

## Burlington Kids Frequently Asked Questions Answers as of June 20, 2010

Please note that new changes are underway in response to public comment and that this FAQ will be updated periodically.

### **What is Burlington Kids?**

Burlington Kids is an afterschool program that offers Burlington youth enrichment and recreation opportunities along side academic support in a safe, supportive environment. The program is open every day that kids come to school-including early release days-from the end of school until 5:30 p.m.. We offer many choices designed to meet the needs and interests of all families and all kids.

### **Who/What is the Leadership Council?**

The Leadership Council is a *collaborative management team*, made up of the Burlington School District (BSD) and Burlington Parks and Recreation (BPR) leaders who share responsibility for managing the Burlington Kids program. It includes Mari Steinbach the BPR Director; Maggie Leugers the BPR Supt. of Recreation, Dan Cahill a BPR Recreation Coordinator, Jeanne Collins BSD Supt. of Schools, Julie Cadwallader-Staub the BSD Grants Director, Jeff Fournier BSD's Director of Afterschool Programs, Nina Mazuzan BSD's Lead Site Coordinator and as of June 18, 2010, Sarah Carter, Parks and Recreation Site Coordinator. We have met at least monthly, sometimes more often, with their meetings rotating between the BPR and BSD offices. The team reviews staffing, enrollment, budget, programming, and other programmatic issues. The goal is to assure that Burlington Kids implements structures, policies, and systems that support our vision of *happy, safe kids learning and having fun in a vibrant, caring community*. This group of leaders serves as the Burlington Kids management team.

### **What have we heard from parents and the community through the afterschool dialogue over the past several weeks?**

- 1) Burlington Parks and Recreation and the City of Burlington must take care of the four existing staff (the Parks and Recreation Site Coordinators) by working toward maintaining them in the existing personnel structure within the City;
- 2) We must retain parent trust in the program and ensure a high quality to the delivery of services;
- 3) We must achieve transparency in moving the collaboration forward, and that we must navigate through a sound public process.

### **What are the recommendations and why are they important?**

Burlington Parks and Recreation and the Burlington School District began collaborating on programming to share organizational strengths and resources to support a greater vision that we couldn't achieve alone: to offer enrichment and recreational opportunities alongside academic support in a safe, supportive environment that meets families' needs. As our collaborative efforts have evolved and matured, we have fully assessed the programs through daily program monitoring, staff meetings, and a survey to parents this winter. The outcome of our assessment work is a set of recommendations that focus on

improvements which will continue to support the highest quality in afterschool programs. Aside from this, we have also looked introspectively at our organizations and their respective role in the community. Our current recommendations, which we stand behind, call for a re-alignment of Parks and Recreation resources that allow us to fill gaps in our community. Below we provide a breakdown of how our recommendations support higher quality afterschool programs as well as how this re-alignment of resources benefits the entire community.

- Afterschool Program Improvements
  - *Improved billing infrastructure* – We currently use two separate software systems within our program. One system is for billing; one is for program management. We are moving toward an approach that supports one software tool that will perform both tasks: billing and program management. This will greatly increase the efficiency, accuracy, timing, and clarity of afterschool bills. Parents clearly requested improvement in billing in our mid-year survey.
  - *Improved site based leadership* – Our recommendations call for a more efficient, responsible, and effective site based leadership model. This model employs one site director at each program. The site director would be supported by a half time assistant director. This model has been successful at the Sustainability Academy. The benefits of this model are:
    - clear lines of authority for employees and managers
    - less confusion for kids and families by having a single entity, rather than two, for any challenges, questions or issues that come up
    - a more fiscally responsible program through reducing our full time staffing at the site director level from eight site leaders for four sites, to four site leaders for four sites.
  - *Improved Snack Operations* – The goal of our snack program is to serve healthy snacks for all after school participants without additional charge to participating families. In preparation for next year, we have started communicating with the Burlington School Food Service in regard to their role with our snack program. Historically, the Burlington Food Service (BFS) has been a significant partner to help us administer our own snack program. By fully partnering with BFS, afterschool staff will be able to focus more time on children and activities and less time in the intensive efforts that go into administering our own snack program. Clearly, BFS is already set up to deliver healthy, low cost food to students at all of Burlington Schools, and has won national recognition for its success in integrating local foods into school meal programs.
- Re-alignment of Resources for Parks and Recreation:
  - *Inclusion* – Currently our department does not have any capacity that is grounded in an intentional focus on ADA standards. These standards must apply across recreation programs, parks and facilities, and all services. They apply to providing inclusion, reasonable accommodations, design and capital improvements, and improving any aspect of policy, service, or program based

upon these standards. This model would allow us to begin to address these needs of our department, city organization, community members and visitors.

- *Coordination and Partnership with local youth serving non-profits.*  
Burlington is very fortunate to have organizations such as the King Street Center, The Sara Holbrook Community Center, the Burlington Boys and Girls Club, and the YMCA, among others. Opportunities to collaborate with our non-profit partners at the highest appropriate level have yet to be realized. There have been many focus groups meetings that have involved BSD, Parks and Recreation, and our non-profit partners, and we have identified gaps, opportunities, and areas of focus for out of school programming in Burlington. However, we still haven't taken action to intentionally work toward filling these gaps and launching those opportunities. Our recommendation provides capacity for the Parks and Recreation Department to provide leadership and coordination to help close these gaps and realize higher levels of collaboration among community partners.
- *Adult Programming* -- This is an area that has been deficient. Burlington has an active adult and an aging population and it is critical that our department is responsive to these population trends. Our recommendations allow us to provide better support, leadership and programming to our adult and senior adult populations, as we seek to expand lifelong learning skills and opportunities. We can achieve this through balancing our resources more equitably across demographic groups and targeted market segments.
- *Outdoor Recreation and Education* – For the past few years, initiatives that reconnect children to our natural environment have gained momentum, nationally and locally. In light of growing urban populations and decreasing natural resources, the importance of early-life outdoor experience is one of the most important factors influencing young people's life-long appreciation for and protection of nature. Burlington Parks and Recreation currently does little to fill this void in the lives of our children, and can take a leadership role in outdoor recreation and education for our community.
- *Vacation Programming* – The Parks and Recreation Department currently offers 7 vacation camp days during in-service or vacation days. Our recommendations provide the opportunity for the Parks and Recreation Department and BSD to increase the amount of vacation/in-service coverage that we offer.

**How can I get more involved with the decision making of the afterschool programs?**

We are asking each PTO chair to serve on a Community Advisory Committee. This committee will support the collaborative management team. The PTO chair can designate another parent to serve in their place, so if you are interested, please contact your PTO chair.

**Could you set up a Weblink so that parents and community members can easily give their input?**

Yes, please visit the following link to give feedback. The team will review comments received on this weblink prior all meetings. The goal of providing this link is so

appropriate discussion and consideration can be given to parent/community feedback in a timely and consistent manner.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BurlingtonKidsFeedbackForm>

**Is it true that the recommendation shifts all administrative and operational decisions to the BSD?**

No. The collaboration between the BSD and the BPR will stay intact and all program related policy decisions (fee structure, billing policies, activity structure etc...) will be made jointly through the collaborative management team structure with the support of an advisory committee. Programming will remain unchanged. Billing will shift to the BSD along with snack. Under the current recommendation, staff will be hired by the BSD, and therefore personnel specific policy will be aligned under the School District's existing HR department.

**Under the recommendations, how will the program's general structure change?**

It won't. Burlington Kids will continue to offer a mix of enrichment, recreation and academic support for students on a schedule that meets each family's need for afterschool care. We will offer a broad range of choices for all kids in three sessions during the school year. The recommendation will improve the infrastructure to support this scope of programming.

**Under the recommendation, who would employ the staff next year?**

The team recommended that BSD employ staff next year to enable programs to run more smoothly and efficiently under one site leader and one set of policies and procedures that align with the school day.

**Why is the recommendation to have one director at each site for next year?**

After an extensive review of the staffing plan, regulations, and budget as well as a review of the program at the Sustainability Academy, it became clear that the sites would run more effectively and efficiently with one director and one assistant director at each site.

**Under the recommendation, how would the four site director positions be filled?**

We recommended that the four positions be open to all applicants. We're committed to including community voices as we develop a process that honors the work of long-time program leaders and encourages others to apply for the position of site director.

**When will the recommendations be put into place?**

The team recommends that the improved model start in the fall of 2010.

**Under the recommendations, will there be any positions transferred from BPR to BSD?**

The team recommended that BSD employ all program staff. This includes all four site director positions, all "seasonal" staff and all activity leaders. The goal is to fill all of these positions with the best people and to hiring many of the current staff members under this new model.

**Under the recommendations, will there be any budgetary transfers?**

It depends on what you mean by “budgetary transfer.” This year, when all the billing was done by BPR, BSD’s proportional share of expenditures was transferred by BPR to BSD. Next year, under the improved model, it would be the reverse. Revenue from Burlington Kids will continue to support some portion of BPR’s staff. Under the recommendation, this transfer would help support Recreation Specialist positions that are designed to address quality gaps identified during the 2009-10 school year. Specifically, these positions would support staff training, parent outreach, inclusion, and leisure education development.

**Under the recommendations, will you be covering all your costs?**

Yes, that is part of the recommended model.

**Under the recommendations, would current site leaders have preference in hiring?**

The Leadership Council’s recommendation is for all four site leader positions to be open applications.

**What are the next steps for the Burlington Kids Program?**

We are working hard to bring together a Community Advisory Committee that will help review and advise the recommendations of the collaborative management team. This Committee will be composed of 4-6 parents, one member of City Council, two members of the School Board, and one Parks and Recreation Commissioner. The team will work closely with this committee during the first several weeks of July to fully review all recommendations and set an appropriate and responsible course of action that is focused on kids.

## **BURLINGTON KIDS PROGRAM INFORMATION: 2010-2011**

### **How do I sign up for the 2010-11 Burlington Kids Program?**

Families can sign children up for the program now. The complete registration packet is available on-line at [www.bsdt.org](http://www.bsdt.org) or by contacting Holly Jones at 846-3736 or [hjones@bsdt.org](mailto:hjones@bsdt.org).

### **What does the program cost?**

The base rate for participation in Burlington Kids is \$12.50 per student per day. This is the same fee structure as the 2009-10 year. We offer many ways for families to reduce their cost:

1. Short Afternoons—Families that are able to pick up their kids by 4:15 can participate for only \$10 per day.
2. State Childcare Tuition Assistance—Families can apply to the VT Child Development Division to see if they qualify for assistance. Families can apply on-line at: [http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/families/pay\\_child\\_care](http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/families/pay_child_care)
3. Family Discounts—We offer a reduced rate for families with more than one child participating in the Burlington Kids program.
4. Sliding Fee Scale—We offer a sliding scale based on income for families who need it.
5. Academic Scholarships – students who need additional help afterschool, and who are recommended for scholarship by their teacher(s), will receive an academic scholarship at a level that will enable them to attend, including full scholarship if necessary.

### **How will billing and fees work next year?**

The Burlington Kids' current billing process is complex due to the variety of funding opportunities for families. The current system used to support this complexity has been unnecessarily cumbersome and inefficient. Next year, BSD will manage billing for the program. This will streamline application for scholarships and align participation and billing systems under one roof. This will lead to a much more manageable billing system that delivers accurate bills on a timely basis. BSD already has a system set up for its program at the Sustainability Academy, many aspects of that system will be expanded to bring on the Burlington Kids sites as well.

### **Are there scholarships available?**

Yes, families can apply for "Financial Assistance" through the State of Vermont. If families are not eligible for the State of Vermont's financial assistance program, we have a "Tuition Assistance" program that families can apply for. "Tuition Assistance" is funded through the Burlington School District.

### **How do I apply for scholarships?**

Families can download "Financial Assistance" applications at the Child Care Resource <http://www.childcareresource.org/> "Tuition Assistance" applications can be obtained through contacting Holly at the Burlington School District at 846-3736. Families are also

encouraged to contact a site coordinator at their afterschool help for assistance with scholarship applications.

**How do I secure a year-long slot in the Burlington Kids Program?**

We reserve 75% of the program enrollment capacity for families who use the program for regular childcare. This leaves 25% of enrollment space for families who sign up for activities each session. Our hope is to serve all families, however, if program capacity is reached, a lottery system is utilized to confirm enrollment.

**Will there still be reliable child care for every day a child is in school?**

Yes, just as it has been this year, and in the past.

**Do the programs operate on early release days?**

Yes.

**Will there still be the rich array of choices of programming?**

Yes, this will continue as it always has. Under a restructured program, there will be more opportunity to focus on program development. Specifically we look forward to more engagement with children and families around activity sign up choices. If you have ideas or suggestions for programming, please let us know.

**Will there still be circle and sharing time?**

Yes, every site leader received training in the Responsive Classroom Model, which uses respectful circle and sharing time as its base.

**Will there still be field trips?**

Yes, though less often than in the past. Under the recommendations, transportation resources would become more broadly available throughout the community.

**Will there still be a holistic approach to children?**

Yes, recreation and leisure activities will be available alongside academic enrichment and homework help.

**Will children be encouraged to play for play's sake, and not have to go into organized enrichment programs?**

Parents, or parents with their child's input, choose what programming to sign up for, so it is up to the parent and child to decide how much play and how much academic enrichment the child will participate in. Each site offers a "free-play" option that is grounded in leisure education and recreational exploration. This "free-play" or "exploration" option is available to families at the same level as in the past.

**Will children be mentored by older kids or will there be separation by age group?**

We organize the groups by interest within age ranges, so younger and older children are together to some degree. Because of developmental differences, age ranges are usually within one or two grade spans, but each session we offer opportunities for students of all ages to play and learn together.

**Will children be treated kindly and with respect?**

That is always our first priority.

**How will I sign my child up and pay?**

Many families have already submitted registration materials for the fall. The 2010-2011 registration packet is available on the BSD web page or by calling Holly Jones at 846-3736 and [hjones@bsdvt.org](mailto:hjones@bsdvt.org)

**GENERAL QUESTIONS, REQUESTS & SUGGESTIONS**

**Is Burlington Kids only for elementary schools?**

Though BSD oversees after school programs from kindergarten through high school, the Burlington Kids collaborative is at the elementary level.

**When the collaborative programs formed, did people really buy-in?**

Our survey this winter demonstrated that 75% of parents who responded were positive about the merged programs and about the transition. These parents indicated that they felt the Burlington Kids collaboration improved or maintained program quality.

**Why do staff need to use walkie talkies so much?**

Staff keep in touch with each other through walkie talkies for safety reason since there are several groups of children throughout the school building. If you have a concern about overuse of walkie talkies, please contact either Jeff Fournier at 540-0285 or Dan Cahill at 865-7091, who oversee the program.

**Could you do homework club earlier in the day?**

The timing of each of the enrichment programs depends upon the availability of teachers, so we have limited ability to schedule programs outside of their availability, yet we will continue to review this request.

**I don't think shared leadership is working – how will this program address that?**

This was one of the reasons that the team recommended a single site leader position at each site. One person in charge with one set of policies and procedures to follow will help all programs run more smoothly, so that more attention can be paid to high quality programming and less to administrative challenges.

**What's going on at the Sustainability Academy and the Integrated Arts Academy?**

At the Sustainability Academy at Barnes, BSD operates a program that mirrors those at Champlain, EES, Flynn and Smith. We have one site director with a half time assistant who work with a team of enthusiastic staff member to offer recreation, enrichment and academic support every school day. At the Integrated Arts Academy at HO Wheeler, BSD has a longstanding partnership with the Boys and Girls Club to deliver after school programming there.

**Do you partner with King Street?**

We do not have a formal partnership with King Street, though we have explored it several times in the past few years, and will continue to do so as the programs and community needs continue to evolve.

**Wasn't the impetus for this to be more efficient?**

Yes, we are always looking for ways to make the programs more efficient and cost-effective, while continuing to improve our services to children. The recommendations allow us to focus our efforts on enhancing program quality and reduce operating costs.

**Can we [families] afford it?**

We have sliding fee scale as well as academic scholarships available.

**Can we [taxpayers] afford it?**

The recommendations strengthen the Burlington Kids program and the community at large. We realize substantial savings by reducing overall operating costs. We use these savings to improve our staff development and increase program quality while producing a net savings of \$100,000 to \$150,000. For more info please refer back to the answers to the question, *“What are the recommendations and why are they important?”*

**Is there a difference between being “revenue neutral” and “more efficient?”**

Yes, and they are related. We are always trying to make scarce taxpayer dollars stretch as far as possible, so that revenue can support high quality programming. By “revenue neutral,” we mean that the funding that we currently have will not need to increase in order to support this recommended model.

**Can you explain the funding mechanisms?**

These programs are supported by a combination of, local taxpayer funding 31%, state subsidy 31% (which is federal money through the state’s Department of Children and Families) and parent fees 38%.

**Will BPR continue to cover vacations and summer camps?**

Yes.

**Can we collect fees through the school lunch billing/payment system?**

We are working on this for next year and hope that we can implement it next year!

**Can we have a box online to have parents pay and sponsor a child?**

Yes, this is another thing that we hope to implement next year as part of billing through the school lunch program.

**Is the BSD set up to collect money from families?**

We currently do this for our program at the Sustainability Academy – yes.

**Is there any consideration being given to moving kids around on busses?**

Yes, there was consideration given to this, but because we offer programs at every school, it was not included in the budget.

**What will the impact be of Challenges for Change?**

The Finance Committee of the School Board is watching this closely. We don't know yet. We hope that it won't affect our after school program.

**Will this change our local budget?**

Again, we don't know yet—the Finance Committee of the School Board is watching this closely.

**Do we know what the state subsidy will be next year?**

Financial aid, or childcare subsidy, is available for eligible families. Based on the quality of our program we will operate next year with two stars in the Step Ahead Recognition system. This means that Burlington Kids will receive a 10% premium the funds it receives from the State.

**What are we doing to address eligibility issues?**

The state sets the parameters for eligibility. Please contact the Department of Children and Families at [http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/families/pay\\_child\\_care](http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/families/pay_child_care) if you have questions or suggestions about eligibility.

**Do you have other questions you'd like addressed?**

If you have other questions, please use the survey form at the link below. Or, call Dan Cahill at 865-7091, or Jeff Fournier at 540-0285.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BurlingtonKidsFeedbackForm>