

# BLUE MOUNTAIN SUPERVISORY DISTRICT

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Emilie Knisley, Superintendent  
Lori Blood, Business Manager

March 5, 2018

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community,

The way that we define success in Vermont schools is changing as a result of our new Vermont State Plan. You have recently received a testing schedule for the spring series of required assessments for the State of Vermont. Large scale change in how schools are assessed and measured is beginning to be rolled out with this new testing schedule. Starting this year, the accountability system is shifting from the rules developed under No Child Left Behind (determining school effectiveness by reading and math achievement) to a new accountability system under The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The new VT State Plan, written to comply with ESSA, will bring several changes to BMU. But most importantly these changes widen the lens on school quality measurement beyond a single measure on a single test. ESSA will begin to take into account other measures such as: college and career readiness, student growth from year to year, personalization of learning, equity, financial efficiency, and school climate and safety. To prepare for this new accountability system BMU is taking the following measures as part of a comprehensive series of strategic actions:

**Restructuring in grades 3-9:** Student assessments are shifting to put a new focus on growth in grades 3-9. SBAC will no longer be administered to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Instead it will shift to 9<sup>th</sup> grade so that student growth over time can be measured over a band of grades—this is a shift from a straight proficiency measure under the old system. As a result, we are re-aligning our educational program in grades three through nine to better meet this new need. Additionally, we will be offering increased curricular supports targeted in these grades to help implement our new school curriculum that was recently approved by the School Board. Our goal is that these changes will lead to increased student performance over time across this grade span.

**Science and Robotics:** The science assessment will shift from grades 4, 8, and 11 to grades 5, 8, and 11. Science scores will begin to be used for accountability purposes in 2018-2019. We will be making structural shifts to align more closely to these new expectations, so that students are getting the appropriate content at the appropriate time. We are continuing to see an incredible amount of student interest in robotics, engineering, and coding. We will continue to invest in these areas as a priority.

**Physical Fitness Measures:** A new physical education assessment will be rolled out this year. This assessment will begin to be used for accountability in the spring of 2019.

Scott Blood  
Principal

Sue Reardon  
Interim Assistant  
Principal

John Barone  
Director of Curriculum  
and Instruction

Donna Waelter  
Director of  
Special Education

Kimberly French  
Director of  
Guidance

Julie Gandin  
Elementary  
Guidance

**High School Measures:** We are adapting our Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) in high school to take into account the need to measure for college and career readiness. We will be designing PLPs that track performance on several different measures: the SAT/ACT, ASVAB, graduation rates on both a four and six year measure, college coursework and dual enrollment, service learning, virtual learning, tech center coursework, work-based learning, and other applicable measures.

**Quality Reviews:** The educational quality review process that BMU underwent as part of a State pilot in 2016 will continue to be a part of the accountability system. During our review we received high marks for our innovative programs such as J-term and YAST, as well as our ability to personalize student learning at the high school level. BMU is scheduled to undergo another review during the 2019-2020 school year. Areas that were targeted for improvement during our visit in 2016 have led to the implementation of our local assessment system and adopted curriculum. We hope that future reviews will prove to be equally impactful for our students.

**Continuous Improvement:** BMU has developed and continues to revise our district's continuous improvement plan. This document keeps our priorities on track to ensure that we are planning for the future and making the necessary changes to maximize student outcomes. You can find the full text of our plan on our website at: [www.bmuschool.org](http://www.bmuschool.org)

**Local Assessments and Student Growth:** Our newly developed comprehensive local assessment system is showing that the changes we have implemented thus far are resulting in academic growth in many areas. This is pointing to positive progress on the part of our students.

We are pleased that the new VT system will measure several different areas of achievement. The State of Vermont has many excellent resources on the new accountability system on their website. These resources explain the changes in much greater detail than this correspondence, and have examples of the new school accountability reports that are under development. Check those out here:  
<http://education.vermont.gov/vermont-schools/education-laws/essa/vermont-state-plan>

As with any new measure or system, there will be an adjustment period as we implement these changes. Change science across multiple disciplines has proven this to be true time and time again. We appreciate your continued support of the work that we do for our students. Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Emilie B. Knisley, M. Ed., CAGS