



Kingdom East School District

PO Box 129, Hilton Dorm, 64 Campus Lane
Lyndon Center, VT 05850

Phone: 802-626-6100 Email: info@kingdomeast.org Fax: 802-626-8165
Burke Concord Lyndon Lunenburg Miller's Run Newark Sutton

Jennifer Botzojorns, Ed.d
Superintendent

February 4, 2022

Thank you for inviting me to testify. My 37th year in education, I serve as superintendent for the rural remote Kingdom East school district in the Northeast Kingdom. We have seven Pk-8 schools and tuition to high school. My prior work was in Chittenden County, Montpelier and a small independent school in Burlington.

We are fortunate to have the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative to share resources and implement promising programs. My testimony to you is to illustrate one small area, a fine grain, to give you the specific context of why it is essential to address workforce development and growing and sustaining a high-quality teacher workforce in Northeastern Vermont.

In our District, we currently have 4 unfilled special education positions. We have hired creatively to address the needs by using content specialists to teach academics, this leaves increased pressure on our special educators and behavior specialists. We partner with regional Human Services agencies, yet we still are challenged.

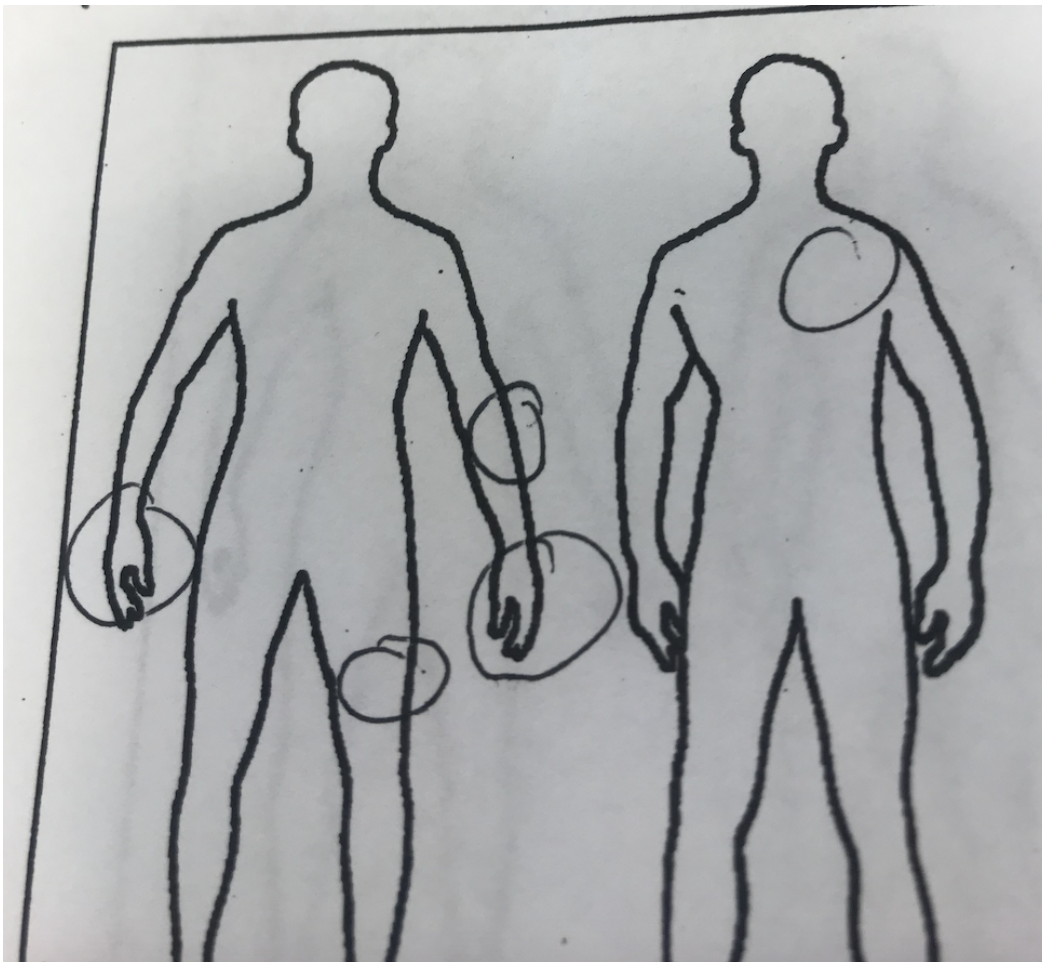
A significant pressure in classrooms and special education concerns children with trauma, and the ability to serve their social and emotional needs. I would like to give you an example. Last week, I visited a school. A young child became dysregulated for several hours which included physical aggression and disrobing. The young person destroyed a classroom and caused physical harm. Please see a picture of the classroom.





The adults calmly support children, trying to change their trajectory. Unfortunately, in this protection, we have injuries to our faculty and staff. Workforce development includes both training in prevention and also how to calm and sustain calm situations. We have had faculty and staff who do this work and they are also subjected to injuries as a result of their daily work.

In one school we have had 41 staff injuries as a result of dysregulated children. Please see an actual example of an accident report form that circles the areas where an adult was injured. The 41 different incidents of injuries in one school are from preK-5th grade young people. This is one school. I have seven schools.



These pictures are shared to give you a visual understanding of what is occurring in our District, and across the state.

How does this relate to workforce development?

Our staff are kind, patient and trained. They are exhausted. There are no current spaces

in therapeutic programs for dysregulated children to attend.

I want to retain the current staff I have and would like to provide a path to teacher licensure so individuals can receive a teacher's wage.

Additionally several adults are working with dysregulation in children. This takes away from children on the cusp. The children on the cusp can be supported and guided to have a stable schooling experience, yet we are drawn to the more significant needs.

Workforce development would help us serve all children and provide more special educators, behaviorists and teachers in our schools to support needs. Hopefully this visual provides one example of current context.

In addition to workforce development, training special educators, our collaborative can work together to address the need for therapeutic alternative day settings for children. These alternative options in our rural region do not have the capacity, as a result we are faced with an increasing number of situations that I described.

I look forward to the continued work on new pathways that both attract candidates and provide the necessary training for individuals to succeed and stay in the profession.