



DISTRICT OFFICES
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Dear BSD Families,

I hope you are enjoying a wonderful summer filled with all of the joys that the summer months bring, and that you are feeling the excitement for the 2023-2024 school year. This summer gave me time to recharge, to get away, and to be with my family, and now I am feeling energized and ready for school to start again.

While summer offers us all a break, it is also an important and productive time in our district. Our district leadership team and principals spent the last few months hiring excellent educators, preparing facilities so they are clean and welcoming, and updating our systems. We also continued to develop our anti-racist leadership skills, reflected on our progress on the strategic plan, and onboarded a few great new leaders.

As a part of this, we've spent a great deal of time planning our areas of focus for the coming school year. In grades K-5, as part of our strategic plan *Priority Area 2: Deeper Learning for Every Student*, we will continue working on the shifts in literacy practices, jumping into year two of our new literacy curriculum from the American Reading Company. Our professional learning will give particular focus to the phonics components of this curriculum. We know that our literacy instruction has to be very intentional for all of our students to experience the growth they are capable of achieving, and our shift in literacy materials and practices is designed to set a strong academic foundation for our students. This, along with creating meaningful connections to learning, is key to creating an equitable learning environment. So we will also focus on creating connections to students' interests, prior knowledge and future goals at all grade levels.

Our adult professional learning around anti-racist teaching practices will also continue next year. Our school board *Policy Title 1.1: Reducing Disparities* requires that we pay specific attention to student groups who have been historically marginalized by our system and do all in our power to erase these inequities. As part of this, last year all teachers and paraeducators grades PreK-12 (who were not working on literacy) spent time honing their skills as antiracist teachers. This year we will continue that work and will expand this learning to all staff.

In order for any of this to be successful, we need to continue to foster strong relationships built on trust and love. We will focus on *Priority Area 5: Relationship-Based Communities through Restorative Practices* of our Strategic Plan as a way to do this. After a few years of co-construction with students, families and staff and a pilot implementation, we have finalized and updated our Restorative Code of Conduct. This document, which is available on our website, memorializes how we will engage with each other and react when negative issues come to light. This is a big shift for the district that moves us further away from exclusionary practices and pushes us to do the harder, deeper work of collective responsibility and true community building.

If you are a new family, welcome to our wonderful district! If you are a returning BSD family, thank you for your support and partnership. When I first arrived in Burlington in 2021, I shared my values for deep learning, equity and engagement. These values continue for me, and I encourage and invite your engagement and partnership in all we do in BSD. Please reach out if you want to get involved.

In partnership,

Tom