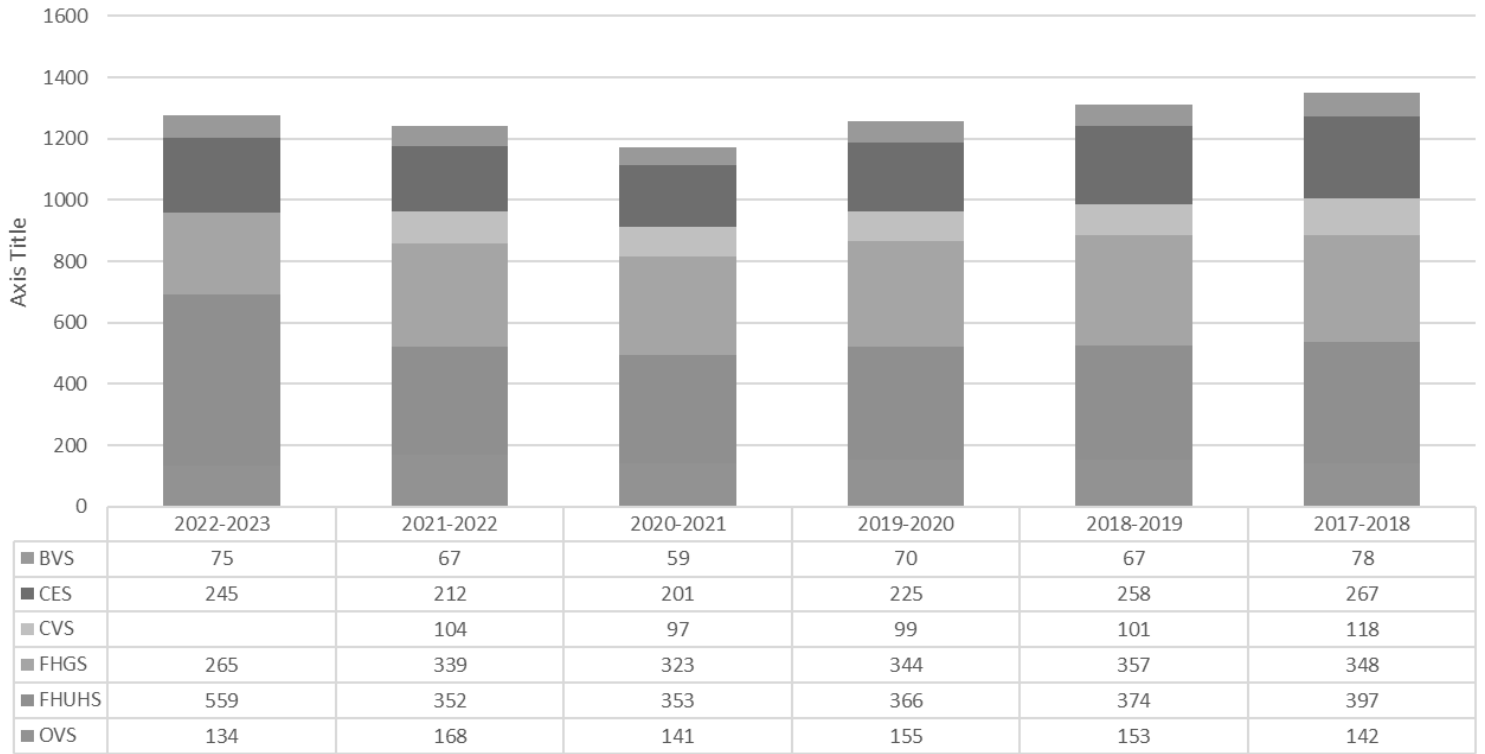
Slate Valley Enrollment by School

| School | 2022-2023 | 2021-2022 | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| BVS | 75 | 67 | 59 | 70 | 67 | 78 |
| CES | 245 | 212 | 201 | 225 | 258 | 267 |
| CVS | | 104 | 97 | 99 | 101 | 118 |
| FHGS | 265 | 339 | 323 | 344 | 357 | 348 |
| FHUMHS | 559 | 352 | 353 | 366 | 374 | 397 |
| OVS | 134 | 168 | 141 | 155 | 153 | 142 |

*Castleton Village School was closed effective 7/1/2022. Also note that district schools were reconfigured as of July 1st, 2022 to create a combined district middle school where all 7th & 8th graders attended school at the renovated Fair Haven Union Middle & High School campus.



Slate Valley Enrollment by School



Ethnic Groups

94.1% of SVUUSD students identify themselves as white/Caucasian, 5.6% as African-American, Asian, or Hispanic.

Average Daily Attendance

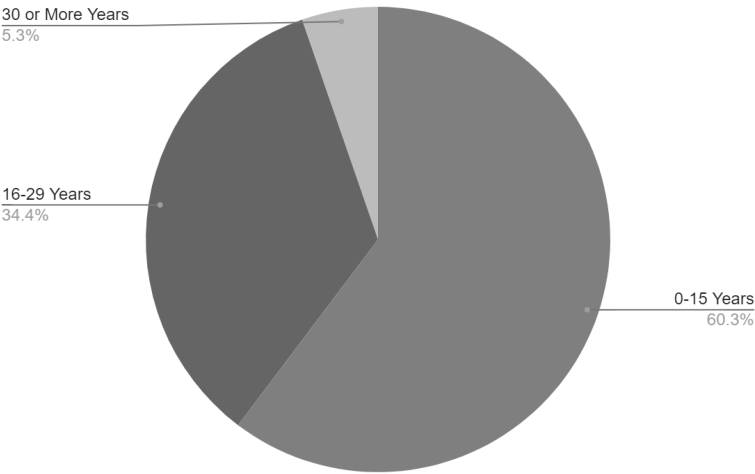
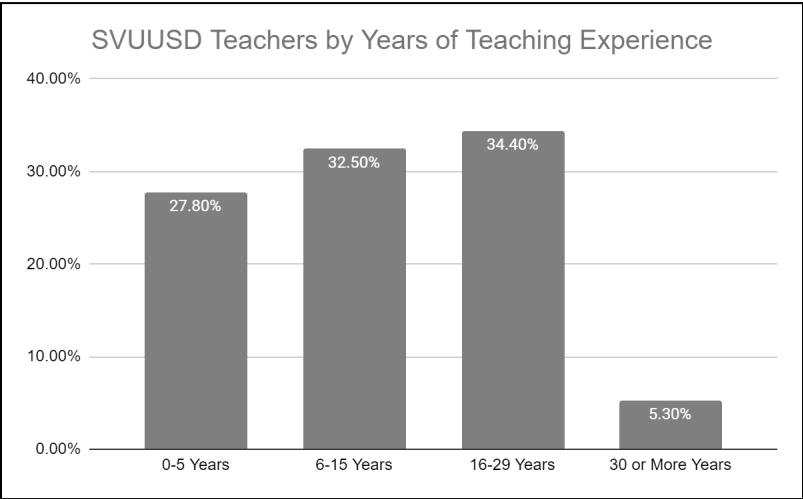
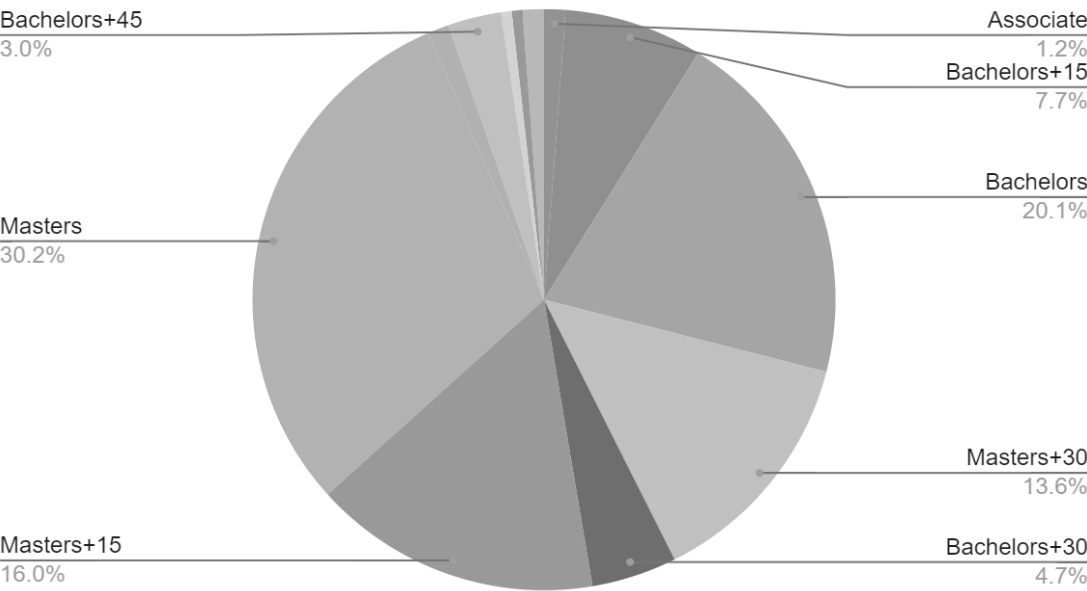
SVUSD's attendance rate for the 2021-2022 school year averaged 88.9%.



Faculty and Class Sizes

Professional Staff

SVUUSD Education Levels



SVUUSD Salary Schedule - July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Step | BA | BA + 15 | BA + 30 | BA + 45 | BA + 60 | MA | MA + 15 | MA + 30 |
| 1 | \$ 46,281 1.000 | \$ 47,855 1.034 | \$ 49,428 1.068 | \$ 51,002 1.102 | \$ 52,575 1.136 | \$ 54,149 1.170 | \$ 55,722 1.204 | \$ 57,296 1.238 |
| 2 | \$ 47,669 1.030 | \$ 49,243 1.064 | \$ 50,817 1.098 | \$ 52,390 1.132 | \$ 53,964 1.166 | \$ 55,537 1.200 | \$ 57,111 1.234 | \$ 58,684 1.268 |
| 3 | \$ 49,058 1.060 | \$ 50,631 1.094 | \$ 52,205 1.128 | \$ 53,779 1.162 | \$ 55,352 1.196 | \$ 56,926 1.230 | \$ 58,499 1.264 | \$ 60,073 1.298 |
| 4 | \$ 50,446 1.090 | \$ 52,020 1.124 | \$ 53,593 1.158 | \$ 55,167 1.192 | \$ 56,741 1.226 | \$ 58,314 1.260 | \$ 59,888 1.294 | \$ 61,461 1.328 |
| 5 | \$ 51,835 1.120 | \$ 53,408 1.154 | \$ 54,982 1.188 | \$ 56,555 1.222 | \$ 58,129 1.256 | \$ 59,702 1.290 | \$ 61,276 1.324 | \$ 62,850 1.358 |
| 6 | \$ 53,223 1.150 | \$ 54,797 1.184 | \$ 56,370 1.218 | \$ 57,944 1.252 | \$ 59,517 1.286 | \$ 61,091 1.320 | \$ 62,664 1.354 | \$ 64,238 1.388 |
| 7 | | \$ 56,185 1.214 | \$ 57,759 1.248 | \$ 59,332 1.282 | \$ 60,906 1.316 | \$ 62,479 1.350 | \$ 64,053 1.384 | \$ 65,626 1.418 |
| 8 | | \$ 57,574 1.244 | \$ 59,147 1.278 | \$ 60,721 1.312 | \$ 62,294 1.346 | \$ 63,868 1.380 | \$ 65,441 1.414 | \$ 67,015 1.448 |
| 9 | | \$ 58,962 1.274 | \$ 60,536 1.308 | \$ 62,109 1.342 | \$ 63,683 1.376 | \$ 65,256 1.410 | \$ 66,830 1.444 | \$ 68,403 1.478 |
| 10 | | \$ 60,350 1.304 | \$ 61,924 1.338 | \$ 63,498 1.372 | \$ 65,071 1.406 | \$ 66,645 1.440 | \$ 68,218 1.474 | \$ 69,792 1.508 |
| 11 | | \$ 61,739 1.334 | \$ 63,312 1.368 | \$ 64,886 1.402 | \$ 66,460 1.436 | \$ 68,033 1.470 | \$ 69,607 1.504 | \$ 71,180 1.538 |
| 12 | | | \$ 64,701 1.398 | \$ 66,274 1.432 | \$ 67,848 1.466 | \$ 69,422 1.500 | \$ 70,995 1.534 | \$ 72,569 1.568 |
| 13 | | | | \$ 67,663 1.462 | \$ 69,236 1.496 | \$ 70,810 1.530 | \$ 72,383 1.564 | \$ 73,957 1.598 |
| 14 | | | | \$ 69,051 1.492 | \$ 70,625 1.526 | \$ 72,198 1.560 | \$ 73,772 1.594 | \$ 75,345 1.628 |
| 15 | | | | \$ 70,440 1.522 | \$ 72,013 1.556 | \$ 73,587 1.590 | \$ 75,160 1.624 | \$ 76,734 1.658 |
| 16 | | | | \$ 71,828 1.552 | \$ 73,402 1.586 | \$ 74,975 1.620 | \$ 76,549 1.654 | \$ 78,122 1.688 |
| 17 | | | | \$ 73,217 1.582 | \$ 74,790 1.616 | \$ 76,364 1.650 | \$ 77,937 1.684 | \$ 79,511 1.718 |
| 18 | | | | \$ 74,605 1.612 | \$ 76,179 1.646 | \$ 77,752 1.680 | \$ 79,326 1.714 | \$ 80,899 1.748 |
| 19 | | | | | | \$ 79,141 1.710 | \$ 80,714 1.744 | \$ 82,288 1.778 |
| 20 | | | | | | \$ 80,529 1.740 | \$ 82,102 1.774 | \$ 83,676 1.808 |

Class Sizes

It shall be the sincere intention of the Board to limit the maximum number of pupils per class (except specials) as follows:

- Kindergarten through Grade 3, less than 20
- Grades 4 through 8, less than 25.

It is recognized that the availability of classroom teachers and unanticipated enrollments may necessarily cause a class size to exceed the number stated above.

SVUUSD Board Chair's Report

With the prior three school years adversely impacted by the COVID pandemic, what a relief to begin our 2022-2023 school year free of restrictions and ready to return to normal learning and routines. And what an exciting time it is to be a student in Slate Valley! With the concept of a consolidated middle school having been discussed at many points in the past, the Fair Haven Union Middle and High School officially opened for students to begin the school year this fall. When a substantial bond to construct a new middle school was soundly rejected by the voters in March 2020, the potential of a consolidated middle school seemed lost. However, in perhaps the lone good fortune to come from the pandemic, numerous sources of funding became available which was used to fit-up existing square footage within the high school to house all 7 th and 8 th grade students within the school district. A consolidated middle school has allowed us to bring together a critical mass of students and enhance academic programming; provide more opportunities in athletics, the arts, and science and technology; better utilize our human and physical assets; and operate within a more sustainable operating budget. Many thanks to school leadership, teachers, custodial staff, families, and community stakeholders for their ideas and support in making the new middle school a reality. As we all are aware, the price of everything has gone up lately. Unfortunately, the school budget is not insulated from the drivers of cost. While the board has successfully managed to keep expenditures flat over the past few years, the budget to be presented in March 2023 will show a significant increase in cost. Salaries are up 5%. Health insurance premiums are up 12%. Together, these two components represent approximately 80% of the total school budget and are largely outside a school board's ability to control. Energy and transportation costs are also up considerably. Staffing remains a challenge, as competition within an ever-shrinking pool of quality educators intensifies. Taken as a whole, the final analysis on property tax rates will be determined by: (1) VT Legislature use of education fund surplus; (2) education tax yield as determined by VT Legislature; (3) finalized pupil counts; and (4) common level of appraisal (CLA). All of these factors are outside school board control. We are mindful of the current economic environment, and remain focused on maximizing the efficient use of available resources. Education is changing rapidly. Society is changing rapidly. And with change comes new challenges and new asks of our community. School looks quite a bit different today than it did for our baby boomer generation fifty years ago, or even to my fellow Gen X'ers thirty years ago. The academic and emotional needs of our students has grown exponentially, and this trend was solidly in-place even before the pandemic. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for many of our students to come to school hungry, unkept, and unavailable to learn. Support, stability, and values, once normally thought to have been provided at home, can no longer be counted on in many circumstances. New initiatives, new mandates, new measures... the constant stream of "great ideas" from our political leaders never ends. Problem is, new initiatives come so fast that results can never be measured. The State is constantly asking more of our schools, but providing less. In the absence of funding, or perhaps leadership, many services previously provided by other State agencies are now becoming the responsibility of our schools. Because of this, a substantial and a growing component of the school budget goes towards providing these additional supports and services. As a school board, our ability to enact change and manage costs is limited. Change needs to occur at the top. I encourage everyone to not only participate in our local discussions, but to connect with elected Federal and State leaders. It takes a village to raise a child. We as a school board remain committed to this duty of providing the best education and expanded opportunities for our children. We thank the community for its continued support. We are proud, we are grateful, we are Slate Valley.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Smith
School Board Chair

Budget FY24 Proposed Budget Information

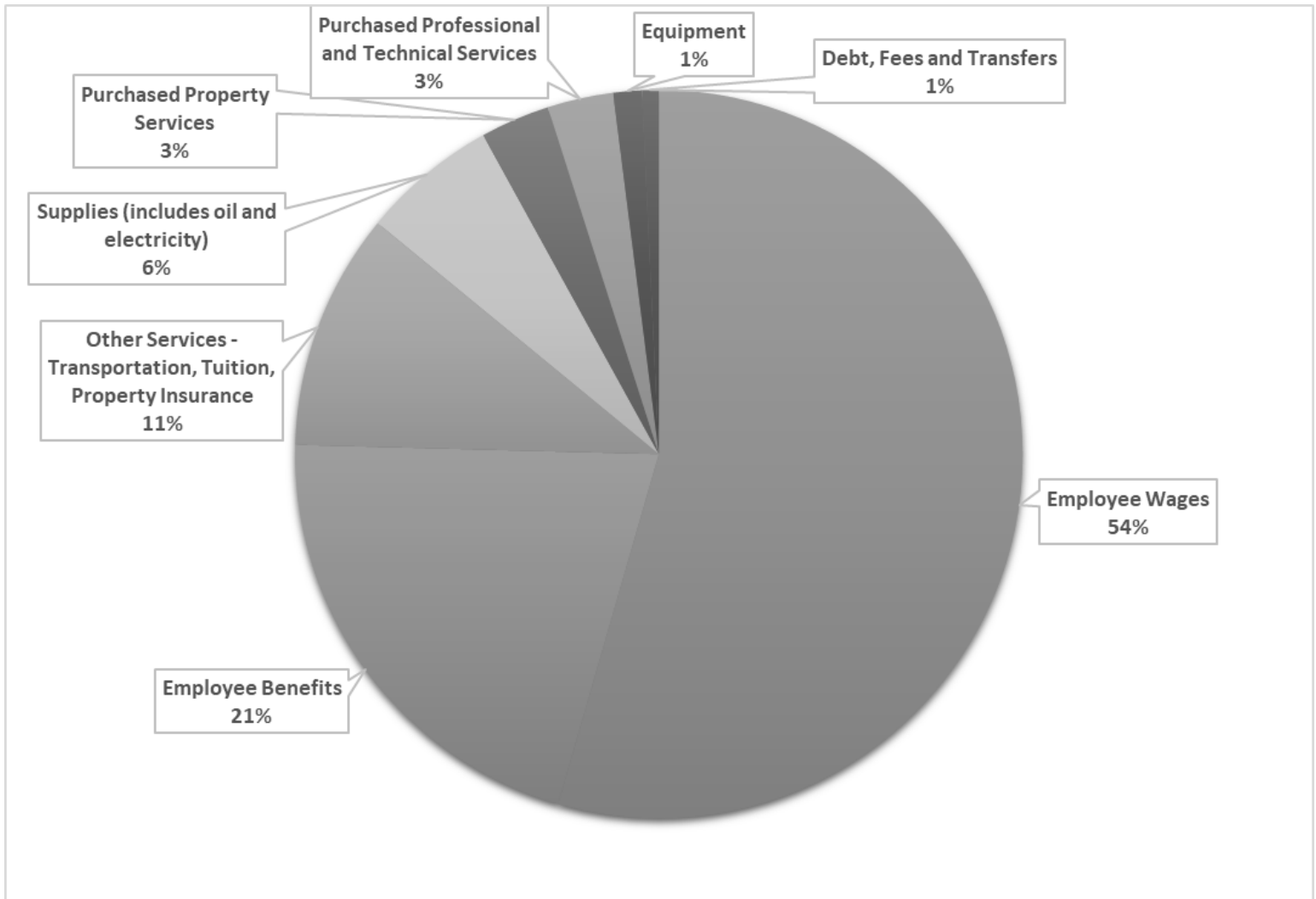
Budget Objectives

- Addition of 2 Classroom Teachers due to increased enrollment
- Address Student Behavior and Mental Health
- Building Maintenance - specifically additional classroom space at the Middle School
- Educational Equity for All Students
- Efficiencies Throughout the System
- Value for Taxpayers

Projected Staffing Changes

- Reduction of .3 FTE (EEE Teacher)
- Addition of 3 FTE (Support Staff Position, Middle School Teacher and Elementary Teacher at BVS)- due to an increase in enrollment.

FY24 Proposed Budget Breakdown by expenditure account



Revenue Summary FY24 Proposed Budget

| | | FY23 Budget | FY24 Proposed Budget | Change |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| | | 7/1/22-6/30/23 | 7/1/23-6/30/24 | Increase (Decrease) |
| Offsetting Revenues: | | | | |
| Local | | | | |
| | Gate Receipts | \$ 10,000 | \$ 15,000 | \$ 5,000 |
| | Prek Tuition | - | 3,764 | 3,764 |
| | Elementary Tuition | 33,000 | 16,500 | (16,500) |
| | Secondary Tuition | - | 52,500 | 52,500 |
| | Prior Year Surplus | 1,204,087 | 1,100,000 | (104,087) |
| | Indirect Fees Charged to Federal Grants | 30,000 | 30,000 | - |
| | Interest Earned | 25,000 | 6,000 | (19,000) |
| State | | | | |
| | Special Education | | | |
| | Early Childhood Special Ed Block Grant | 118,973 | 129,101 | 10,128 |
| | Act 173 Census Block Grant | 2,507,931 | 2,619,675 | 111,744 |
| | Excess Cost Reimbursement | - | 20,000 | 20,000 |
| | Extraordinary Needs Reimbursement | 19,500 | 30,000 | 10,500 |
| | State Placed Reimbursement | 90,000 | 140,000 | 50,000 |
| | Transportation | | | |
| | State Aid for Transportation | 421,000 | 436,500 | 15,500 |
| | Vocational Ed Transportation Aid | 56,500 | 58,000 | 1,500 |
| | Reimbursement for Drivers Ed | 6,000 | 8,000 | 2,000 |
| | Other | | | |
| | Merger Support Grant | 116,435 | 116,435 | - |
| | | | | |
| | SUBTOTAL OFFSETTING REVENUES | \$ 4,638,426 | \$ 4,781,475 | \$ 143,049 |
| | | | | |
| | State Education Spending Grant | 21,274,335 | 22,923,008 | 1,648,673 |
| | State To Tech Center On Behalf of the District | 323,786 | 351,917 | 28,131 |
| | | | | |
| | TOTAL REVENUES | \$ 26,236,547 | \$ 28,056,400 | \$ 1,819,853 |

Expense Summary by Functional Area FY24 Proposed Budget

| Function | Description of Functional Area | FY23 Budget | FY24 Proposed Budget | Change |
|----------|---|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| | | 7/1/22-6/30/23 | 7/1/23-6/30/24 | Increase (Decrease) |
| 1100 | Direct Instructional Programs -Reg Ed, Spec Ed and Voc Ed | \$ 13,184,573 | \$ 13,921,003 | \$ 736,430 |
| 1400 | Athletic Programs | 461,791 | 487,995 | 26,204 |
| 1500 | Co-Curricular Programs | 76,031 | 79,349 | 3,318 |
| 2120 | Guidance Services | 768,570 | 815,045 | 46,475 |
| 2132 | School Nurse Services | 543,902 | 535,655 | (8,247) |
| 2140 | Psychological Services | 94,348 | 67,669 | (26,679) |
| 2150 | Speech and Other Therapy Services | 356,255 | 367,112 | 10,857 |
| 2160 | Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Vision | 113,134 | 129,331 | 16,197 |
| 2190 | Other Student Services | 635,308 | 749,629 | 114,321 |
| 2210 | Improvement of Instruction | 287,019 | 376,008 | 88,989 |
| 2220 | Library Services | 292,927 | 328,883 | 35,956 |
| 2230 | Instruction Related Technology | 545,082 | 569,660 | 24,578 |
| 2311 | School Board and Legal Services | 112,515 | 124,337 | 11,822 |
| 2320 | Superintendent's Office | 370,474 | 381,059 | 10,585 |
| 2410 | School Administration | 1,781,646 | 1,920,273 | 138,627 |
| 2490 | Other Admin. Support Services | 441,907 | 514,555 | 72,648 |
| 2500 | Other Central Services | 150,202 | 181,599 | 31,397 |
| 2510 | Fiscal Services | 619,996 | 652,321 | 32,325 |
| 2580 | Districtwide Technology Services | 562,566 | 591,993 | 29,427 |
| 2600 | Buildings and Grounds | 2,555,734 | 2,809,215 | 253,481 |
| 4700 | Building Improvements | 600,000 | 500,000 | (100,000) |
| 2660 | Security and Safety | 201,881 | 218,799 | 16,918 |
| 2700 | Transportation | 1,339,250 | 1,543,958 | 204,708 |
| 3100 | Food Service Programs | 40,500 | 87,800 | 47,300 |
| 5000 | Debt Service | 100,936 | 103,152 | 2,216 |
| | | | | |
| | TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$ 26,236,547 | \$ 28,056,400 | \$ 1,819,853 |

A detailed report of the FY24 proposed budget expenditures compared to the FY23 budget, and actual expenditures for FY22 and FY23 year to date can be found by going to the Slate Valley UUSD website: www.slatevalleyunified.org. The website also has a link to the FY24 budget presentation which contains additional information regarding the budget and estimated tax rates.

Three Prior Years Comparison

PRELIMINARY

Three Prior Years Comparisons - Format as Provided by AOE

ESTIMATES
ONLY

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| District: Slate Valley UUSD SU: Addison - Rutland | | U062 Rutland County | | Property dollar equivalent yield | ←See bottom note | Homestead tax rate per \$15,479 of spending per equalized pupil |
| | | | | 15,479 | | 1.00 |
| | | | | 17,600 | | Income dollar equivalent yield per 2.0% of household income |
| Expenditures | | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 | FY2024 | |
| 1. | Adopted or warned union district budget (including special programs and full technical center expenditures) | \$26,402,586 | \$26,280,385 | \$26,236,547 | \$28,056,400 | 1. |
| 2. | plus Sum of separately warned articles passed at union district meeting | - | - | - | - | 2. |
| 3. | Adopted or warned union district budget plus articles | \$26,402,586 | \$26,280,385 | \$26,236,547 | \$28,056,400 | 3. |
| 4. | plus Obligation to a Regional Technical Center School District if any | - | - | - | - | 4. |
| 5. | plus Prior year deficit repayment of deficit | - | - | - | - | 5. |
| 6. | Total Union Expenditures | \$26,402,586 | \$26,280,385 | \$26,236,547 | \$28,056,400 | 6. |
| 7. | S.U. assessment (included in union budget) - informational data | - | - | - | - | 7. |
| 8. | Prior year deficit reduction (if included in union expenditure budget) - informational data | - | - | - | - | 8. |
| Revenues | | | | | | |
| 9. | Union revenues (categorical grants, donations, tuitions, federal, etc.) | \$4,794,164 | \$5,221,285 | \$4,638,426 | \$4,781,475 | 9. |
| 10. | Total offsetting union revenues | \$4,794,164 | \$5,221,285 | \$4,638,426 | \$4,781,475 | 10. |
| 11. | Education Spending | \$21,608,422 | \$21,059,100 | \$21,598,121 | \$23,274,925 | 11. |
| 12. | Slate Valley UUSD equalized pupils | 1,318.09 | 1,276.47 | 1,273.69 | 1,285.69 | 12. |
| 13. | Education Spending per Equalized Pupil | \$16,393.74 | \$16,497.92 | \$16,957.13 | \$18,103.06 | 13. |
| 14. | minus Less net eligible construction costs (or P&I) per equalized pupil | \$62.17 | \$61.81 | \$59.62 | \$56.00 | 14. |
| 15. | minus Less share of SpEd costs in excess of \$60,000 for an individual (per equip) | - | \$0.22 | \$0.72 | \$1.31 | 15. |
| 16. | minus Less amount of deficit if deficit is SOLELY attributable to tuitions paid to public schools for grades the district does not operate for new students who moved to the district after the budget was passed (per equip) | - | - | - | - | 16. |
| 17. | minus Less SpEd costs if excess is solely attributable to new SpEd spending if district has 20 or fewer equalized pupils (per equip) | - | - | - | - | 17. |
| 18. | minus Estimated costs of new students after census period (per equip) | - | - | - | - | 18. |
| 19. | minus Total tuitions if tuitioning ALL K-12 unless electorate has approved tuitions greater than average announced tuition (per equip) | - | - | - | - | 19. |
| 20. | minus Less planning costs for merger of small schools (per equip) | - | - | - | - | 20. |
| 21. | minus Teacher retirement assessment for new members of Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System on or after July 1, 2015 (per equip) | \$61.71 | \$70.82 | \$75.28 | - | 21. |
| 22. | minus Costs incurred when sampling drinking water outlets, implementing lead remediation, or retesting. | - | - | - | - | 22. |
| 23. | Excess spending threshold | threshold = \$18758 \$18,758.00 | threshold = \$18,708 \$18,789.00 | threshold = \$19,987 \$19,997.00 | threshold = \$22,204 \$22,204.00 | 23. |
| 24. | plus Excess Spending per Equalized Pupil over threshold (if any) | - | 2 year suspension \$16,498 | 2 year suspension \$16,957 | 2 year suspension \$18,103.06 | 24. |
| 25. | Per pupil figure used for calculating District Equalized Tax Rate | \$16,394 | \$16,498 | \$16,957 | \$18,103.06 | 25. |
| 26. | Union spending adjustment (minimum of 100%) | 149.061% based on yield \$10,998 | 145.780% based on yield \$11,317 | 127.363% based on \$13,314 | 116.952% based on \$15,479 | 26. |
| 27. | Anticipated equalized union homestead tax rate to be prorated [(\$18,103.06 ÷ (\$15,479 ÷ \$1.00))] | \$1.4508 based on \$1.00 | \$1.4378 based on \$1.00 | \$1.2738 based on \$1.00 | \$1.1695 based on \$1.00 | 27. |
| Prorated homestead union tax rates for members of Slate Valley UUSD | | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 | FY2024 | FY23 % |
| T017 | Benson | 1.4508 | 1.4378 | 1.2738 | 1.1695 | 100.00% |
| T042 | Castleton | 1.4508 | 1.4378 | 1.2738 | 1.1695 | 100.00% |
| T073 | Fair Haven | 1.4508 | 1.4378 | 1.2738 | 1.1695 | 100.00% |
| T098 | Hubbardton | 1.4508 | 1.4378 | 1.2738 | 1.1695 | 100.00% |
| T148 | Orwell | 1.4508 | 1.4378 | 1.2738 | 1.1695 | 100.00% |
| T233 | West Haven | 1.4508 | 1.4378 | 1.2738 | 1.1695 | 100.00% |
| 28. | Anticipated income cap percent to be prorated from Slate Valley UUSD [((\$18,103.06 ÷ \$17,600) × 2.00%)] | 2.36% based on 2.00% | 2.36% based on 2.00% | 2.13% based on 2.00% | 2.06% based on 2.00% | 28. |
| Prorated union income cap percentage for members of Slate Valley UUSD | | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 | FY2024 | FY23 % |
| T017 | Benson | 2.36% | 2.36% | 2.13% | 2.06% | 100.00% |
| T042 | Castleton | 2.36% | 2.36% | 2.13% | 2.06% | 100.00% |
| T073 | Fair Haven | 2.36% | 2.36% | 2.13% | 2.06% | 100.00% |
| T098 | Hubbardton | 2.36% | 2.36% | 2.13% | 2.06% | 100.00% |
| T148 | Orwell | 2.36% | 2.36% | 2.13% | 2.06% | 100.00% |
| T233 | West Haven | 2.36% | 2.36% | 2.13% | 2.06% | 100.00% |

- Following current statute, the Tax Commissioner recommended a property yield of \$15,479 for every \$1.00 of homestead tax per \$100 of equalized property value, an income yield of \$17,600 for a base income percent of 2.0%, and a non-residential tax rate of \$1.386. These figures use the estimated \$64,000,000 surplus from the Education Fund. **New and updated data will likely change the proposed property and income yields and perhaps the non-residential rate.**

- Final figures will be set by the Legislature during the legislative session and approved by the Governor.

- The base income percentage cap is 2.0%.

Expenditure Budget Comparison to Prior Years

| Comparison to FY23 | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------------|----------------|
| FY24 Proposed Budget | FY23 Budget | \$ Change | % Change |
| \$28,056,400 | \$26,236,547 | \$1,819,853 increase | 6.94% increase |

| Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil | | |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| FY24 Proposed | FY23 | Percent Change |
| \$18,103.06 | \$16,947.12 | 6.97% increase |

Homestead Tax Rate:

The Tax Commissioner in his annual letter to the Legislature, recommended a yield based on “statutorily prescribed parameters” of \$15,479. A significant factor in setting the yield this year is a surplus of nearly \$64 million in the Education Fund from FY23. The Vermont Legislature will finally set the yield and there is much discussion in Montpelier with regard to how to use the \$64 million. The District is using the Tax Commissioner’s recommended yield in its estimates of tax rates. Based on using this yield we are projecting that the equalized tax rate will be less than the FY23 tax rate by 10.41 cents. The equalized tax rate is further adjusted for each town’s common level of appraisal (CLA). The tax rate is an estimate until such time as the Legislature sets the yield.

| FY24 <u>Estimated</u> Equalized Tax Rate | | | |
|--|----------|------------------------------|----------------|
| FY24 | FY23 | Change in Equalized Tax Rate | |
| \$1.1695 | \$1.2736 | \$0.1041 decrease | 8.17% decrease |

| Town | FY24 <u>Estimated</u> Equalized Tax Rate | CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) | FY24 <u>Estimated</u> Homestead Tax Rate | Increase in <u>Estimated</u> Tax Rate (\$) | Increase in <u>Estimated</u> Tax Rate (%) |
|------------|--|---------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Benson | \$1.1695 | 88.42% | \$1.3227 | \$0.0368 | 2.86% |
| Castleton | \$1.1695 | 80.17% | \$1.4588 | \$0.0523 | 3.72% |
| Fair Haven | \$1.1695 | 93.04% | \$1.2570 | \$0.0435 | 3.58% |
| Hubbardton | \$1.1695 | 78.48% | \$1.4902 | \$0.0603 | 4.22% |
| Orwell | \$1.1695 | 89.14% | \$1.3120 | \$0.0469 | 3.71% |
| West Haven | \$1.1695 | 78.38% | \$1.4921 | \$0.1795 | 13.68% |

Income Sensitivity:

Some taxpayers pay their education property taxes based on household income. The FY24 household income cap percentage is 2.06%. In FY23 it was 2.13%. The following are the percent of homestead taxpayers by town that paid their property taxes based on income in tax year 2022.

| Town | % Based on Income | Town | % Based on Income |
|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Benson | 65% | Hubbardton | 73% |
| Castleton | 66% | Orwell | 72% |
| Fair Haven | 62% | West Haven | 81% |

Auditor's Reports Letter

The firm of RHR Smith & Company of Buxton, Maine was engaged to complete the annual audit of the financial statements of the governmental activities, any business type activities, any discretely presented component units, any major fund, and any aggregate remaining fund information, including the related notes to the financial statements which collectively comprise the basic financial statements of the Slate Valley Unified Union School District as of and for the year ending June 30, 2022.

The audits include the financial statements for the school district's non-major governmental, non-major enterprise, and fiduciary funds for the same period. The audit report includes Management's Discussion and Analysis, fund balances and budget to actual comparison information for the year ended June 30, 2022.

RHR Smith & Company has stated that the audit was conducted in accordance with auditing standards that require them to plan and perform the audit in order to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

The audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements that collectively comprise the Slate Valley Unified Union School District basic financial statements.

A copy of the annual audit can be obtained by contacting the Slate Valley Unified Union School District at 33 Mechanic Street, Fair Haven, VT or by visiting the website at www.slatevalleyunified.org.

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment's Report

The adoption of a revised Slate Valley mission and vision in June of 2022 provides a coherent framework through which to design teaching and learning. Slate Valley's revised Strategic Plan holds administrators accountability to our mission and vision.

As the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment the following strategies, in support of Slate Valley's mission, vision and accompanying goals, are where I focus my work:

1. Increase measurable student learning and reduce achievement gaps as we provide equitable student opportunities that nurtures the social and emotional well-being of all learners.

Slate Valley completed a two year process, interrupted by COVID-19, to revise its PreK-12 curriculum. The creation of PreK-6 skill based learning progressions are facilitated through Slate Valley's Pre-K - 6th Curriculum Overview. This document maps where skills and content appear across our school district. The ability to recognize foundational skills in reading, writing and math allows for individualized and small group instruction in Slate Valley's Pre-K 6 classrooms. The review of curriculum across K-12 music, physical education, health, art, and library, specific grade bands, and in our middle and high schools provided educators with the opportunity to identify prerequisite skills and a continuum of topics to support college and career readiness.

To address proficiency, in behavioral and academic skill areas, Slate Valley increased the frequency with which we collect data and progress monitor interventions to support student growth. The collection and review of evidence allows Slate Valley to better use its resources within its system of supports.

2. Expand academically-rigorous, real, hands-on, individualized learning to improve the learner experience.

In collaboration with individuals and teams associated with Castleton University's Hidden History Project, Casella Waste Systems, and Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department elementary students connect content outside of the classroom through community engagement. Slate Valley has expanded opportunities for real hands-on experiences at every grade level. Many more K-6 trips are planned from visiting the Slate Valley Museum, Starbase, and visits to a local bank.

Castleton University continues to provide opportunities for secondary students through Dual Enrollment and Early College. Slate Valley's collaboration with Castleton University led to a nine week elective course offered during the 2021-2022 school year. Five

different Castleton University staff supported Innovation Lab 101: fueling collective creativity for Fair Haven Union High School students on Castleton University's campus.

Hubbardton Forge has welcomed students from Fair Haven Union High School twice a month for 90 minutes to visit each of its departments. This is the first step in bringing Slater talent to Hubbardton Forge. Hubbardton Forge expects their employees to effectively communicate, be self-directed, problem solve, be responsible and informed citizens, and informed and integrative thinkers. Fair Haven Union Middle and High Schools has a variety of experiences that complement these transferable skills as part of its core curriculum preparing students for workplace experiences.

Slate Valley is grateful for the workplace learning experiences that over 35 11th and 12th grade students had during the past year through internships, job shadows, and paid work experiences! Employers supporting our students were located in the towns making up Slate Valley as well as from Rutland and Shoreham.

The focus of Slate Valley's professional learning over the past year has been on:

What we want all students to know, understand and be able to do.

How to respond when students have not mastered skills and/or content.

How to extend learning for students who are already proficient.

To support the aforementioned focus areas, educators identify areas of interest/growth for a school year. The PreK-6 professional learning supports reading, writing, and math instructional strategies. The PreK-6 professional development framework is centered around embedded coaching. Slate Valley instructional coaches and educators reflect, learn, and plan evidence-based practices together to improve student outcomes.

Middle and high school educators participate in differentiated personal learning through Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. Monthly meetings reflect on Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships toward academically-rigorous, real, hands-on, individualized curriculum, instruction and assessment to improve the learner experience.

Respectfully submitted,
Casey O'Meara,
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment



Performance Indicators

2021 SAT: FHU Average of 1127

FHU Graduation Rates

| School Year | 4 Year % | 6 Year % |
|-------------|----------|----------|
| /20-21 | 89.2% | 75.4% |

Tech Center Enrollment

| School Year | CTE Enrollment | Early College |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| 2020-2021 | 29 | 6 |
| 2021-2022 | 31 | 6 |
| 2022-2023 | 34 | 24 |

VSAC Survey from 2022 Graduates: Your Plans for this Fall (Fall 2022)

| | FHUHS | | Statewide | |
|----------------------------------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Attend school | 12 | 21.8 | 1759 | 45.1 |
| Attend school & work | 17 | 30.9 | 833 | 21.4 |
| A registered apprenticeship | 2 | 3.6 | 65 | 1.7 |
| Get a job (full or part-time) | 12 | 21.8 | 730 | 18.7 |
| Join the military | 1 | 1.8 | 57 | 1.5 |
| Take care of my family | 0 | 0 | 17 | .4 |
| Take some time off | 1 | 1.8 | 74 | 1.9 |
| Gap year | 2 | 3.6 | 167 | 4.3 |
| Don't know - most likely college | 3 | 5.5 | 81 | 2.1 |
| Don't know - most likely career | 5 | 9.1 | 117 | 3.0 |
| | | | | |
| Aspiration Rate | 34 | 61.8 | 2,393 | 73.1 |

Director of Special Services' Report

Slate Valley is committed to a comprehensive system of support to ensure that each student has the opportunity to develop the skills and talents necessary to obtain their educational goals and to access post-secondary pursuits in education or in the workplace. We understand high quality universal instruction has the greatest impact on educational outcomes for our students and we strive to ensure that effective classroom instruction, in conjunction with research based interventions for academic, social, emotional and behavioral challenges are accessible throughout the continuum of grades for the students of SVUVT.

One way that we embark on this process is through the implementation of universal screening of all students. Universal screening is the process of providing a brief assessment to all students to identify those who may experience lower than expected outcomes. It is a component of response to intervention, which involves a strategic approach to providing layered, evidenced-based strategies for students who are at risk for falling below grade-level expectations either academically, socially, emotionally or behaviorally. Universal screening is the first step in identifying those students who may be at risk in both academic and behavioral categories and is part of the SVUVT Assessment Plan. In addition to the universal screeners identified in the district's assessment plan for academics, we also implement a universal screener on social, emotional and behavioral learning needs of our students in grades K-12. We use the SSIS SEL for grades K-6 and the Vermont Afterschool Project Survey for grades 7-12. The social, emotional and behavioral needs that have been identified are dynamic and have been increasing since the start of the COVID 19 pandemic. SVUVT has this in common with other schools across our state and country; we must adjust our system of interventions and support accordingly.

The Special Services team throughout SVUVT works in collaboration with the building leadership and school based teams to ensure that a continuum of services or programming is available to support ALL learners. This is accomplished through the oversight of Special Education for students ages 3 through 21, including the provision of specialized instruction, physical therapy, occupational therapy, school psychology, speech and language therapy, and school counseling. The Special Services office also serves as the registration office for the district, coordinates the School Based Medicaid programs, serves as the liaison for youth and families experiencing transitional housing or homelessness and organizes the support for English Language Learners.

This year, we have experienced the implementation of Act 173, the new funding model for education in the state. The purpose of Act 173 is to enhance the effectiveness, availability and equity of educational services to all students. It has changed the funding of special education from a reimbursement model to a census based block grant. Corresponding to the funding changes, the special education field is also in the process of transitioning to a new Special Education Rules that will go into effect in July that require the district to adopt either a Response to Intervention Model or a Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses Profile to determine eligibility for a specific learning disability. This shift further emphasizes the importance of ongoing progress monitoring of all students and the importance of meaningful collaboration among all teachers and specialists. The new special education regulations also provide for increased voice of parents in the planning process for those students deemed eligible for special education. In December 2022, the Agency of Education posted an updated Notice of Procedural Safeguards: Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities which can be found on the Vermont Agency of Education website.

In Slate Valley, we are currently providing Special Education Services to 221 students in special education from our district, 2 students from a tuition town, and 4 school choice students. Of these students, 8 of them are served through early childhood special education (ECSE) at the preschool level, 117 students are served at the K-6 level and another 96 students are served in grades 7-12. We are providing special education services to 18% of our school population across the grade span of kindergarten through grade 12. We have several alternative programs for elementary, middle and high school students that we operate in SVUVT. We work diligently to create educational opportunities within our schools that will meet the unique needs of learners so that we can keep our students in our local community.

We know that early identification and intervention is the key to ensuring that all students come to school ready to learn. Slate Valley supports a variety of programs designed to ensure that all children from our district have access to high quality early

learning experiences that will equip them with the pre-academic, social and emotional skills that will provide the greatest promise for their success in kindergarten and beyond. Through Act 166, Vermont's Universal Preschool legislation, we operate preschool classrooms at sites hosted at Benson Village School, Castleton Elementary School and Fair Haven Grade School and offer five different class options. In these programs we provide high quality early education experiences to our three and four year olds (and five year olds that have not yet reached kindergarten age). In addition, we hold eight preschool partnership agreements with private providers throughout Addison and Rutland Counties to allow our families as many flexible options as possible. We provide Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Services within our district boundaries to eligible students ages three to five as prescribed in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). We are currently serving 60 students in our SV preschool classrooms and have 44 children/families accessing private partnership programs.

The challenges that schools and communities must address can not be done in isolation. We are fortunate to have willing community partners and professional organizations to help support the complex needs of youth and families, despite workforce and resource challenges in our county. We currently have partnerships with Rutland Mental Health, Vermont Outdoor Adventure Program, the Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County, Up for Learning, Rutland County Parent Child Center, the United Way of Rutland County, and the Vermont Food Bank to ensure that our students and families have what they need to send their kids to school, ready to learn. We are also fortunate that our faculty, staff, students and families show remarkable cooperation, flexibility and resilience to ensure the continuity of education, safety and well-being of our students. We are appreciative of the support and commitment to our kids, our school and our communities as we strive to meet the needs of all.

As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Kristin H. Benway
Director of Special Services



Benson Village School Principal's Report

School Climate

Benson Village School welcomed 16 new students this year, with our largest Kindergarten class of 14 students in over 10 years. The BVS Pre K program is now running 4 days a week with 3-year-old and 4-year-old sessions to accommodate the increase in numbers. We continue to offer the 5-hour day for the convenience of our families.

Our Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grades are again following the departmentalized schedule that was piloted last year. Miss Ackert and Mrs. Thurston, along with our Specials teachers, manage the 3 grades with students being instructed in both math and ELA at their respective grade levels. Mrs. Sturtevant is teaching 3rd grade and Mrs. Schuyler is supported by our Interventionist, Mrs. Eddy, in the 4-5-6 grades. This arrangement of teachers is coming to a close with our single 6th-grade student getting ready to head off to the new district middle school. As of now, BVS will see 10 kindergartners in FY 24.

Benson Village School is a close-knit group of professionals who work together to model our behavior expectations and support our students and families. With several shared staff members; Mrs. Parrott (Art & STEAM), Ms. Knockenhauer (PE & Health), Ms. Nadler (Library), Ms. Broughton (Music & Instruments), and Mrs. McKee (SLP), it is critical that we function in tandem with our sister schools to offer a fluid and organized environment for traveling personnel.

Creating and maintaining a sense of mindfulness and calm throughout the school day is a source of pride for Benson. Through a grant, Nurse Ashley Casey brought Petra O'Neill to BVS for 8 weeks of yoga for all students in Kinder - 6th this fall. Teachers have opted to continue this mindfulness time on Thursdays with yoga in their classrooms. Local outdoor enthusiast, Sandra Owens, has been volunteering time once a month with students to experience Funology and the joy of the Vermont seasons.

Community Engagement

BVS held both an informal and a formal Open House this past fall for our community. Along with these events which help to welcome both new and returning students to the building, our Ghostly Gala Trunk-Or-Treat saw its 4th year with a record number of participants and trick-or-treaters. This is a wonderful event that staff can volunteer for alongside community members. Our Thanksgiving Luncheon served over 160 students, family members, and staff this past November.

Included with their regularly scheduled STEAM class with Mrs. Parrott, Benson K-6 students are also participating in 3 STEAM weeks this year which utilized parent volunteers and culminated in a presentation day. The Tin Can Racer event took place in early November with over 30 family members volunteering during the tin can racer build days.

Bringing the community to the school has been an ongoing cooperative plan with the Benson Family Days Committee. Creatively looking at more events that can be hosted at the school, like the Touch A Truck Event this past summer, is a continued goal. The teachers have planned several field trips that introduce students to businesses and municipalities. Pine Hill Park and Hathaway Farm were early adventures that showcased local areas for exploration. The Kindergarten - 2nd grades visited both the water treatment facility and water plant in Fair Haven to add to their understanding of the water cycle.

Curriculum and Professional Development

The BVS teachers participated in focused writing workshops through LIFT run by the SVUVT Coaches. They worked on creating a positive culture around writing with the explicit teaching of a writing skill that engaged students through modeling and sharing their work. Students were able to demonstrate their thinking in oral language activities prior to writing and then revisit work across several days to add, delete or change their writing.

Benson teachers met with Dr. Barb Blanke and TJ Jemison, both highly regarded educational consultants, last fall to discuss Bridges Number Corner and best practices in math instruction. From those conversations, Dr. Blanke's book, Mathematical Discourse Let the Kids Talk! was purchased and has been a recommended resource for enhancing student engagement during math.

Laura Dailey, BVS PreK teacher, attended the Early Childhood Annual Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children Conference this fall and is enrolled in the spring course, Essential Instruction for Early and Struggling Readers.

Physical Plant

BVS welcomed Mr. Clay Williams this past July as the new Maintenance Technician. Clay has done a wonderful job with the routine building and grounds needs and identifying and addressing repairs and updates as they occur. The following have either been completed or are in the planning phases:

- updated boiler system circulator pumps
- continued updating of classroom flooring
- planning for future upgrades to windows
- planning for the painting of the building exterior

The parking lot and driveway were both resurfaced this fall and necessary drainage work was completed along the west side of the property.

Our Prek playground received some new equipment from a grant that Kris Benway, Director of Special Education received. Students have a new 3-piece chalkboard panel and a biosphere for investigating all sorts of nature.

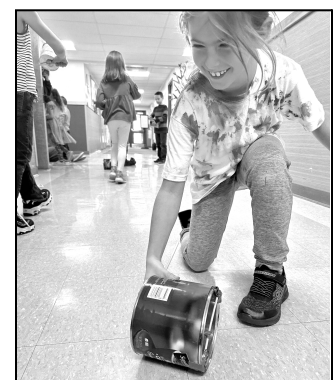
Point of Pride/Celebration:

Benson Village School was awarded "School of Recognition" this past year through our PBIS data (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports). The students proudly continue to demonstrate the numerous character traits that highlight good citizenship and decision-making skills. As of November, over 210 Pawsitive Office Awards have been written for students and staff members.

Happiness creates success, and success is about finding happiness. Our goal is to nourish a school environment where the interests of the students are valued, creativity is encouraged, and quality time is spent with thoughtful adults. Students who can define their purpose also express hope, confidence, and determination when challenges are presented. Our students are unique individuals and when teaching methods adjust for that, their motivation increases, behavior issues subside, and ownership of the learning naturally gravitates to them, where it belongs.

As principal of BVS, I reflect back on both the big and small changes that have come our way over the past 4+ years. Adjustments made to become a Prek - 6th school last year feel normal this year. Continuing to operate with many of the pandemic changes in day-to-day routines has proven to be beneficial for students and their sense of well-being. The Benson staff remains committed to providing an environment that focuses on students being able to work hard, have fun, and be nice.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Roy
Principal



Castleton Elementary School Principal's Report

School Climate

At Castleton Elementary School, we are a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) school and that framework is at the heart of all we do to create a positive learning environment. We focus on three key areas:

Responsible and Safe

Respectful

Ready to Learn

We have new posters this year that outline those behavior expectations in each area of our building: classrooms, cafeteria, gym, hallways, bathrooms, playground and crosswalks, bus, extracurricular activities and field trips. Having these expectations in place enables us to talk about them and reinforce them with our students. We celebrate the positive climate this creates each month at our assemblies. As a school, we zero in on one character trait a month, but lots of other recognition happens at assemblies as well.

Welcoming families back to our school has also been very positive. Families are happy to be here! Also, we have been able to welcome our volunteers back! Castleton University mentors have returned as well. All of these things make our school feel special.

We have student led teams that look at our school climate data and work on areas that need improvement. Having students work with adults is key around school climate. Older students mentor our younger students as well through reading buddies and visits to classrooms to talk about bullying and kindness.

Community Engagement

This year, the Slate Valley District is dedicated to welcoming our community back into our schools. We want to expand our connections with the community and build lasting partnerships. We know that a strong community connection strengthens all we do at our schools. At CES, we have expanded or added new ways this year to engage our community.

Fire Safety Day has become Community Safety day, expanded from just firefighters, adding to that annual day police, EMT and bus safety. This will be a new tradition moving forward.

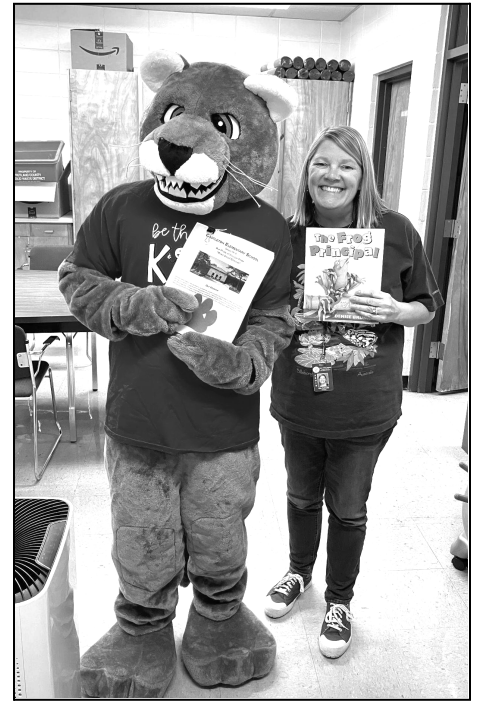
This is the third year we have partnered with Casella Waste Management. This fantastic connection brings engineering to our students. And, it's nothing but fun for our students!

New this year is the Hidden History Project with Castleton University. This hands-on history project was expertly designed by our partners at Castleton University and also offered a field trip to the University.

Family Lunches are in their second year, and this year's turnout was even higher than last year! This is a week-long event where families are welcome to join their child for lunch at school. It's a special lunch for students and families alike. Family Lunches are certainly catching on!

We have new volunteers this year and have welcomed our local librarian, a forest ranger and international students from Castleton University as guest speakers in our building.

Our Veterans Day Assembly returned in the fall. This event is one of the most loved in our community. This assembly is one way to show our Veterans just how deeply they are appreciated.



Physical Plant

Last summer, we did a lot of work on our building in preparation for the Pre K- 6 configuration. Lockers were added in direct response to what students wanted as 6th graders. Also, walls were constructed to our largest classrooms to add additional classrooms for welcoming Grade 6 back to our building.

Future projects at the school will include updating the storm water runoff to be in compliance with Act 64. This is required for locations that have more than 3 acres of impervious surfaces. This will be largely funded by the State of Vermont. Once this is completed we will be making long needed updates to paving of the existing parking lots and the roadway. Additionally, plans are underway to update the existing public address system at the school.

We are fortunate to have an exceptional team of maintenance and custodial staff. These folks are on top of situations that arise and they take care of problems fast and even anticipate problems before they even arise!

Curriculum/Professional Development

The world of Curriculum and Professional Development typically brings new things every year. Research shows us updated best practices, and to keep on the cutting edge, we respond. Our district has an exceptional Curriculum Director who supports and inspires this work.

This year, we added a program called Lexia. This program is student driven and responds to what each individual student needs. It sets goals for students around literacy and math. Students feel very excited when they achieve these goals!

Our district instructional coaches work tirelessly to support teachers so in turn, they can support students. The mechanism for much of this work is done through LIFT (Learner Information Fueling Teaching) time with teachers. This design is in year two and works well as a means of professional development.



Early release days this year have stressed the importance of data. We are learning new ways to examine and use data efficiently. Some of the data we look at include test scores and PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) data. Our teacher leaders facilitate these discussions as do our district's instructional coaches. In addition, we have done work on the schoolwide goal of building/reinforcing student/student relationship and student/adult relationships.

Our Celebration of Learning is in year 3. This event showcases the year's work through displays of student work and is a sample of what students have accomplished during the school year. It's such a fun event!

Lastly, the administrators in our district have committed to work as a team to fine tune their supervision and evaluation skills. We are learning about best practices for classroom observations, in particular. This work started in the summer and will continue through the current school year, and beyond.

Points of Pride/Celebrations

The start of the new school year in the Fall of 2022 began (again) with our school designed as a Pre K - Grade 6 school. Our 6th graders became the leaders and role models for our building. We were able to design a schedule that had teachers teaching both 6th grade classes, so students are able to switch classes. We also have our sixth graders mentoring younger students as well as focusing on data through our Student Voice group. All of these leadership roles make our school a better place!

Another proud moment for our school was when we celebrated our 50th anniversary! This special event was held in May and saw many former teachers and students joining us for this event. There were historic displays which included fun facts and pictures, of course! We can't thank our veteran staff members Mrs. Corliss and Mrs. Diercksen for their commitment to this celebration!

Also recognized was the closure of Castleton Village School in response to the district's reconfiguration of grade levels and buildings. In May, we celebrated the 70 years that CVS was a part of our community's education. Students and staff even received a commemorative sweatshirt, marking the significant occasion. Have you seen folks wearing these one of a kind sweatshirts?

Castleton Elementary School students have been recognized this year for their participation and selection of drawings for the state's firefighter calendar as well as the state's plow contest, where we named a plow "Slushy!"

Monthly, our student assemblies recognize the outstanding accomplishments of our students. This recognition comes from supportive families, and we know that student accomplishments are the result of all of that support. At Castleton Elementary School, we appreciate our families. We know they are partners with us in educating our community's children, which is the work we feel passionate about each and every day!

Respectfully submitted,
Kim E. Prehoda
Principal

Fair Haven Grade School Principal's Report

School Climate

The National School Climate Center defines school climate as the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. At FHGS, the school climate is a strong focus. For students, a positive school climate is a powerful predictor of social, emotional and academic success. For staff, it creates healthy morale and collective efficacy, the belief that by working together we have the shared ability to make a positive difference.



As we have transitioned this year to a preK-6 school, we have worked to establish new collaborative team structures. We have a primary team (prek- grade 1), intermediate team (grades 2-4) and an early middle level team (grades 5 & 6). These teams of educators work closely together following our agreed upon team norms: 1. Assume good intentions, 2. Ask questions to seek understanding, 3. What we permit we promote. These teams work together to review data, plan instruction and intervention and other ways to collectively support all students in being engaged learners and good citizens in our school community.

Student and family perception is an important indicator of school climate. Last spring we administered a PBIS School Climate Survey to students in grades 3 and up and to all student families. The results were analyzed by staff and student members of our grade 5-6 Student Voice Group. An action plan was developed to target areas in need of improvement.

FHGS climate strengths reported by students include:

My school has clear rules for behavior (mean score 3.84 out of a 4 point scale)

Teachers treat students with respect (mean score 3.71 out of a 4 point scale)

Good behavior is noticed at our school (mean score 3.64 out of a 4 point scale)

Areas our Student Voice Group wanted to focus on this year relate to students treating each other well (mean score 2.64) and students behaving so teachers can teach (mean score 2.48). To address these areas staff and students developed new Falcon core values: SOAR (safety, ownership, acceptance and respect). We now have monthly Falcon Gatherings where we acknowledge students in each grade level who exemplify these core values through their demonstration of expected behaviors.

We developed a consequence guide to support consistent responses to behavior that interferes with teaching and learning. Our teachers and counseling team provide universal and targeted instruction to students in the areas of social skills and problem-solving skills. Student Voice members are working on activities they can do and stories they can read with younger students to support them in managing emotions. We have also provided school-wide presentations (Tiger Program, Puppets in Education) to support our efforts in teaching safety, ownership, acceptance and respect.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is one area that was hit hard during the pandemic. Strong family, school and community partnerships are critical components for a positive school climate and student success. For three years, pandemic restrictions made it difficult to foster those partnerships. Based on family climate survey results last spring (where the mean scores ranged from 2.6-2.98 out of a 4 point scale), we determined family and community engagement is an area of need, one we needed to focus on this year. We established a number of school-wide actions steps in order to build our family and community partnerships and here are a few of our accomplishments:

- We began the year by having our Open House the day before school started. This was a wonderful way to start our school year by inviting all of our families into the school to meet staff, see classrooms and learn about the year ahead. We also invited community organizations to join our open house so families could learn about other resources available (i.e. Boys and Girls Club, Scouts, PTO).
- Our school organized the return of Applefest to the Fair Haven community. Although we tried last year, we did not have the turn-out we usually do because of COVID. This year was amazing, with beautiful weather and great attendance. This long-standing event is organized by the staff of our school, partnering with student and family volunteers, supported by local business donations while promoting many local vendors, businesses and organizations.
- We started monthly assemblies (Falcon Gatherings) to celebrate students who are acknowledged for demonstrating behaviors that exemplify our school values. Families of those students acknowledged were invited to attend.
- Our FHGS PTO hosted a free Halloween night dinner booth for the community. School staff and parents donated crockpot meals and volunteered their time to provide this service to students, families and community members who visited their booth on Caernarvon Street.
- Classroom teachers are working to make learning connections to our community by bringing guest speakers into the classroom or bringing students into the community. For example, when learning about community helpers, kindergarten went to the police station. First grade invited family and community members into the classroom to share how they use reading, writing and math in their work. Third grade is hosting surprise guest readers from our community. Our school is participating in the Castleton University Hidden History Project, where grades 3 and 5 have guest speakers come to share about our local history and grades 4 and 6 visit the university's Granger House.
- We have brought back our Drama program and will be hosting our first drama production for the community in February.

We will continue to make community engagement a priority, as raising the next generation is a shared responsibility. When families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits.

Curriculum and Professional Development

We continue to focus on the areas of literacy and student engagement as part of our school continuous improvement plan. In the area of literacy we have implemented in grades K-5 a new intervention approach, Lexia® Core5® Reading. Lexia® Core5® Reading is an adaptive blended learning program that accelerates the development of literacy skills for students of all abilities, helping them make that critical shift from learning to read to reading to learn. We piloted this program last year in grade 3 with great success. Given the positive results of this pilot, the district made the decision to utilize this tool in all of our elementary schools grades K-5.

We continue to support staff in the use of a number of literacy strategies and train our new staff in these practices as well through coaching and professional development to include PASS - Promoting Awareness of Speech Sounds, Reading Simplified, Words Their Way, Lucy Calkins Units of Study, and high leverage literacy practices. Additional embedded coaching is also

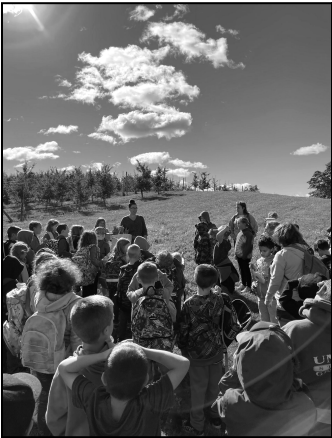
taking place in math. Teachers K-5 are implementing Bridges Number Corner and grade 5 is implementing the core Bridges math curriculum as well. As a district we will be transitioning to Bridges Math next year K-5.

In the area of student engagement, teachers are working to provide more project-based learning opportunities for students, utilizing our new science lab, technology lab and multipurpose room for such work. We are also looking for ways to engage students school-wide in promoting projects that engage and benefit all students. One example of this is the creation of our Falcon News. Our daily announcements are now a live news broadcast pushed into every classroom each morning through a Google Meet. This live production is filmed in our new technology lab. Students applied and interviewed to be part of the cast and production crew. We have student meteorologists, sports reporters, joke reporters, etc. who are responsible for researching and developing their news report and then participate in the live production. This has been a wonderful addition to our routines at FHGS and an amazing way to start our day together.

Teachers also continue to work on increasing the amount of student talk in the classroom that reflects discipline-specific habits of thinking and ways of communicating with each other that encourages students to share their thinking with one another, to build on one another's ideas and to assess their understanding of one another's ideas. Increasing student talk and decreasing teacher talk has a positive effect on student engagement and learning.

Physical Plant

We have made many exciting improvements to FHGS. With our reconfiguration as a Prek-6 building we have repurposed spaces to engage and meet the needs of our Prek-6 population. We have created a school-wide science lab, technology lab, and multi-purpose classroom that teachers can sign up to access with their students. These spaces allow for the use of shared science and technology materials and an exciting and engaging learning environment that students get to experience. Our multipurpose room is attached to a kitchen and provides the opportunity for students to cook. This space also allows for class/grade level meetings/projects/performances. Additional building projects completed include the installation of a beautiful new fenced preschool playground that is within quick walking distance, with engaging, developmentally appropriate equipment. We resurfaced the front walkway and an entrance area in the back of the building as well. Our PTO also created an amazing outdoor classroom space with custom built benches that flip into a seat and writing table. We have two projects of focus for this upcoming school year that includes updating our PA/intercom system and repairing the exterior stairs by the gym on the Dollar General side of our building.



Points of Pride/Celebration:

Our entire FHGS team is proud to have accomplished our first ever school-wide field trip to a community orchard. We connected this trip to our Applefest event and various classroom activities.

Fair Haven Grade School received acknowledgement for their implementation of universal PBIS practices by receiving the VTPBIS School of Merit Ribbon.

Joanna Surething, School Counselor and PBIS Coordinator was the recipient of the 2022 Sherry Schoenberg PBIS Champion of the Year Award for Vermont.

I am proud to serve as the Principal of FHGS and honored to represent our school community as the recipient of the Vermont Middle Level Principal of the year by the Vermont Principals' Association this past summer. As educators and leaders, we don't enter this profession for recognition. Our

success is the result of shared leadership, and the hard work and commitment of all educators in their support of students, our number one stakeholders. We are fortunate at FHGS to have hardworking and committed educators. With the combination of our committed staff and strong family/community partnerships, we have the shared ability to support students in being successful and in turn, our entire community will benefit.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah A. Infurna
Principal

Fair Haven Union Middle and High School Principal's Report

The 2022-2023 school year may best be exemplified by the word 'change.' Not only have we changed our name (from FHUHS to FHUMHS), but we have also experienced dramatic changes in student numbers, staffing, the physical space, and our approach to meeting the needs of each of our students. Welcoming approximately 200 middle school students, and over two dozen staff members, has been a welcome challenge that we have wholeheartedly taken on. This year's report will focus on how we are addressing these new challenges, as well as how we continue to build upon past momentum, by looking at five main areas:

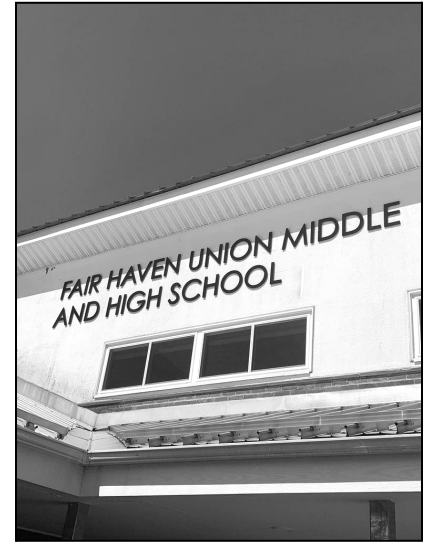
School Climate

Community Engagement

Physical Plant

Curriculum/Professional Development

Points of Pride/Celebrations



School Climate

School climate has been a major focus throughout the whole school. At the middle school level, faculty, staff, and administration have utilized an 'advisory' block to teach expectations within a themed framework. In November, for example, students exemplified the theme of 'gratitude.' This was done in several ways, one of which was a coin drive to raise money for the Castleton Legion Veterans' Day dinner. Other themes our middle school students will explore include 'goal-setting,' 'motivation,' and 'compassion and empathy.' Each of these themes exists within our larger Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system. PBIS is a system that addresses behaviors and character development through the positive recognition of our students as they meet expectations. Our middle school teams recognize students each month (and by themes) by giving Golden Slater awards. They also recognize students daily through a "Slate Quarry" system that recognizes positive behaviors and allows students to earn celebrations and special events.

At the high school level, we continue to build upon the PBIS system in an age-appropriate manner. Students are regularly recognized through positive postcards. This is a system developed where faculty and staff write postcards to families recognizing their children for excellent behavior, academic achievements, and positive social interactions. This system begins moving students from external reward systems to internal rewards and accountability. Our high school students continually build prosocial behaviors through rigorous academics that address challenging topics such as inclusion, diversity, tolerance, and equity. These types of conversations prepare our youth for an increasingly complicated world where they will become problem-solvers.

Community Engagement

The middle and high school has worked hard at increasing community engagement in many ways. First and foremost, each teacher has developed a professional goal to build community engagement into their curriculum. In some cases, classroom teachers have engaged employment opportunities throughout our local communities. For example, student groups have been regularly visiting Hubbardton Forge to explore career opportunities. We have also more than doubled the number of students utilizing community connections through work-based learning opportunities. Teachers have also developed curricula that connect students to community resources through engaging field trips, community service projects, and by hosting events intended for the larger community. A few examples include having a local apiary come teach our students how to maintain bees and harvest honey from our hives on campus, our 7th-grade students working with FHGS kindergarten through 3rd-grade students on "Gratitude Chains," and several combined middle and high school evening events (plays and concerts) that have drawn record crowds from the community.

Physical Plant

The physical changes at FHUMHS have been amazing to watch! The new middle school is developing into an excellent space for our 7th and 8th graders. We have recognized challenges early in the transition, and have adjusted to accommodate the

needs of our students. We have expanded the middle school's internal footprint to include several more bathrooms. We are also exploring options for adding classrooms and reducing class sizes. Along with this, the physical improvements across the whole school have exemplified our mission to build engaging, hands-on learning environments. A new middle school climbing wall and basketball court have been constructed, there has been a major improvement to the high school greenhouse, and a new digital arts room has been built and fully supplied with state-of-the-art technology for both middle and high school students.

School safety is our top priority at FHUMHS. We have been readdressing safety protocols regularly and addressing needs as we adjust to our new consolidated school. We run monthly safety meetings and student drills. We work tirelessly at ensuring student safety within our building and take great pride as a leading example across the state.

Curriculum & Professional Development

We continue to push the three R's of FHUMHS - Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. High school teachers have implemented curricular strategies in each department based on student rigor. Teachers use a learning cycle to identify student needs based on data, implement research-based instructional strategies, and assess the effectiveness of their practice (with a focus on adjusting instruction as needed). A large component of this practice has been building a schedule that allows teachers to meet and discuss their professional development and practices. Another main focus for middle and high school teachers is student engagement. We have begun discussions that will explore how we develop curricula that engage our students and differentiates the instruction to their specific needs. The middle school teams are implementing engagement strategies through interdisciplinary projects that will combine the core content areas into a holistic learning model.

Social and emotional needs have been a priority across the Slate Valley district for many years. The FHUMHS In-School Restoration and Student Support Center have played a major role addressing student needs. Our middle and high school team has been building their program and completing professional development that supplies them with the tools and skills to continue to address student needs. The main focus has been on the implementation of PBIS, restorative practices, and relationship-building with every student. Our team plans to continue building upon this program by teaming with teachers to help build positive classroom environments where every student feels safe, heard, and valued.

Points of Pride/Celebrations

We are very proud of the Slater tradition at FHUMHS, and we look forward to passing that tradition on to all members of our 7-12 community. Our student body holds strong values and knows what it means to be a Slater. Student Council continues to organize student events that pull students together, such as dances, hot cocoa before school breaks, and student-organized assemblies. Our athletic teams and fans bring an enormous amount of school spirit to each event and demonstrate it in an inclusive manner meant to build people up. This, in large part, has been the result of our student-led Athletic Leadership Committee. We have several after-school clubs that not only build tolerance but celebrate differences within our Slater community - such as GSA, Be You, and the American Sign Language clubs. We have started several other clubs, and are investigating even more, at the middle and high school levels to explore student interests - such as Future Business Leaders of America, Model United Nations, Odyssey of the Mind, and Future Farmers of America. Combining these extracurricular opportunities with our curricular goals and objectives allows each of our students to live the Slater experience where one feels a sense of belonging and recognizes their value within our school community.

Sincerely,
Benjamin E. Worthing
FHUMHS Principal



Orwell Village School Principal's Report

School Climate

With the social-emotional well-being of our students as our top priority this year we have been focusing on respect. OVS students were honored at the September PBIS celebration for demonstrating exceptionally noticeable values of respect throughout the school day and therefore being tremendous role models to their fellow OVS students. We have been utilizing our school-wide focus on PBIS, character development, and restorative practices to cultivate our children's ability to develop into productive members of society, lay the foundation for fuller, richer lives, and give them the guidance to become good men and women.



Community Engagement

This year we welcomed our community back into school with open arms. We began First Fridays with the children and teachers welcoming families into their classrooms for a glimpse of what life and learning are like here. Families are welcome to visit for forty-five minutes or so on the first Friday of each month. We also opened up our PBIS monthly assemblies to families. During these assemblies, we recognize students and classes for demonstrating our monthly spotlight values throughout the school day. Our off-to-work breakfast was well attended and we worked closely with the First National Bank of Orwell to serve a community Thanksgiving dinner and delivered many meals to those who could not attend.



We continue to work closely with our Middlebury College community partners as their International Students visited OVS in October to share cultural elements from different parts of the world. Orwell Veterans were invited to a luncheon with our 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade students, community guest readers came to OVS during Literacy Week, and Orwell firefighters visited our school to share fire safety tips. Lastly, we have a dance residency monthly throughout this school year with a culminating community event in the spring.

Curriculum & Professional Development

OVS teachers have been collaborating with our district coaches on reading, writing, and math strategies to challenge our students to reach their full potential. Reading in the lower grades has a focus on implementing Guided Reading with a strong connection to Reading Simplified and targeted reading instruction that connects our phonics work to decoding. In writing at the upper-grade levels, students are learning to use writing as a tool for thinking about texts, and are looking at sentence complexity as a means to elevate our writing. Our math coach is currently working in first and fifth-grade classrooms. The implementation of math workshop is the focus in first grade. Fifth grade is implementing computational fluency by utilizing small groups for real-world problem-solving and guided instruction. This hands-on approach is both effective for students and fun!



This year's staff book study is *Circle in the Square: Building Community and Repairing Harm in School*. This work supports our use of circles, conflict resolution, and repair. It supports our belief that our children can be kind and compassionate, and can make the right choices when they are guided and equipped with the right tools to deal with the issues that arise in our school community.

Physical Plant

Our next project is storage for the town hall planned for this spring. We are looking to renovate the town hall kitchen and replace the front steps. New flooring will be installed in the lower wing with fresh paint in several areas. Looking beyond next year windows in both the town hall and school need replacing.



OVS Pride * Celebrating Student Learning

We are proud of our hard-working students. We see a nice academic flow throughout the school. Classroom circles are happening at all grade levels to cultivate student social-emotional well-being and to further develop our monthly spotlight values. Student relationships are developing, communication skills are improving, and empathy is growing.

Students excitedly followed the World Cup, adopted teams, made flags, and explored the value of good sportsmanship and developing a global perspective.

Our students had their first Dance Residency class with Ashley Hensel-Browning. Ashley was able to get everyone to think about movement as an opportunity for self-expression, collaboration, and shape-making.

Our Veteran's luncheon was a huge success with many Orwell Veterans intermingling with our fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade students to honor them and show respect for their military service.

Our professional staff is proud of how well we work together to support each other for the benefit of our students. Collaborative problem-solving and flexibility are the marks of true professionals. We care about our children and each other.

Respectfully submitted,
Patrick Walters,
OVS Principal