It is a privilege to submit the 2018 Bellows Free Academy Annual Report. We strive to ensure exceptional teaching and learning opportunities for all students. Our expectation is that everyone who attends the Academy develops positive relationships with adults and has memorable experiences that will guide them throughout their life after graduation. None of this is possible without your on-going support and commitment to our school and students. We are proud of our accomplishments and the exemplary traditions of BFA that are integral to the greater St. Albans Community and our school district.

Our focus continues to be the implementation of the state mandated, Flexible Pathways Act 77 graduation requirements. Our teachers participate on leadership teams to help ensure that all students will be graded on proficiency-based assessments by 2020. BFA professional development has been directly connected to this work. Teachers have collaborated in their learning areas to align assessments and rubrics so that we can clearly demonstrate what each student knows and can do. We will soon be presenting new report cards that will now more specifically show student progress for 9th and 10th graders.

To further support students, teachers designed a mid-term assessment schedule which included increased time for student assistance and designated make-up opportunities. We are also working to embed the Vermont Transferable Skills so that all students will become critical thinkers, practical problems solvers, effective communicators, self-directed learners and active and involved citizens. Additionally, staff members participated in community events this fall regarding the impact of proficiency-based learning both in high school and post-secondary institutions. Although there continues to be challenging work ahead, we have made measurable growth in our transition to a proficiency-based learning system.

In April 2017, juniors participated in the third year of the statewide Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium exams, SBAC. In math, 43.43% of the students met or exceeded proficiency scoring six percent higher than the state average. This reflected a 1.43% increase in students meeting or exceeding proficiency from last year. In English Language Arts, 62% of our students met or exceeded proficiency. Student performance showed an 18% increase from last year and surpassed the state average by three percentage points. We are extremely proud of the work of our teachers and students in demonstrating such success on a very challenging assessment.
During the 2016-17 school year, 136 students took a total of 256 Advanced Placement exams and had a pass rate of 64.7%; a four percent increase over last year. Additionally, 98.5% of our graduates left BFA with a post-secondary plan for career or further education. Based on our data at the end of the school year, sixty-one percent of our students will attend four-year colleges, 11% will go to two-year colleges, 3.5% plan to join the military and 23% will enter the work force.

2017 was a wonderful year for BFA’s involvement with the Greater St. Albans Community as exemplified by our Madness Day in April. Seniors performed a variety of service and clean-up activities while freshmen and sophomores enjoyed social learning experiences and relationship building at the Collins Perley Sports Complex. In September, our freshmen participated in the first annual Hiram Bellows Day. Students joined in a variety of events including landscaping at the elementary schools, gardening at Northwestern Medical Center, assisting our senior citizens and mentoring young children. Additionally, over 100 students participated in Work-Based Learning activities and job shadows. The response from our community partners in these efforts was extraordinary and gave our students a greater sense of appreciation for their towns and neighborhoods.

BFA continues to provide a wide range of special education services. We have developed and enhanced our programs to meet all student needs and strive to ensure that everyone, regardless of learning challenges, achieves academic and social success.

This year we welcomed the following new members to the BFA staff: Bruce Pollard, French Teacher, Kristin Perrault, Business teacher, Brittany Awil, Tutor, Colleen Rouhan, In-School Suspension Monitor, Melissa Hayden-Raley, Database Administrator and Corporal Paul Morits, School Resource Officer. Additionally, we were pleased to hire Drama instructor Susan Palmer, who along with our performing arts staff directed our fall musical Godspell in November. The energy and enthusiasm of our student performers was outstanding. We also hosted the President’s Own Marine Band in a truly inspiring show this fall, as well as Verne Colburn’s encore concert in the spring.

BFA continues to attract students throughout the region. In 2017, 19 students from outside the Maple Run Union School District chose to attend BFA through Act 29. Due to our strong academic programs and comprehensive co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, we are emerging as a magnet school for Northwest, VT.

In the winter of 2017 our girls hockey team, boys hockey team, boys snowboarding team and cheer team all competed for state titles. Our boys’ hockey team and boys snowboarding team earned state championships. The Powder Puff football game hosted in partnership with our friends from Missisquoi Valley Union High School generated over $27,000 in contributions to Camp Ta Kum Ta and to support families experiencing catastrophic illness. We are also very proud of our banner presented by Special Olympics of Vermont, that recognized BFA as a Unified Champion School.

Everyone at BFA deeply appreciates your continued support for our school and devotion to our young people. Your partnership is essential to their success.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chris Mosca
Principal