



Vermont RURAL EDUCATION Collaborative

...nourishing and inspiring rural educators, students and communities to learn, share & thrive

***this is a working proposal presented to provide context and initial concepts for consideration and shared planning between VREC & the VTAOE**

A Vision for Growing and Sustaining a High-Quality Teacher Workforce in Northeastern Vermont

The Vermont Rural Education Collaborative has established workforce development as one of our priorities in our strategic plan. Although VREC has supported professional development since its beginning, the current landscape for attracting and retaining teachers nationally, statewide, and particularly in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, has become more challenging since the pandemic and ongoing disruption in the labor market. Schools are faced with unfilled positions and more candidates coming from non-traditional pathways. We believe VREC can play a meaningful role in supporting the teacher pipeline and the ongoing professional growth opportunities necessary for educators.

Context:

It's mid December and Lake Region Union Elementary-Middle School District is dividing up middle school students from the Irasburg Village School to attend other K-8 schools in the district due to not being able to fill teaching positions... Charleston middle school students are receiving math instruction in real time distance learning from the math teacher at the Troy School... Schools across the region are sending letters home to parents of children on IEPs who will not receive services due to unfilled positions. North Country Union High School students only have access to French instruction online despite straddling the border of Quebec.

The challenge of hiring and retaining teachers in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom is not new. Yet, the scope and extent of the challenge was exacerbated due to the pandemic and larger shifts in

the labor market in the past two years. Despite the availability of substantial Federal funding to respond to a pandemic recovery effort, many schools have not been able to hire intervention teachers to provide the level of additional support so needed in many rural and often high poverty districts. Additional factors, such as limited child care or increased housing costs, have compounded the challenges. Furthermore, the national context for teaching has witnessed a more politically divisive environment.

The Vermont Department of Labor & McClure Foundation joint report on promising careers list K-12 teachers as the highest need in Vermont over the next 10 years (7850 openings) Meanwhile, the number of students participating in teacher education programs has declined in Vermont and nationally. Schools are all too often not filling essential positions and relying on hiring individuals entering the teaching profession through non-traditional pathways.

The AOE reports over 1600 teachers on provisional or emergency licenses for the 2022-23 school year. Unfortunately, having teachers “jump in the deep end” to being their experience as an educator does not always provide the best opportunity for success. The Vermont NEA has established Grow-VT Ed, through State funding, to support individuals on provisional or emergency licenses who are going through the Vermont Agency of Education's Peer Review program. An appreciated approach, yet not enough to meet the current need in the field and questionable as to the level of training one receives is sufficient. Other programs such as The Vermont Higher education Collaborative and Champlain College's Teacher Apprenticeship Program (TAP), which provides a path to licensure in as little as eight months, are also valued options and also still not enough to meet the current needs.

There is a need to provide new pathways that both attract candidates and provide the necessary training for individuals to succeed and stay in the profession. A number of states have expanded “grow your own” apprenticeship programs as a means to creating a “teacher pipeline.” Some states, such as Tennessee, are making major investments in expanding the teacher pipeline with financial support for “earn and learn” apprenticeship programs for instructional assistants and full paid tuition programs for undergraduates.

The teacher shortage is not a uniform picture. There are regional differences and even variations between neighboring supervisory unions and supervisory districts based on multiple factors. Additional factors, such as housing and childcare, are important contributing factors to the ability to attract and retain a quality workforce. Whereas each of these aforementioned programs are a benefit to supporting Vermont's teacher population, there remains a need for more options to make entering the teaching profession attractive and accessible for a broader range of candidates, especially in those areas that have traditionally struggled in fielding viable applicant pools.

compounded the challenges. Furthermore, the national context for teaching has witnessed a more politically divisive environment.

Potential Responses:

There is a need for multiple entry points and pathways in order to attract a wide range of candidates into the profession and to provide accessibility. This is most evident in the Northeast Kingdom. VREC proposes the development of several “pilot pathways” in conjunction with the Vermont Agency of Education, potential Vermont institutions of higher education and various partner organizations. Based on research of various programs across the country, we suggest the four following pathways, or variations thereof, be pursued in Vermont:

- A. Three year BA/Licensure–working para educators or intern “Earn and Learn” program. With substantial tuition support from the State
- B. Three year BA/Licensure with accelerated teacher education program. With substantial financial support for participants by the State. (Tuition, Grants, or Loan Forgiveness...)
- C. Post-Baccalaureate Hybrid– One year paid internship while completing licensure and/or MA with coaching. With substantial State support for pay or tuition.
- D. Introduction to Education as Career/Teaching as a Profession–High Schools & CTE Centers & flexible pathways with potential early college options.

Program Principles & Commitments:

- Strong public support from the administration for public education & workforce investment (primarily Agency of Education & Dept. of Labor)Flexibility–multiple pathways to support individuals at different entry points into the field of education.
- “Earn as you learn”-- It is essential that participants in each pathway have the financial assistance to allow them the opportunity to succeed.
- Sustainable–It is important that there is a substantial commitment of State resources to incentivize participants & minimize the financial burden placed on local school districts over multiple years. Federal funding for startup and State funding for sustainability.
- Integrated–In addition to additional pathways to support a new teacher pipeline, efforts should be tied to teacher induction/mentoring, ongoing professional learning that is accessible & affordable, and professional learning networks in the region to promote continued growth and success in the profession.
- Intentional approach to understanding issues in rural education and place-based learning in Vermont context
- Recruiting a diverse educator workforce and attention to aspects of equity, inclusion and culturally responsive practices.

VREC Experience & Capacity:

The Vermont Rural Education Collaborative already plays an essential role in the region supporting workforce development. VREC currently provides coordination of professional learning for some course work across the region. VREC assumed this role at the very beginning of our development as an organization due to the consolidation of Education Service Agencies in the State. VREC does generate a modest amount of revenue from facilitating these activities, yet strives to keep costs down to make workshops and courses affordable.

VREC helped to initiate the Grow-VT Ed and is considered a partner with VTNEA. We will continue to support and provide feedback to Julie Longchamp at VTNEA. This seems to be working well, though currently there is a concern the need is outpacing the capacity of VTNEA. We checked in recently to discuss how the current program is going, considerations moving forward and how VREC may continue to be a thought partner and potential collaborate in some fashion around opportunities for teachers to achieve “micro credentials.”

VREC is partnering with OESU & St. Michael’s College to promote access to an administrative licensing/leadership academy that includes some classes held in our region, some on campus and some virtually. VREC has worked with Castleton in the past on the development of a leadership cohort and remains committed to providing pathways to administrative licensure.

VREC attempted to establish a NEK cohort for the new principals in partnership with Jay Nichols who is the Executive Director for the Vermont Principals’ Association. Unfortunately we were not able to bring together a large enough cohort to run a separate section in the NEK this past summer, but will continue to pursue doing so in the future.

Currently VREC is engaged in a partnership with [ExcEL2026](#) to bring professional development and financial resources to our schools in support of personnel working with English language learners. (specialists, content teachers, classroom teachers) in three VREC SU/SDS and in the process of recruiting others to participate.

VREC did some initial leg work this summer and fall to explore the potential for hiring/contracting two individuals to support SU/SDs with folks navigating the licensing process. At the time, it did not make sense for VREC to hire or broker these services and SU/SDs were provided with contact info so that they could consider either directly. OCSU & NCSU are using one individual currently. To some extent, the VTNEA is providing this level of support for a cohort of approximately 80 individuals on provisional or emergency licenses and is looking to expand their capacity.

VREC is uniquely positioned to support initiatives to increase pathways and support continued growth into the field of education in the Northeast Kingdom. As a non-profit with SU/SD membership, VREC has a direct relationship with schools in the region and disposition to respond to their needs and interests. It is necessary for a third party organization such as VREC to have a multi-year commitment in order to build sufficient capacity and bring on board the staffing necessary to develop, implement and administer programs. VREC is able to administer the piloting of teacher pipeline programs in a direct partnership with the Agency of Education and institutions of higher education in Vermont, and has already begun work to explore potential partners and pathways.

In order for VREC to assume the responsibility to coordinate the development and implementation of a comprehensive approach to teacher apprenticeship pathways, it will require a substantial increase in personnel. Whereas there are potential variations to what this staffing could look like, in part due to variability in experience and skills of candidates, we propose the following as the preferred plan:

- Full-time Director of Workforce Development & Professional Learning
- Part-time Professional Learning Coordinator
- Part-Time Administrative Assistant/Communications Support
- Contracted Support as bridge in early planning

The reality is that it would be challenging for VREC to add this kind of capacity at this time, but with certain enabling conditions and commitments, we believe it is possible. VREC's expanded capacity will further our ability to partner with the Vermont Agency of Education, higher education and supervisory unions/supervisory districts to ensure success.

We believe it is essential to approach "workforce development" in a comprehensive manner and not solely pursue increased pathways to licensure. We must remain dedicated to teacher retention and professional growth at the same time we ramp up new pathways into the profession. The success of a teacher, and continued licensure, is contingent on access to ongoing professional learning, professional networks and strong advocacy for public schools. Eventually, we hope to bring on board an Instructional Innovation Coach to assist schools with implementing best practices related project-based and place-based learning.

VREC already plays an important role in promoting professional practices, advocacy for sound educational public policy and presenting a positive narrative about our rural schools. VREC is best suited to function as a facilitator of ongoing professional learning and convener of professional learning networks—both essential to the continued development and support of teachers in the region.

With additional resources, VREC is positioned to support small pilot cohorts of apprentices teachers and a regional initiative to provide work-based learning and early college opportunities for area secondary students in partnership with Community College of Vermont, Vermont University, University of Vermont or organizations such as Upper Valley Educator Institute. Working closely with the Agency and higher education, VREC has the potential to provide multiple "grow your own" pathways in support of the next generation of educators and most importantly learners.

We certainly recognize various teacher pipeline initiatives will likely be an iterative process, yet want to begin with small, regional ventures before building out something more statewide. Currently, we feel the following two areas are most promising in pursuing at this time:

1. BA program for working paraeducators/Instructional Assistants--It would be great to develop a similar "earn & learn" model that Tennessee is using where individuals are paid by the school district and tuition is paid for by the state. Ideally, this would be a three year program. We recognize there needs to be intentional recruitment and screening to identify candidates who have the academic skills to succeed. We also believe this would actually create an incentive for highly qualified individuals to become para educators knowing they would have this opportunity.

2. Post-Baccalaureate Rural Teacher Residency--One year paid intern/teaching assistant to become licensed as a middle school or secondary school teacher. Participants would work as team teachers, provide small group instruction, or serve as an interventionist as an intern. We are even willing to consider facilitating a "homestay" model to assist with housing for those coming from outside the area.

We encourage a hybrid approach to delivery of learning for participants with some instruction being in person and some being virtual--both synchronistic and asynchronistic. We believe it is important that in-person instruction take place in the NEK.

Of course these pathways are contingent on funding from the State to be viable. It seems that perhaps working on "early college" and flexible pathways initiatives with CCV, UVT and UVM are pathways to build out as we go as well.. We remain open to other emergent options pending how higher education partners envision the best opportunity for success given their resources and limitations. Certainly an undergraduate pathway, with substantial financial assistance for participants, where students are not working for most of the time, but maybe in a paid "internship" when it comes to "student teaching" is a promising option. We understand there are many variables to consider and enabling conditions necessary for any apprenticeship program to launch successfully and be sustainable.

VREC is committed to playing a meaningful role in supporting teacher workforce development in the region. We want to be sure our contribution is within our ability to deliver and is sustainable. The financial support of the McClure Foundation over the next 18 months will support our organizational capacity to move our comprehensive forward with the specific resources from the Vermont Agency of Education dedicated to the development of the runway to get programs off the ground.

Tentative Timeline:

- Planning– January - June 2023
- Program Development & Recruitment–March- August 2023
- Summer Coursework & Orientation June-August
- First Pilot Cohort Starting the Fall of 2023 (model to be determined)
- Development of Teaching as a Profession, work-based learning & early college initiatives
- Second Pilot Starting Fall of 2024

Budget:

It is hard to define a budget at this point without at least a tentative scope of programming envisioned. VREC will need to build capacity to develop and coordinate any type of teacher apprenticeship program. The creation of a Director of Workforce Development and Professional Learning is the primary staffing need and likely ancillary support. We are hopeful that the McClure Foundation will make a commitment in support of our capacity building, yet will require additional funding from the AOE or Department of Labor to compliment a modest contribution from McClure.

The largest cost of investing in a comprehensive approach to developing the teacher workforce will be financial support for participants in the form of tuition support or potentially compensation to serve as paid interns that are part of an apprenticeship program. It is reasonable that there will likely be some shared costs between participants, school districts and the State. However, without a substantial commitment from the State, any effort to meaningfully expand the teacher pipeline will have limited success.

Considerations, Questions & Limitations:

- Is there a need to address public policy? (Tennessee did not)
- What is the scope of funding? (how much & how long?)
- Is there any chance that K-12 teachers (or specific categories) would be deemed “Critical Occupations”?
- Is there a potential for VREC to leverage philanthropic support for capacity building in conjunction with efforts directly supported by the AOe? What is the context of collective bargaining agreements and practices such as signing bonuses or loan forgiveness?
- Recruitment: What regional or statewide initiatives to increase marketing/incentives for teachers from outside state to relocate?
- Where does other workforce needs fit into the picture: Leadership Cultivation and Licensure, Instructional Assistants/Para-educator recruitment and development, Substitute Teachers)
- Is there a need to focus on specific areas: special education, math, foreign language, etc...?
- What kind of commitment would participants need to make? ...including placement

Potential Partners:

Higher Education Institution:

- VT State University—committed to continuing conversations, seemed most interested in early college opportunities.
- University of Vermont
- Community College of Vermont—perhaps early college options?
- Upper Valley Educator Association—more capacity than VREC—perhaps ability to help build a custom pilot for a small cohort?

VT NEA

VSA

Existing Programs

[Champlain College TAP](#)

[Vermont Higher Education Collaborative](#)

[Grow VT Ed](#)

[Educator Raising](#)

[CCV Portfolio/PLA](#)

Resources:

[National Grow Your Own Center](#)

[UVM/CEEDAR](#)
[UNH Rural Teacher Residency Program](#)
[Monmouth College Teacher Corp](#)
[Tennessee Grow Your Own](#)
[UT Grow Your Own Center](#)
[Georgia Office of Rural Education & Innovation](#)
[Georgia Teaching as a Profession](#)
[Apprenticeships USA](#)

News & Opinion

[USA Today Unconventional Jan. 2023](#)

[Rural Schools Collaborative, Jan 2023](#)
[Hechinger Report, Jan. 2023](#)
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[The Atlantic, Aug. 2022](#)
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Research & Data

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[2021 Title II Report](#)
[Washington State GHO Study 2017](#)
[New America GYO Strategies](#)
[New American GYO Findings](#)
[Teach & Learn GYO Programs](#)
[Teacher Residency Programs](#)
[Minnesota GYO](#)
[HS GYO Programs](#)

[Design Thinking](#)

