



**BLUE MOUNTAIN  
UNION SCHOOL**

**2025 ANNUAL REPORT**



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

**Annual Meeting**  
Monday, March 3 • 6 pm

**Voting Day**  
Tuesday, March 4 • 10 am – 7 pm





## Annual Meeting & Public Information Hearing

Monday, March 3, 2025 • 6 pm  
Blue Mountain Union School



## Voting Day

Tuesday, March 4, 2025  
10 am to 7 pm

- Ryegate Town Hall
- Groton Community Building
- Wells River Village Garage



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## Meet Our School Board Members

NAME	TOWN	BOARD POSITIONS / COMMITTEES	TERM	EMAIL ADDRESS
Megan Foy	Groton	Board Member	2024-2025	megan.foy@oesu.org
Paul Hazel	Ryegate	Vice-Chair, Budget & Operations, Community Relations, Negotiations	2022-2025	paul.hazel@oesu.org
Allison Ingerson	Groton	Budget & Operations, Negotiations, Buildings & Grounds	2022-2025	allison.ingerson@oesu.org
Kristen Murray	Ryegate	RAB, Buildings & Grounds	2022-2025	kristen.murray@oesu.org
Kelsey Root-Winchester	Wells River	Chair, Budget & Operations	2022-2025	kelsey.root-winchester@oesu.org
Sasha Emerson	Groton	Community Relations	2024-2027	sasha.emerson@oesu.org
Daniel LaCoss	Ryegate	Secretary, Negotiations, Buildings & Grounds	2024-2026	daniel.lacoss@oesu.org
Anna Morrison	Ryegate	Board Member	2024-2025	anna.morrison@oesu.org
Alissa Smith	Wells River	Community Relations	2024-2025	alissa.smith@oesu.org





## FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD

As we look at the past year, we reflect on a time filled with both challenges and celebrations. Our community faced significant hurdles, such as flooding, yet we witnessed incredible resilience and support as neighbors came together to help one another. This experience has left a lasting impact, not only on our local area but across the state. We extend our deepest gratitude to our community for their unwavering support of BMU. There is much to be proud of and thankful for at our school. We celebrate the achievements of our students, including our valedictorian, Abigail Emerson, and salutatorian, Karli Blood, who exemplify academic excellence. As a high school, we continue to see positive growth: our academic achievement rates have risen as more students successfully complete their coursework and move on to bright futures. Behavioral referrals and suspension rates have decreased, reflecting the positive contributions of our hardworking student body, faculty, and staff in fostering a supportive and thriving school environment. A special congratulations to 2024 Vermont Outstanding Educator of the Year Neil Emerson.

This year also marked the return of something truly special: our first musical production since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Directed by Shelby Peters, who once starred in our production of Mary Poppins, the cast and crew brought High School Musical to life with incredible energy and

talent. It was a joy to see our school once again filled with music, creativity, and community spirit.

BMU is more than just a school—it is a cornerstone of our community. It provides our students with an education and serves as a gathering place for all to cheer on the Bucks, enjoy concerts, and participate in programs. We are proud to be part of a school that brings people together and builds a brighter future. The 2023–2024 school year brought home a Division IV Boys Baseball Championship.

As a board, we are committed to balancing sensitivity to the growing financial challenges faced by taxpayers with our responsibility to ensure every student has the knowledge and resources needed to thrive in their chosen life paths. We continually evaluate our existing structures to determine if they are both sustainable and effectively aligned with the needs of our students and community. “What’s best for the community is a good school, one that has a good reputation. What is best for the kids is a good school.” Dr. Rowe

Thank you for your continued support of BMU. Together, we achieve great things.



Sincerely,  
*Kelsey Root-Winchester*  
**BMUSD BOARD CHAIR**



“As a high school, we continue to see positive growth: our academic achievement rates have risen as more students successfully complete their coursework and move on to bright futures.”



Board meetings take place the first Wednesday of the month at 6 pm at Blue Mountain Union School. Community participation is always welcome! Please use the QR code or visit [oesu.org/boards](https://oesu.org/boards) to stay abreast of the School Board’s ongoing activities.





# WELCOME FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



"The connections students and staff make throughout their time at BMU are building blocks upon which they move not so much up (as each is as important as the other), but forward in their journey."

**Schools are, of course, buildings:** bricks, mortar, wood, glass and steel. But we know that buildings are not themselves imbued with any meaningful character of place until they have been lived in and given a personality by the people that inhabit them over time. It is this day-to-day "stuff" of education that makes a school a school and gives it character.

And a place like BMU is all the more fortunate because it is home to pre-kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, and high school students all together in one place, giving it a unique character that stretches across many different ages, even for the same child over time. It is a place where faculty and staff come together to nurture students from the time that they are just beginning to learn "school stuff" all the way until they are ready to head out into the world and make their own way.

It is an amazing transformation to see and one which allows young and old alike the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and grow together in a trusting, caring, and meaningful way that is largely unique to rural schools and an important part of the character that makes Blue Mountain Union the place that it is.

The differences in the education of pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students by grade, ability, subject, classes, etc., is obvious. But each step in the process doesn't exist as if in a vacuum, nor does it stand alone. The connections students and staff make throughout their time at BMU are building blocks upon which they move not so

much up (as each is as important as the other), but forward in their journey. Though grade levels are certainly distinctly different, there are common threads that run through them and interconnect from year-to-year to make the experience a whole. It is a wonderful thing.

We are grateful for the support of our community to be able to do this, to have this opportunity to see such growth and change in our young people. Whether it be through volunteering in the classrooms, attending curricular and co-curricular events, or supporting athletics at all levels, your time, energy, and effort matters to our students and staff.

The many positive things our students do here at BMU day in and day out are the very things that they take with them and continue on with in their lives as they move into our communities and become not only contributing members of our local villages and towns (or further away), but as leaders who are meaningfully connected to this place and how, through their years at BMU, they got there. Go Bucks!



Sincerely,

*Randy Gawel*

**SUPERINTENDENT**

Orange East Supervisory Union

## How Many Students Are Enrolled in Our District?



Town/Grade	EE	PK	KF	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Barnet													1		1	2
Bradford											1		1			2
Corinth												1	1		1	3
Groton	3	17	11	12	7	11	11	12	9	13	7	6	13	11	9	152
Newbury												1		1	3	5
Ryegate	1	12	10	12	14	16	7	14	11	12	15	11	17	14	14	180
St. Johnsbury		1	1													2
Topsham						1						3	2	1	1	8
Wells River	1	4	3	4	3	6	4	5	4	2	5	5	4	2	5	57
Out of State				1					1							2
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>413</b>



### Other Enrollment Data

#### River Bend Career & Technical Center

10th Grade	1
11th Grade	16
12th Grade	14

#### Homestudy Students in Our District

Wells River	6
Newbury	2
Ryegate	22
Groton	8

BMU student Nyx Desrochers receives highlights from Paige Tremblay, a Thetford Academy student and fellow second-year cosmetology student.





# ELEMENTARY GRADES UPDATE

The 2024/2025 school year has been moving along in a productive manner! Teachers, specialists, and support staff have been providing excellent instruction and support, allowing for quality grade level instruction, remediation strategies that meet students where they are, and extension for students who are ready for more. Certainly, there is plenty of work to be done in all components of instruction, but there is no doubt in my mind we will get there as we move forward with a student-first focus and an open mindset.

## Illustrative Mathematics

For the 2023/2024 school year, we adopted Illustrative Mathematics as our primary math program at BMU. Since that time, there has been a strong learning curve for both students and staff, as we have navigated through the shift in platform and philosophy within this new program. We are seeing consistent improvement in confidence, delivery, and performance, which is all promising! Below, you will find student performance data from our STAR Math assessment for grades 3-6 from fall to spring of the 2023/2024 school year.

“Since adding Direct Instruction to our reading system, we have seen great catch-up growth which is allowing more students to access text to learn.”

## Direct Instruction

Also in our second year of implementation, Direct Instruction is moving along in a promising direction! This year, we have worked deliberately to combine Direct Instruction with components of Fountas & Pinell, have expanded Reading Mastery into grades 3-5, and are in the process of including Spelling Mastery, as a part of our literacy system. Since adding Direct Instruction to our reading system, we have seen great catch-up growth, which is allowing more students in grades 3 and above to access text to learn, which is such a necessary component to all content areas.

On the next page, you will find student performance data from our STAR Reading assessment for grades 3-6 from fall to spring of the 2023/2024 school year. In terms of reading, we are currently in the process of working through the requirements of ACT 139. With a goal for all students to be reading on grade level by 3rd grade, this law requires schools to utilize an approved reading program, train all teachers and administrators, and report out to parents/guardians, at least once a year, when their child in grades K-3 requires “urgent intervention,” as established by an approved assessment. For this assessment, Blue Mountain is using STAR Reading. The report to parents must indicate the student performance data, categories of intervention required, and an intervention plan identified to correct the issue. Blue Mountain is using our winter STAR Reading results to report out to families for students in need of urgent intervention.

## STAR Math & Reading Level Data by Grade Level Equivalent

Scores range from 0.0 to 12.9+. A score of 1 means a 1st-grade level. The number after the decimal point (.) shows the month of the school year.

### Illustrative Mathematics: Performance Data

Grade Level	Fall Score	Spring Score	Grade Level Growth
3	2.6	3.9	+1.3
4	3.5	4.3	+0.8
5	5.4	6.1	+0.7
6	4.6	5.2	+0.6

### Direct Instruction: Performance Data

Grade Level	Fall Score	Spring Score	Grade Level Growth
3	2.4	3.65	+1.15
4	2.7	4.5	+1.8
5	4.1	6.1	+2.0
6	4.3	5.8	+1.5





In January, February and March, some students in grades 3-6 will go to Burke Mountain for skiing instruction, and all other students will go to Evergreen Sports Center for swimming, gymnastics, and rock climbing.



### Elementary Winter Program

We are building on our Winter Program Day during the 2023/2024 school year to launch an Elementary Winter Program, consisting of 3 days for the 2024/2025 school year. During the months of January, February and March, we will send some students in grades 3-6 to Burke Mountain for skiing instruction and all other students to Evergreen Sports Center to experience swimming, gymnastics, and rock climbing. Furthermore, as a transition into the winter program, we are planning to send all 2nd grade students to Running Water Recreation during the March Winter Program day. We are super excited to offer this opportunity to students as a form of experiential learning and hope to continue this type of programming for years to come!

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the communities of Wells River, Groton, and Ryegate as the Elementary Principal at Blue Mountain Union School. Our young learners are the cornerstone to a bright future for all and that's a pivotal focus each and every day at BMU. The most optimal learning takes place for students when partnerships are strong between the school and home, so please feel free to reach out to us at any time as we move forward.



Sincerely,  
*Scott Blood*  
**BMU ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL**



*Principal Scott Blood joins students for a special story time in the library, guest-reading "Snow Day!"*



## GRADES 7–12 UPDATE



"In partnership with the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative, students had the opportunity to tour the campus of Vermont State University-Randolph and visit classrooms where they witnessed teaching and learning in action."



Over the past several years, high school in Vermont has changed to accommodate more opportunities for learning outside of the traditional classroom. These shifts enable students to study with employers, at area tech centers, and through university partners and on-line learning providers.

### Online Learning Expands Opportunities

Outside the classroom, BMU does its best to respond to students' interests. We offer an online program called Edmentum for initial courses not offered at BMU and for credit recovery. Additionally, students who want to take courses that aren't available at BMU can sign up through the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (VTVLC). Students complete the course virtually in a one-to-one setting, supported by frequent communication with the VTVLC instructor. BMU maintains strong communication with VTVLC to support student success.

### Students Explore Colleges and Careers

BMU visits post-secondary options as frequently as possible. At the middle school level students attend the Kingdom Career Connect held on the Vermont State University – Lyndon campus. Students attend the opening session along with an interest based career exploration session. Students eat lunch on a college campus and are exposed to what a campus looks like.

In partnership with the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative (VREC), students had the opportunity to tour the campus of Vermont State University-Randolph and visit classrooms where they witnessed teaching and learning in action.



Students sort donations at Listen Thrift Store as part of a J-Term course that focuses on community service.

In the Fall, juniors and seniors are encouraged to attend the New England Association of College Admissions Counseling (NEACAC) Annual College Fair at Saint Michael's College. Students are exposed to over 100 college admissions counselors and are able to have lunch on a college campus. We even got to visit with a BMU alum!

This year, students attended the VSAC Gear UP event at the Community College of Vermont campus in White River Junction to assist in planning the future. Students got to hear from Gear UP alum regarding their experiences navigating postsecondary education and professional paths they took. Students attending workshops focused on workforce preparation including resume writing, getting ready for interviews, and doing internships.

In the Winter, sophomores visit River Bend Career and Technical Center and have the opportunity to





In the past year, our Global Explorers have visited Ireland, England, and the Dominican Republic.



visit three programs of their choice. Sophomores will also visit the Saint Johnsbury Academy Career and Technical Education site as there are different programs available at each location. Students will tour both campuses and have a chance to ask questions and apply to programs.

Students have also had the opportunity to meet with college counselors who visit the BMU campus. BMU has visits throughout the year from military recruiters who share information about the services' educational and career opportunities.

### School Choice Reaches Potential Students

BMU annually visits the Barnet School, Waterford Elementary School, and Waits River Valley School to showcase the various opportunities students have at BMU. Many students ask questions regarding what BMU can offer them in regards to academic and extracurricular opportunities. BMU has several students from surrounding communities attending BMU under School Choice and look forward to welcoming students for the 2025-2026 school year.



Sincerely,  
*Emilie Knisley*  
**BMU 7-12 PRINCIPAL**



## 2024-2025 Activities Offered

- Sewing/Quilting Club
- Hospitality Club
- Marching Band
- Global Explorers
- STEM Club
- Garden Club
- HS Student Council
- MS Student Council
- Flag
- Nation Junior Honor Society
- National Honor Society
- Needle Felting Club
- Yearbook
- GSA Club
- Middle School Volleyball Club







## ATHLETICS AT BMU

As an athletic program, our successes begin with student athletes and the wider community that takes pride in the BMU Athletics tradition. There are countless hours invested behind the scenes that often people do not see. From student athletes that put the work in day after day, to our coaches that thrive to do their absolute best for participants, and families who regularly make sacrifices to ensure they are in the stands and lifting up the teams competing. Many life lessons align with our charge of providing a challenging, comprehensive education, which fosters a lifetime of curiosity, learning, productivity, and good citizenship.

One of the opportunities a small school provides is the ability to participate in numerous endeavors. Not only can our student athletes be found on the field or court but they are officers in our student government, activists at local and state levels, they lead our clubs, and they stand up for each other. They can be found in our elementary grade classrooms lending a hand, mentoring middle school students, donating their time and resources to food drives and fundraisers. They are standout artists and musicians, talented writers and poets, amazing cooks and the skills just go on and on. Your continued support of this community's students is commendable and I personally thank you.

Last year brought about success in many forms for our student athletes. The girls varsity softball hosted the semi final game in the Division IV tournament the boys varsity baseball team won the 2024 Division IV Baseball Championship! The introduction of a Varsity Bass Fishing team last year, who built upon lessons learned, came in fourth in the state championship. Soccer programs are offered for PreK-12 including youth programs, middle school, and varsity. Once again cross country runners represented Blue Mountain at the



In just its second year, the Varsity Bass Fishing team came in fourth in the state championship.



In the fall, six students (above) attended the annual Vermont Student-Athlete Leadership Conference in Burlington.



Boys Varsity Baseball won the 2024 Division IV Baseball Championship.



Girls Varsity Softball hosted the semi-final game in the Division IV tournament.

middle school and varsity level. Winter brings about participation in basketball from K-12 with youth, middle school, and high school levels offered. We were unfortunately not able to field enough interest to put on cheerleading at any level this year. Additionally, we had students take part in member to member agreements with Football, Ice Hockey, and Ultimate at the high school level.

In closing I just want to say thank you again to all of those that have had a hand in the continued proud tradition that is Blue Mountain Athletics. We are truly lucky for our student athletes, their families and this community!



Respectfully submitted,

*Todd Powers*

**ATHLETIC DIRECTOR**



# SCHOOL COUNSELING

## Greetings from the School Counseling Department!

Students are supported in a variety of ways at BMU in the areas of academic, career, and social/emotional development. "The Positivity Project" curriculum along with PBIS (Positive Behavior in Schools) supports positive character development for all students. At the elementary level, monthly assemblies are held to recognize students who exemplify the "Other People Matter" mindset and are celebrated as "Student of the Month" and "Best Buck." Students of the Month are announced on WYKR radio. Quarterly PreK-12 assemblies highlight the academic achievements of all students. Morning announcements highlight events and celebrations happening in the school community.

Students show "Other People Matter" by holding fundraisers to support our community and beyond and participating in the world-wide "Great Kindness Challenge." Fundraisers include "Coins for Cody," "Undy 500" and the "Jazzy's Children Fund." The outreach campaign will continue through the school year as needs arise.

Students work with Vermont Student Assistance Collaborative Gear UP regarding post-secondary preparation. Individual meetings for high school students happen in the spring to plan for their next year of high school. These meetings include a review of the BMU graduation requirements, career interests and course placement for the upcoming

school year. Students in grades 7-12 work on the BMU E-Portfolio. These documents are used to gain important and essential information for students to prepare for life after high school. The portfolios include topics such as: all about me, career plan and interest inventory, personalized learning plan, and transferable skills.

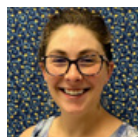
Students are able to take concurrent enrollment courses taught by a BMU faculty member. Students earn high school and college credits simultaneously. BMU collaborates with Southern New Hampshire University and the Community College of Vermont. In addition to the concurrent courses, students access two dual enrollment vouchers through the Vermont Agency of Education. Students, in their junior or senior year, are eligible to take two tuition-free courses through a Vermont approved college or university either online or in person.

In an effort to promote a safe and nurturing environment for all students, the counseling department provides individual and small group counseling sessions as well as classroom lessons which support student success.

Respectfully Submitted,  
**BMU School Counseling Department**



*Dawn Blanchard*  
**7-12 SCHOOL COUNSELOR**



*Samantha Page*  
**PREK-6 SCHOOL COUNSELOR**



*Julie Grandin*  
**SCHOOL COUNSELOR**

BMU collaborates with families facing challenges regarding food, clothing, and shelter. In an effort to support families, we offer a number of programs and resources to match the needs we see in our community.



Vermont Food Bank  
BackPack Program



"Take What You Need"  
Hygiene Shelf



Bucks Boutique



The Mentoring Project



Initiatives Within the 302 Cares  
Whole Child Outreach program

Students show "Other People Matter" by holding fundraisers to support our community and beyond and participating in the world-wide "Great Kindness Challenge."



# BLUE MOUNTAIN UNION SCHOOL BUDGET PROPOSAL: FY2026

## Our Commitment

The BMU Board is committed to the ongoing educationally focused financial support of our students, staff, and community. To this end, we are unwavering in our desire to balance responsible fiscal management with increased student needs. By working collaboratively with all stakeholders, we look to grow opportunities for our students while understanding the equally important and varied needs of our constituent communities.

## Programmatic Highlights

- Integrating services and seeking to maintain continued levels of support for our students and staff to help meet the needs of all students, specifically when addressing academic and social emotional support.
- Utilization of the budget surplus to help offset local taxes.
- Utilization of Capital Reserve to offset budget increases.
- Previously agreed upon and negotiated increases in staff wages and state-mandated health care costs.
- Inflationary increases in the price of goods, services, food, and transportation that everyone is faced with.
- Ongoing changes to Vermont's student and school funding model that have led to additional support for local districts with regard to educational funding, but which are also under review by the governor and state legislature.

**Please attend our annual informational meeting to learn more:  
Monday, March 3 • 6 pm • Blue Mountain Union School**

## Review of the Overall Budget



This budget increase includes a 11.9% healthcare cost increase for all staff (from the state –this is not determined locally), salary increases for staff through previously negotiated agreements (a 5% pay increase plus steps on the salary grid as applicable). The Board has again elected to return the budget surplus (\$433,590) to the general fund to help offset the burden placed upon the local taxpayers. The board also chose to use the Capital Reserve Fund to reduce the Plant Operations line item in the budget by \$102,159.

Throughout the changes and the upheaval associated with the current school funding model, we have continued to seek to provide ongoing academic interventions and classroom support for our students through a combination of strategically utilized staffing and careful management of the local budget. To this end, our hope is to be able to identify students most in need of interventions and provide for them ongoing academic, as well as social emotional support. Moreover, we have expanded our efforts to engage students and staff in building the positive culture and

climate we want at BMU through programmatic improvements and targeted interventions. We continue to support the expanded preschool program at Blue Mountain, enabling us to offer full day preschool five days each week, with the addition of home to school transportation. This has dramatically improved our ability to provide early intervention services to our families and we are strongly committed to continuing to do so.

This report has an overview of the budget changes, but detailed explanations of the budget and all related materials can be found on the BMU and OESU websites. If you have further questions please reach out to a BMU Board member, the BMU principals, or the Superintendent of Schools and we will be happy to provide you with more information. We also encourage you to attend our annual informational meeting to learn more and ask any questions.



For detailed budget information, scan the QR code or visit the BMU School Board: [oesu.org/boards](https://oesu.org/boards).



## WARNING

### BLUE MOUNTAIN UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT #21 ANNUAL MEETING AND PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING March 3 & March 4, 2025

The legal voters of the Blue Mountain Union School District #21 (the "District"), comprising the legal voters, respectively, of the Towns of Groton, Ryegate, and Wells River, are hereby NOTIFIED AND WARNED to meet at the Blue Mountain Union School in Wells River, Vermont on Monday, March 3, 2025 at 6:00PM to transact the following business from the floor:

- Article 1: To elect the following officers as required by law and to authorize the Board of School Directors to fix their compensation: Moderator, Clerk Treasurer
- Article 2: To hear and act on the reports of the Blue Mountain Union School District #21 officers for the past year.
- Article 3: Shall the voters of the Blue Mountain Union School District #21 authorize the Board of School Directors to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes not in excess of anticipated revenues for the next fiscal year?
- Article 4: To transact any other business thought proper under this warning.

Said meeting shall be followed immediately by a public informational hearing regarding the proposed budget and other business, to be voted on by Australian Ballot, on Tuesday, March 4, 2025.

The legal voters of the Blue Mountain Union School District #21 are further notified and warned to meet at the following locations:

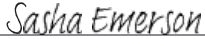
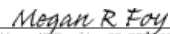
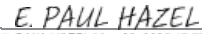

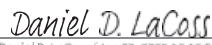
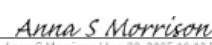
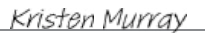


Ryegate:	Town Hall in Ryegate Corner
Groton:	Groton Community Building in Groton
Wells River:	Village Garage in Wells River

On Tuesday, March 4, 2025 between 10:00 in the morning and 7:00 in the evening there will be a vote by Australian Ballot on the following question:

- Article #1: Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$12,054,049.00, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? The Blue Mountain Union School District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per pupil education spending of \$13,330.23, which is 5.27% higher than per pupil education spending for the current year.

The legal voters of the Blue Mountain Union School District #21 are further notified that voter qualification and registration relative to said Annual Meeting shall be as provided in Section 706u of Title 16 and Chapters 43, 51 and 55 of Title 17, Vermont Statutes Annotated.

Signed by the Blue Mountain Union School District #21 Board of School Directors at Wells River, in the County of Orange and State of Vermont this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of January, 2025

 Sasha Emerson (Jan 22, 2025 13:24 EST) Sasha Emerson	 Megan R Foy (Jan 22, 2025 12:57 EST) Megan Foy	 E. PAUL HAZEL (Jan 22, 2025 15:57 EST) E. Paul Hazel
 Allison Ingerson (Jan 22, 2025 12:32 EST) Allison Ingerson	 Daniel D. LaCoss (Jan 22, 2025 16:19 EST) Daniel LaCoss	 Anna S Morrison (Jan 22, 2025 16:12 EST) Anna Morrison
 Kristen Murray (Jan 22, 2025 14:05 EST) Kristen Murray	 Kelsey Root-Winchester (Jan 22, 2025 12:29 EST) Kelsey Root-Winchester	 Alissa Smith

Recorded on this date prior to posting, January 23, 2025.

  
Lauren Nelson (Jan 23, 2025 08:19 EST)

Lauren Nelson, Clerk

## Administration

Scott Blood, PreK-6 Principal  
Parrish Eiskamp, Dean of Students  
Emilie Knisley, 7-12 Principal  
Paul Pellegrino, Food Service Director  
Todd Powers, Systems Ad./Athletic Director  
Clayton Hatch, Dir. of Buildings and Grounds

## Administrative Assistants

Jodi Hart, Executive Assistant  
Crystal Sweeney, Administrative Assistant  
Marie Winchester, SPED Secretary

## Custodians

Gary Cochran  
Steve Davie  
Joseph Lange  
Mike Gordon  
Daniel Webster

## Food Service

Charles Gilman  
Leeanna Roy  
Jackie Webster  
Sarah Webster  
Amanda Welch

## Teachers

Kim Adams, HS Science  
Liz Baillargeon, 3rd Grade  
Dawn Blanchard, MS & HS School Counselor  
Carrie Bogie, PreK  
Heather Boutin, Kindergarten  
Grace Brown, 5th/ 6th SS  
Trista Burns, 4th Grade  
Tammy Carbee, 2nd Grade  
Sara Coon, HS Math  
Hannah Davis, 7th & 8th ELA  
Maria DeChiaro, Technology Intergrationist  
Calen Dexter, 1st Grade  
Jennifer Dube, Art  
Kate Dunn, School Nurse  
Kelly Emerson, K-4 Literacy Interventionist  
Neil Emerson, HS SS/Drivers Ed/Journ  
Moriah Fahey, K-9 Math Interventionist  
Kimberly French, K-12 Health/VTVC  
Julie Gandin, .5 School Counselor  
Leah Gawel, HS English  
Melanie Gonyaw, Kindergarten  
Tiffany Hall, 2nd Grade  
Megan Hebb, 1st Grade  
Sarah Heffer, ELL

# BMU FACULTY & STAFF

## Support Staff

Suzette Anderson	Kelsey Locke
Sheri Ashford-Crown	Lorilynn Mariano
Danielle Brown	Jennifer Mattoon
Nicki Bruleigh	Melanie Minshull
Dawn Burroughs	Marisa Morris-Craige
Debra Carbee	Ashley Murray
Amanda Cole	Beth Paye
Ranee Curtis	Alorah Richardson
Jazmin Darling	Anna Ricker
Heather Engle	Ken Schaffer
Paula Guion	Michael Scott
Michelle Kalnins	Mercedez Shackett
Ashley Kennedy	Sara Silva
Sue LeBlanc	Carmen Phillips

Nicole Hill, HS SS  
Sarah King, 5th & 6th ELA  
Charlotte LaBonte, Instrument Instructor  
Leslie Lamoureux, PE  
Carolyn Lang, PreK-4 Literacy Interventionist  
Jennie Lund, Librarian  
Jennifer Maccini, HS Science  
Torie Marshall, 5th & 6th Science  
Robin Martineau, 5th & 6th Math  
Forrest Matthews, HS Math  
Carmenza Montague, Spanish  
Meghan Mushovic-Girroi, HS English  
Allana Page, MS Science  
Matthew Page, PE  
Samantha Page, Elementary Guidance  
Shelby Peters, MS SS  
Billy Jo Roberts, 3rd Grade  
Jessica Roy, 4th Grade  
Vicki Saibou, PreK  
Shelby Sarno, 5th-8th Lit. Intervent.  
Phyllis Shea, School Nurse  
Marsha Sutherland, MS Math  
Victor Toman, Music

# 2024 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Blue Mountain Union School District #21 • Wells River, Vermont • April 11, 2024

The legal voters of Blue Mountain Union School District #21 met in the Garvin Library at Blue Mountain, April 11, 2024. Angeline Bogie called the meeting to order at 6pm, with approximately 22 people in attendance (including school board members and administrator).

## **Article 1: Election officer and authorization to fix their compensation**

- Brian Emerson of Wells River, Vermont was nominated for Moderator and was then elected
- Lauren Nelson of Ryegate, Vermont was nominated for Clerk and was then elected
- Dena Baker of Groton, Vermont was nominated for Treasurer and was then elected

## **Article 2: Action on the report of the Blue Mountain**

- Richard Roderick (Wells River) would like to see the email addresses of the school board members posted. He would also like to see the student count broken down by town. He would also like to see the list of all employees and their salaries posted.
- Bill Nelson (Ryegate) asked if the superintendent was at the meeting, he was not.
- Jeff Haslett (Ryegate) found page 10 of the report helpful in explaining the overall budget. He suggested that more detail was spent on individual lines of the budget. He also questioned why the grant spending was not itemized. Kristen Murray explained that the grant funds are required to be separate from the regular budget. Angeline agreed that next year the grant money both in and out will be shown on page 12.
- Brian Woehle (Groton) asked what Central Office Assessment covers. Angeline responded that it is all the support staff at OESU. Richard Roderick suggested it be renamed “OESU office” moving forward.
- Dan LaCoss (Ryegate) noted that for this year, each town in the district is showing a budget increase, some more than the proposed BMU increase.
- Richard Roderick (Wells River) asked how many students do we send to Riverbend. There are 38 students in Riverbend and 2 in the Electrical program at St Johnsbury Academy.

- Jeff Haslett (Ryegate) noted that page 14 of the report is incredibly confusing. Several other people agreed.
- Bill Nelson (Ryegate) suggested that the top Revenue line in the budget be divided into what the state gives and what each town gives.
- Sue Burroughs (Ryegate) asked where does BMU compare to other school districts. It was noted that this info would be provided in the slideshow later in the meeting.
- The Annual Report was accepted as published.

## **Article 3: Authorization to borrow money**

- Motion was made by Angeline to authorize the school board to borrow money. The motion was 2nd by Richard Roderick. Motion passed.
- Article 4: The transact any other business
- Kristen Murray created a comprehensive slide show that explained the Equalized Pupil Rate, and the CLA and how both impact the new budget figures.
- ESSER funds (covid funds) are expiring and tax funds will be used to continue these key positions at the school
- Richard Roderick (Wells River) asked how many ESSER positions the school has now. There are currently 6.5 positions, with two being eliminated for the upcoming year.
- Bill Nelson (Ryegate) asked if the employees pay a portion of their healthcare costs. Yes, is the answer, depending on their position. This is state negotiated.
- Richard Roderick (Wells River) stated that he had requested more information be provided in the annual report at last year’s meeting. He would like to see more detailed information, similar to what was available in the old version of the report.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dawn Evans, 2nd by Jeff Haslett. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 7:21 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

**Lauren Nelson, District Clerk**



# BLUE MOUNTAIN UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT: BUDGET COMPARISON FY2023 – FY2026

		Budget FY23	Budget FY24	Budget FY25	Proposed FY26	FY25 – FY26 \$ Change
REVENUES	State – Support	\$7,557,755	\$8,205,638	\$9,769,089	\$10,822,015	\$2,616,377
	State – ELL Categorical Aid	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000
	State – Transportation	\$115,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$0
	Tuition	\$128,400	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$156,000	\$16,000
	Prior Year Surplus	\$626,680	\$640,000	\$200,000	\$433,590	-\$206,410
	Vocational Transportation Reimb.	\$20,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$10,000
	High School Completion Program	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Other Local/Miscellaneous	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$11,800	\$3,800
	Municipal Bond Refund	\$6,003	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,285	\$285
	<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$8,461,838</b>	<b>\$9,135,638</b>	<b>\$10,259,089</b>	<b>\$11,600,690</b>	<b>\$2,465,052</b>
BUDGET / EXPENSES	Direct Instruction	\$3,098,533	\$3,477,948	\$3,802,679	\$4,267,185	\$464,505
	Direct Instruction Intervention	\$0	\$0	\$214,060	\$232,898	\$18,839
	ELL	\$2,250	\$2,200	\$2,200	\$3,200	\$1,000
	Preschool	\$175,013	\$230,351	\$260,274	\$298,351	\$38,077
	Special Ed	\$524,966	\$704,220	\$723,104	\$911,094	\$187,990
	Vocational Education	\$208,784	\$235,207	\$251,196	\$282,175	\$30,979
	Summer Services	\$0	\$24,000	\$32,104	\$57,288	\$25,184
	Student Activities	\$63,052	\$90,256	\$120,256	\$133,582	\$13,326
	Athletics	\$176,717	\$169,301	\$197,999	\$201,654	\$3,655
	Guidance	\$305,894	\$337,387	\$397,804	\$320,034	-\$77,770
	Nurse	\$16,864	\$11,125	\$11,125	\$80,900	\$69,775
	Staff Development	\$80,000	\$84,800	\$84,800	\$85,000	\$200
	Library	\$127,551	\$143,038	\$151,673	\$159,284	\$7,611
	Curriculum	\$98,335	\$57,694	\$58,950	\$125,306	\$66,356
	Enrichment	\$31,425	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$98,000	\$44,000
	Computer Instruction Services	\$265,308	\$289,641	\$295,633	\$305,858	\$10,226
	School Board	\$135,072	\$130,896	\$154,896	\$155,020	\$124
	Staff Relations/Negot./Conting.	\$663,420	\$294,342	\$281,878	\$314,289	\$32,411
	Principal	\$217,955	\$335,485	\$358,671	\$492,898	\$134,227
	Dean of Students	\$99,936	\$110,097	\$111,411	\$123,597	\$12,186
	School Administration	\$185,870	\$169,115	\$181,494	\$218,173	\$36,679
	Fiscal Services	\$2,442	\$1,992	\$1,692	\$1,997	\$305
	Plant Operations	\$663,568	\$731,478	\$916,321	\$922,317	\$5,996
	Transportation	\$364,841	\$384,470	\$388,499	\$423,131	\$34,632
	Transfer to Food Service	\$77,776	\$164,710	\$132,029	\$171,638	\$39,609
	Central Office Assessment	\$446,757	\$313,180	\$394,968	\$584,485	\$189,517
	Early Childhood Spec. Ed Assess.	\$32,997	\$74,640	\$99,229	\$71,099	-\$28,130
	K-12 Spec. Ed. Teachers Assess.	\$348,510	\$433,752	\$538,861	\$532,840	-\$6,021
	Ropes Course Assessment	\$1,293	\$1,302	\$2,511	\$0	-\$2,511
	ELL Teacher Assessment	\$17,600	\$12,571	\$12,571	\$27,400	\$14,829
	Behavior Specialist Billing	\$0	\$35,325	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Technology Director Assessment	\$29,109	\$31,117	\$26,202	\$0	-\$26,202
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$8,461,838</b>	<b>\$9,135,638</b>	<b>\$10,259,089</b>	<b>\$11,600,690</b>	<b>\$1,341,602</b>

## TAX WORKSHEET: FY26 PROPOSED BUDGET

	RYEGATE	GROTON	WELLS RIVER	RYEGATE	GROTON	WELLS RIVER
	Adopted Budget 2024-2025	Adopted Budget 2024-2025	Adopted Budget 2024-2025	Proposed Budget 2025-2026	Proposed Budget 2025-2026	Proposed Budget 2025-2026
<b>Estimated Education Spending</b>						
Estimated General Fund Expenditures	\$10,259,089	\$10,259,089	\$10,259,089	\$11,600,690	\$11,600,690	\$11,600,690
Estimated Grant Expenses	\$583,350	\$583,350	\$583,350	\$334,918	\$334,918	\$334,918
<b>Total Estimated Expenditures</b>	<b>\$10,594,007</b>	<b>\$10,594,007</b>	<b>\$10,594,007</b>	<b>\$12,054,049</b>	<b>\$12,054,049</b>	<b>\$12,054,049</b>
<b>Less Anticipated Receipts</b>						
Grant Revenues	(\$334,918)	(\$334,918)	(\$334,918)	(\$453,359)	(\$453,359)	(\$453,359)
State and Local Revenues for General Fund	(200,000)	(200,000)	(200,000)	(433,590)	(433,590)	(433,590)
Prior Year General Fund Balance	(\$640,000)	(\$640,000)	(\$640,000)	(\$200,000)	(\$200,000)	(\$200,000)
<b>Total Estimated Receipts</b>	<b>(\$824,918)</b>	<b>(\$824,918)</b>	<b>(\$824,918)</b>	<b>(\$1,232,034)</b>	<b>(\$1,232,034)</b>	<b>(\$1,232,034)</b>
<b>Estimated Education Spending</b>	<b>\$9,769,089</b>	<b>\$9,769,089</b>	<b>\$9,769,089</b>	<b>\$10,822,015</b>	<b>\$10,822,015</b>	<b>\$10,822,015</b>
<b>Equalized Pupils/LTWADM</b>	771.51	771.51	771.51	811.84	811.84	811.84
Estimated Education Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,662.30	\$12,662.30	\$12,662.30	\$13,330.23	\$13,330.23	\$13,330.23
Cost Containment Threshold (Previously Excess Spending)	\$23,193.00	\$23,193.00	\$23,193.00	\$15,926.00	\$15,926.00	\$15,926.00
Is Spending Per Student <b>Below</b> State Spending Threshold?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estimated Excess Spending Penalty	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Estimated Education Spending Per Pupil	\$12,662.30	\$12,662.30	\$12,662.30	\$13,330.23	\$13,330.23	\$13,330.23
Homestead Property Yield	9,893.00	9,893.00	9,893.00	8,553.00	8,553.00	8,553.00
District Spending Adjustment Percentage	127.992%	127.992%	127.992%	155.854%	155.854%	155.854%
Base Homestead Equalized Tax Rate	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
Estimated Homestead Tax Rate, Equalized	\$1.2799	\$1.2799	\$1.2799	\$1.5585	\$1.5585	\$1.5585
% Pupils PK-12	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Equalized Tax Rate	\$1.2799	\$1.2799	\$1.2799	\$1.5585	\$1.5585	\$1.5585
Other Components	\$0.0000	\$0.0000	\$0.0000	\$0.0000	\$0.0000	\$0.0000
Total Eq Homestead Tax Rates	\$1.2799	\$1.2799	\$1.2799	\$1.5585	\$1.5585	\$1.5585
Common Level of Appraisal	85.84%	77.43%	79.84%	102.00%	88.63%	94.62%
Estimated Local Homestead Tax Rate	\$1.4911	\$1.6530	\$1.6031	\$1.5280	\$1.7585	\$1.6472
Base Non-Residential Equalized Tax Rate	\$1.3910	\$1.3910	\$1.3910	\$1.7910	\$1.7910	\$1.7910
Estimated Non-Residential Tax Rate	\$1.6205	\$1.7965	\$1.7422	\$1.7559	\$2.0208	\$1.8928



# BLUE MOUNTAIN UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT: TAX RATE PROJECTIONS

## Common Level of Appraisal: Change from FY2025 to FY2026

Towns	CLA 2024-2025	CLA 2025-2026	CLA Increase
Ryegate	85.84%	102.00%	16.16%
Groton	77.43%	88.63%	11.20%
Wells River	79.84%	94.62%	14.78%

### HOW DOES THE CLA AFFECT OUR TAXES?

- The CLA compares each town's total property value on the grand list versus the fair market value of properties.
- The higher the fair market value of properties, the further under 100% the CLA will be.
- As the CLA decreases, the tax rate increases.
- This is how the State provides taxpayers with an equalized grand list across the state.

## Tax Rate Change: FY2025 to FY2026

Towns	Estimated Tax Rates 2024-2025	Estimated Tax Rates 2025-2026	Increase (Decrease)
Ryegate	\$1.4911	\$1.5280	\$0.0369
Groton	\$1.6530	\$1.7585	\$0.1055
Wells River	\$1.6031	\$1.6472	\$0.0441

### FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- Equalized Pupils: 811.84
- Property Yield: \$8,553.00
- Local Spending/Equalized Pupils \$13,330.23
- Equalized Tax Rate = \$1.5585

## Tax Rate Change: Impact on Tax Bills

Towns	Projected Tax Rates FY 2025-2026	\$100,000 House Value	\$200,000 House Value	\$300,000 House Value
Ryegate	\$1.5280	\$36.93	\$73.85	\$110.78
Groton	\$1.7585	\$105.48	\$210.95	\$316.43
Wells River	\$1.6472	\$44.05	\$88.10	\$132.15

### DIFFERENCES BY TOWN

- Each Town starts with an equalized tax rate of \$1.5585 and an equalized tax rate increase of \$.2786.
- The local Common Level of Appraisal affects the actual tax rate, which is why the amounts differ by Town.

# THREE YEARS COMPARISON

Format as Provided  
by the Vermont  
Agency of Education

- Using the revised December 1, 2024 Education Fund Outlook FY26 forecast, the FY26 education fund need results in a property yield of \$8,553 for every \$1.00 of homestead tax per \$100 of equalized property value, an income yield of \$12,260 for a base income percent of 2.0%, and a non-residential tax rate of \$1.791. **New and updated data will likely change the proposed property and income yields and perhaps the non-residential rate.**

- Final figures will be set by the Legislature during the legislative session and approved by the Governor.

- The base income percentage cap is 2.0%.

PRELIMINARY

District: <b>Blue Mountain USD</b> SU: <b>Orange East</b>		<b>U021</b> Orange County			Property dollar equivalent yield	Homestead tax rate per \$8.553 of spending per pupil
					<b>8,553</b>	<b>1.00</b>
					<b>12,260</b>	
					<--See bottom note	
Expenditures		FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	
1.	<b>Adopted or warned union district budget</b> (including special programs and full technical center expenditures)	\$8,459,981	\$9,135,638	\$10,594,007	\$12,054,049	
2.	plus Sum of separately warned articles passed at union district meeting	-	-	-		
3.	<b>Adopted or warned union district budget plus articles</b>	\$8,459,981	\$9,135,638	\$10,594,007	\$12,054,049	
4.	plus Obligation to a Regional Technical Center School District if any	-	-	-		
5.	plus Prior year deficit repayment of deficit	-	-	-		
6.	<b>Total Union Expenditures</b>	\$8,459,981	\$9,135,638	\$10,594,007	\$12,054,049	
7.	S.U. assessment (included in union budget) - informational data					
8.	Prior year deficit reduction (if included in union expenditure budget) - informational data	-	-	-		
Revenues					Income dollar equivalent yield per 2.0% of household income	
9.	Union revenues (categorical grants, donations, tuitions, surplus, federal, etc.)	\$1,209,092	\$930,000	\$824,918	\$1,232,034	
10.	<b>Total offsetting union revenues</b>	\$1,209,092	\$930,000	\$824,918	\$1,232,034	
11.	<b>Education Spending</b>	\$7,250,889	\$8,205,638	\$9,769,089	\$10,822,015	
12.	Blue Mountain USD pupils	401.77	385.05	771.51	811.84	
13.	<b>Education Spending per Pupil</b>	\$18,047.36	\$21,310.58	\$12,662.30	\$13,330.23	
14.	minus Less net eligible construction costs (or P&I) per pupil	na	na	na		
15.	minus Less share of SpEd costs in excess of \$66,446 for an individual (per pupil)				na	
16.	minus Less amount of deficit if deficit is SOLELY attributable to tuitions paid to public schools for grades the district does not operate for new students who moved to the district after the budget was passed (per pupil)				based on \$67,638	
17.	minus Less SpEd costs if excess is solely attributable to new SpEd spending if district has 20 or fewer equalized pupils (per pupil)				na	
18.	minus Estimated costs of new students after census period (per pupil)				na	
19.	minus Total tuitions if tuitioning ALL K-12 unless electorate has approved tuitions greater than average announced tuition (per pupil)				na	
20.	minus Less planning costs for merger of small schools (per pupil)				na	
21.	minus Teacher retirement assessment for new members of Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System on or after July 1, 2015 (per pupil)				na	
22.	minus Costs incurred when sampling drinking water outlets, implementing lead remediation, or retesting.				na	
23.	Excess spending threshold	threshold = \$19,997 na	threshold = \$22,204 na	threshold = \$23,193 na	threshold = \$15,926 \$15,926.00	
24.	plus Excess Spending per Pupil over threshold (if any)	suspended thru FY29 \$18,047	suspended thru FY29 \$21,311	suspended thru FY29 \$12,662	\$13,330.23	
25.	Per pupil figure used for calculating District Equalized Tax Rate				\$155.854%	
26.	<b>Union spending adjustment (minimum of 100%)</b>	135.552% based on yield \$13,314	137.995% based on yield \$15,443	127.993% based on \$9,785	155.854% based on \$8,553	
27.	Anticipated equalized union homestead tax rate to be prorated [\$13,330.23 ÷ (\$8,553 / \$1.00)]	\$1.3555 based on \$1.00	\$1.3800 based on \$1.00	\$1.2799 based on \$1.00	\$1.5585 based on \$1.00	
28.	Tax rate "cent discount" (FY25-FY29) <b>adjusted by statewide adjuster of 72.36%</b>					
29.	Cent discount adjusted anticipated district equalized homestead tax rate				\$1.5585	
<b>Prorated homestead union tax rates for members of Blue Mountain USD</b>		FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY22 Pe
T087	Groton	1.3555	1.3800	1.2799	1.5585	100.00%
T175	Ryegate	1.3555	1.3800	1.2799	1.5585	100.00%
T229	Wells River	1.3555	1.3800	1.2799	1.5585	100.00%
30.	Anticipated income cap percent to be prorated from Blue Mountain USD [((\$13,330.23 ÷ \$12,260) x 2.00%)]	2.26% based on 2.00%	2.43% based on 2.00%	2.50% based on 2.00%	2.17% based on 2.00%	
<b>Prorated union income cap percentage for members of Blue Mountain USD</b>		FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY23 Pe
T087	Groton	2.26%	2.43%	2.50%	2.17%	100.00%
T175	Ryegate	2.26%	2.43%	2.50%	2.17%	100.00%
T229	Wells River	2.26%	2.43%	2.50%	2.17%	100.00%



## Understanding the Ballot When You Vote

### BLUE MOUNTAIN UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT #21

#### Official Ballot

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

To vote on the article as it appears on the ballot, place an "X" in the appropriate box.

#### Article #1:

Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$12,054,049.00, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? The Blue Mountain Union School District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per pupil education spending of \$13,330.23, which is 5.27% higher than per pupil education spending for the current year.

If in favor of the Article, make an (X) in this box. YES ☐

If opposed to the Article, make an (X) in this box. NO ☐

**\$12,054,049** provides education for approximately 400 students.

Vermont uses "**equalized pupils**" to calculate spending, adjusting for factors like pre-kindergarten enrollment, secondary school students, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds or non-English-speaking households, as these students typically incur higher costs.

**5.27%** reflects an increase in the per pupil education spending cost compared to FY 2025.



### Annual Meeting & Public Information Hearing

Monday, March 3, 2025 • 6 pm  
Blue Mountain Union School



### Voting Day

Tuesday, March 4, 2025 • 10 am to 7 pm

- Ryegate Town Hall
- Groton Community Building
- Wells River Village Garage

### Will you be out-of-town on voting day?

Please contact your town clerk for an absentee ballot ahead of time.

**Blue Mountain Union School**  
2420 Route 302  
Wells River, Vermont 05081



**STAY IN TOUCH**

802-757-2711  
[bmuschool.org](http://bmuschool.org)

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