

# **Vision for the Future of Burlington Schools, 2008**

## **Burlington Schools Plan for the Future**

The Future is Now:  
Burlington Schools' Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Approved by the Board of School Commissioners July 15, 2008.

### **Areas of Focus**

Focus for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education initiative is centered on three primary areas:

#### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning**

Developing an education curriculum, structure and model that drives excellence in core subjects (reading, writing, math, science) and critical skills to prepare students to excel in 21<sup>st</sup> Century society, featuring:

- Hands-on, real-life projects that strengthen collaboration and organizational skills
- Global awareness and leadership skills
- Curriculum enhancements in sustainability and arts to foster creativity and critical thinking
- Information, economic, and technology literacy

#### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure**

Developing facilities and physical resources conducive to a 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environment encompassing:

- Improved energy efficiency and cost-savings
- Improved safety and addressing deferred maintenance issues
- Technology & flexible learning spaces that support 21<sup>st</sup> Century instruction
- Increased handicap accessibility

#### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Equity**

With more than 40 different nationalities represented, Burlington Schools reflect the diversity of 21<sup>st</sup> Century society more effectively than any community in the State. We are uniquely positioned to attain true equity for all our students in a model system that provides:

- A community that values and respects all cultures, families, and students
- Socioeconomic balance in all Burlington classrooms
- Equal access to learning opportunities for all Burlington students
- Learning situations that prepare students for multicultural environments

## **Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Case for Change**

Burlington Schools are at a crossroads. Like most school districts throughout the United States Burlington Schools face a new reality rooted in factors beyond our control. Since our school system was developed and designed, how we conduct business, how we communicate, who we interact with, how we live - has all changed. Fifty years ago globalization was in its infancy. Few communities were multicultural. People expected to have one job throughout their working years. Natural resources seemed abundant and inexpensive. Technology did not impact our daily lives - there were no computers, internet or mobile devices. Fifty years ago, ours was a different world. Society has evolved significantly since then, and there is every reason to believe this evolution will continue.

The world has changed in many ways and our education system needs to change with it. Preparing our students to engage and excel in today's world is a materially different undertaking than it was 50 years ago. The tools they will use, the strategies they will employ, the skill sets they will require have all shifted dramatically. The education they receive needs to be adapted accordingly. Every one of our children must have equal opportunities to develop their abilities and contribute in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Burlington's school system was largely developed in the industrial age to fit requirements of the day. Our schools have served this community well over the century, but the reality is that they are no longer tooled to meet new demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is true that we have numerous innovative, nationally recognized programs that deliver leading-edge education, but these are typically the work of dedicated teachers finding ways to create excellence despite outdated resources. How much more could we be doing with an education system designed specifically to fit today's environment?

The workplace, government, the academic community, individuals - are all adapting. Education must adapt as well. Communities across the nation are beginning the process of change, and Burlington is no different. We must address the challenges we face now, repair our inefficient buildings, enhance our curriculum to meet today's demands, and ensure that every child has equal access. Curriculum, infrastructure and delivery mechanisms in our school system need refitting to embrace 21<sup>st</sup> Century instruction and true equity for all students. The process is starting in 2008.