

## Summary of School Board Equity Mini Grant Projects

### June 30, 2023

*During the school year 2022-2023, six school boards were awarded mini grants from the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA), Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA), and Vermont Principals' Association (VPA). With generous funding from the Vermont Community Foundation, the purpose of the mini-grant program was to support the pursuit of more equitable and inclusive education communities by leaders and contributors committed to those changes. We are excited to share the summary of these grants and encourage you to reach out to your colleagues across the state to learn more!*

**Central Vermont SU:** Grant Goal: **Engage the community** through a series of community speaker events on equity. The Paine Mountain School District set out to engage the community on topics of equity, anti-racism, and inclusive education through a series of community events featuring a diverse range of community experts and advocates from the region. The 5 part series was designed to feature local and regional experts to speak on the topics of equity in relation to race, disability, mental health, and gender identity in our community.

As part of each event, participants had the opportunity to take home a children's book featuring characters and topics that represent a diverse range of individuals to expand participant's home libraries with diverse books. Progress The Paine Mountain School District Community Speaker Series has been a resounding success!

The events series includes:

- Gender Identity and Equity
- Race and Equity
- Mental Health and Equity
- Disability and Equity
- movie screening of Listen Up

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**Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union:** OSSU secured these funds in order to engage a consultant who could lead and facilitate conversation between board, supervisory union, and school-based leadership as they collaborate on the development and dissemination of procedures supporting the **Equity Policy**.

This project establishes a vision and **engages the community** by opening up a broader conversation and dialogue about the importance of DEI initiatives and their relevance to our school ecosystems. It bolsters the **board and superintendent partnership** via clear channels of facilitated communication, laying the groundwork for future efforts. And, this work supports **effective and ethical operations** through the anticipated development of procedures that uphold OSSU's policy.

OSSU approached a number of organizations seen as appropriate partners for this portion of OSSU's equity journey. After a number of conversations and at the recommendation of OSSU's equity

consultants, SU leadership engaged with Marceline DuBose of Due East Educational Equity Collaborative to lead two 90 minute workshops with the OSSU board and representatives from member district boards. These meetings will focus on emphasizing DEI and how it shows up in our schools. They will also emphasize the ways in which data and research can support equity policy work and underscore its importance.

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**Orange Southwest School District** Board of Education has **engaged the community** in the work of creating a Portrait of a Graduate. We have hosted several events to support this work and have used the grant to fund lunches and transportation for students. We have partnered with Up for Learning and funded their fee with a portion of a Federal Title Grant.

- [PoG Poster](#)
- [Community Dinner](#)
- [Video 1 - Portrait of a Graduate - VSA/VSBA Equity project](#) ([video 1 on Google Drive](#))
- [Video 2 Portrait of a Graduate - VSA/VSBA Equity project](#) ([video 2 on Google Drive](#))

The remainder of the funds will provide stipends to students who led the project and to partially pay for the graphic artist who is designing the graphics for the OSSD Portrait of a Graduate.

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**Burlington SD:** With the ultimate goal of vetting district **policies** through an equity lens, Burlington School Board Members (BSD Board) used the grant to hire a consultant to assist its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DE&I) in implementing the use of an equity tool in revising the district's equity policy. In the beginning stages of this process, the BSD Board adopted a [Racial Equity Tool \(RET\)](#) and approved its use in [Policy A30](#), *Role and Adoption of BSD Policies*. The tool centers on community engagement in establishing policy.

This particular process pertains to BSD's Equity policy and will affirm the district's vision. "Vision" being relative, please see the [BSD Strategic Plan](#) towards an overarching goal where "Burlington School District will be student-centered and responsive to the full range of identities, abilities, cultures, and languages in our community, such that every student is challenged, empowered, and engaged in their learning throughout their time in our schools."

Grant funds have also been used to organize and conduct two **focus groups** of students, teachers, parents and staff, to discuss issues of equity in the Burlington School District. Outreach focused on historically marginalized communities. Each focus group had about 10 participants. Recognizing how aspects of volunteerism uphold inequitable systems, the participants each received compensation for their time with funds from the grant. We gathered [helpful and insightful feedback](#) from the focus groups and have begun to revise the District's Equity Policy ([current draft](#)). The Equity Tool process includes continued communication with these stakeholders as part of measuring progress. The DE&I Committee meetings are attended by the district's Director of Equity and Safe & Inclusive Schools and are open to the public. Participants are collaborators and offer additional analysis of the committee's progress.

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**Addison Northwest SD:** The purpose of the ANWSD Equity and Anti-Racism **Board and Community Engagement** Initiative is to create and sustain positive, collaborative, ever-changing, and productive relationships with families and the community for the benefit of students, especially those who have been historically left on the margins of education. Through the development of a communal shared vision of anti-racism and its impacts in our community, we can find the intersection of local businesses, schools, community organizations, and police departments in order to build a village of support for each and every student, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, or socioeconomic status.

The grant has funded a **board training** Pt 1 of Equity Training to lay the groundwork for understanding how equity work enhances the experiences of all members understanding that the “key to lifting all boats” is an intentional focus on equity. This means addressing the structural and institutional barriers that prevent everyone from having equal opportunity. Increasing equity does not mean providing equal investments to all: it often means investing more in aspects of our school community that have been historically marginalized. Without intentional efforts to invest in equity, a rising tide is likely to only perpetuate inequity because it will maintain gaps between groups rather than shrink them. Pt 2 training (will) delving into biases and beliefs, and how they impact our ability to see (or not see!) the experience of people different from ourselves and appreciate how this then translates into what we believe all students need to succeed. We will use the ANWSD Vision as an anchoring point is a great idea.

*ANWSD **VISION** STATEMENT*

We envision a kind, collaborative, and creative community for all that nurtures a diverse and accessible learning environment. Students will flourish as critical thinkers and productive citizens, cultivating resilience in an ever-changing world.

May 17, 2023: Community event Together in Belonging: Community Discussion with Students  
Dinner and Discussion: How can we enhance safety and belonging in our schools and our community?  
Join us in discussion to better understand our own experiences with school regarding safety and belonging and the current reality in this community. Free babysitting  
Short Film Premiere: Boom and Woah! The Yellow House Community  
We are also partnering with a filmmaker to document our equity journey (a short documentary)

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**Franklin Northeast SU (NMVUUSD):** Since initially submitting this grant application, it has become even more apparent that we need to focus on improving our **family engagement** efforts in FNESU. Despite the return to in-person learning and the loosening of COVID restrictions, we have found it increasingly difficult to engage stakeholders in ways that seem authentic, meaningful, and equitably representative of our population.

We recognized the need to offer **opportunities for the community to come together**, build relationships and engage in learning about themes of equity and inclusion before we ask them to weigh in on our strategic plan or equity strategy. Our project is a mixture of

community performances/film screenings focused on themes of belonging and inclusion. We are also increasing our parent and family engagement strategies including but not limited to surveys, the creation of a family advisory council, and opportunities for interviews/listening sessions to elicit input on our district's priorities.

This project will set the stage for future attempts to solicit feedback and input in a variety of ways from stakeholders on ways to cultivate a culture of belonging; support the implementation of our Portrait of a Learner; and lead to the development of a comprehensive values-grounded strategy. Activities:

- **Board Retreat** in February 2023 was used to unpack the IEG Equity Audit and determine next steps.
- Two community performances of the program entitled, "Race and Song" with award-winning American folk artists, Alistair Moock and Reggie Harris on April 4th and 5th in Richford and Enosburg respectively. Dinner was provided at each of the events, and the events were held free of charge for any FNESU family/community member.
- March 2023 survey of faculty regarding how to increase efforts to lift up student voices in our district, and opportunities to cultivate a culture of belonging in FNESU.
- April 2023 Distribution of family/caregiver engagement surveys, along with plans to distribute student culture/climate/engagement surveys in May 2023.
- Family/Community Engagement Advisory Council on May 4th, 2023 to review the data collected in the surveys, and make recommendations for changes to the Title 1
- Parent Family Engagement policy to the Policy committee on May 10th (and ultimately, the School Boards) for consideration.
- May 10, 2023 Community Screening of the film Listen Up, a youth written, scored and performed musical produced by award winning documentary filmmaker, Bess O'Brien. The screening will be followed by Q/A and dialogue facilitated by members of the film's production crew.