



JoAn Canning
Superintendent of Schools

Spaulding High School
Spaulding Educational Alternatives (SEA)
Barre City Elementary and Middle School
Barre Town Middle and Elementary School

October 8, 2025

Dear families and caregivers of the Barre Unified Union School District –

An incident last week raised some concerns in our community. I am writing to share more information about what happened last week and about our District policies and education programs for teachers, staff and students.

Our district is committed to providing a learning environment that fosters physical and emotional health to build a community of curious learners that empowers student voice and exploration through education, character development, and perseverance, so our students can take on the world's greatest challenges. Read more here: <https://www.buusd.org/district/strategic-plan>

What happened last week

A staff member behaved erratically in school. She disclosed her drug use. In keeping with district policies and state law, the school called an ambulance and the police as well as notifying the Vermont Department for Children and Families. Students were held in their classrooms while the EMTs and law enforcement were at the school. We notified families of the incident.

The employee is no longer employed by our district, in keeping with the admission of use and the district's no-tolerance policy.

Unfortunately, some community members posted information about people with a similar name and a different legal history than the person employed at our school.

District policies and educational programs for teachers, staff and students

Our teachers and other staff must abide by a zero-tolerance policy related to substance use at work. In addition,

- Every school district employee has a criminal records' background check.
- Our contracted bus provider regularly drug tests its employees and also requires background checks.

- Teachers and other staff may participate in district-provided health insurance that includes an employee assistance program. That program provides access to mental health and recovery services related to drug or alcohol use.

District policies and procedures are available online at:

<https://www.buusd.org/district/policiesprocedures>

Our students are provided education and resources related to drug- and alcohol-use through our:

- Health curriculum
- Substance Abuse Program counselors at all of our schools.
- Guidance counselors.
- School nurses.
- Partnership with Washington County Mental Health Agency
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools prevention program offerings such as building leadership skills, resiliency and citizenship skills

Even in our small, closely knit community, our youth see and are exposed to the use of alcohol, marijuana and drugs. Our students' self-reported use of substances is about the same as other Vermont youth. However, our middle school students say they have a 25% higher incidence of traveling in a car with a driver under the influence of alcohol (24%) or marijuana (27%) than the state averages (19% and 13%, respectively). Read more in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey here:

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/hsi_yrbs_2023_barre_su.pdf

Should your student(s) have questions or concerns, please encourage them to talk to their teacher, counselor, school nurse or principal about what happened.

Please reach out to your student's teacher, guidance counselor, principal or other district staff to discuss any concerns you have about their learning and safety.

We're committed to working with you to provide Barre students a safe and healthy environment so they can succeed in taking on the world's greatest challenges.

Sincerely,

JoAn Canning
Superintendent of Schools
jcannbsu@buusd.org
802 476 5011

Copies: BUUSD School Board and district staff