VT-FUTRES
Fostering Understanding To Realize Educational Stability

Co-Principal Investigators: Jessica Strolin-Goltzman   Jesse C. Suter
Contact Numbers: 802-656-2173   802-656-1130
E-mail Address: jessica.strolin@uvm.edu   jesse.suter@uvm.edu

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What: This proposal is for a two-year grant for infrastructure support to develop and implement effective multi-disciplinary policy and practice interventions for improving educational stability and outcomes of middle and high school youth in foster care. VT-FUTRES is a collaboration between the UVM's College of Education and Social Services, the Vermont Department of Education, the Justice for Children's Task Force of the Vermont Family Court, the Vermont Department of Children and Families, and children and families involved with DCF.

VT-FUTRES builds upon Vermont's previous efforts to improve educational stability such as the 2006 Casey Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) grant and the Vermont Justice for Task Force education sub-committee. The core of this grant is the *Rock the GRADES* toolkit for improving educational stability based on the evidence-informed intervention strategies developed by Joan Rock during the BSC process. This intervention will be refined and tested during the course of this grant.

<u>**VT-FUTRES Overall Goal**</u>: **Improve educational stability and academic outcomes for middle and high school youth in foster care.** *Rock the GRADES* will be implemented by child welfare resource coordinators (RCs) and their local multi-disciplinary support networks to improve educational stability enabling them to:

1. **G**enerate multi-disciplinary network of professionals in child welfare, educational, court systems and partnering agencies.

2. **R**ecruit foster families in school districts with high rates of foster care placements.

3. **A**sk foster parents for transportation support to increase educational stability.

4. **D**ata collection and dissemination across disciplines to identify needs and track progress.

5. **E**ducate local communities on importance of educational stability for youth in foster care.

6. **S**upport screening youth in foster care for educational stability and well-being.

Goal 1: Refine and implement the evidence-informed intervention and toolkit *Rock the GRADES*. Through an iterative process of development, testing, and revision, VT-FUTRES will create the *Rock the GRADES* intervention and toolkit.

a. Convene the VT-FUTRES state executive team who will meet monthly to review Vermont and national resources to develop *Rock the GRADES* resources. State advisory members will include co-principal investigators, Shari Young, Dana Lawrence, Mike Mulcahey, Joan Rock, foster youth, resource parent, grant implementation coordinator, and other key stakeholders.
b. Form national advisory panel to inform the state executive committee on best practices being implemented across the nation to enhance *Rock the GRADES*.
c. Synthesize *Rock the GRADES* into a user-friendly toolkit available in paper and online.
d. Develop curriculum and provide trainings on *Rock the GRADES* toolkit.
e. Implement *Rock the GRADES* first in pilot districts (Phase 1) and then statewide (Phase 2).
f. Finalize *Rock the GRADES* using data and feedback from Phase 1 and 2 districts

Goal 2. Build local multi-disciplinary capacity to improve educational stability and academic achievement for middle and high school youth in foster care. VT-FUTRES will offer discrete trainings and outreach during the two-year grant that will lay the foundation for sustainable workforce development infrastructure.

a. Roll out final revised *Rock the GRADES* toolkit statewide
b. Create VT-FUTRES interactive website providing educational stability information, data, and strategies for child welfare, educators, members of the legal community, youth, foster parents, and other community members.
c. Make toolkit and website information available as smartphone app.
d. Deliver Casey Family Programs' *Endless Dreams* video and curriculum at two statewide education conferences to raise awareness and promote strategies supporting educational success of youth in foster care.
e. Collaborate with Casey Family Programs in a train-the-trainers event to establish local trainers in the *Endless Dreams* curriculum.
f. Disseminate regular updates on educational stability and outcomes data to multi-disciplinary audiences through reports, newsletters, websites, meetings, and conferences.
g. Assist Vermont's Court Improvement Program initiative disseminating judicial bench cards supporting judges to ask about educational stability and outcomes for youth in foster care.
h. Disseminate feedback and products from youth leadership groups (Goal 4).

Goal 3. Facilitate the cross-system collection and use of data on educational stability and outcomes of youth in foster care. VT-FUTRES will leverage efforts from initiatives in child welfare, education, and courts to build infrastructure capacity for data collection and dissemination.

a. Create a simple data collection system for RCs to enter and manage data on educational stability and placement.
b. Collaborate with Vermont Department of Education to analyze data and disseminate findings from their upcoming initiative to track educational outcomes for youth in foster care.
c. Facilitate coordination between child welfare and education to generate integrated educational stability and outcomes reports.
d. Use VT-FUTRES data to inform evolving child welfare and education information management systems to ensure sustainability.
e. Regular data updates will be made available on the interactive website.

Goal 4. Engage youth in sharing their experiences to positively influence infrastructure development around educational stability

a. Partner with college students in Vermont who were in foster care to take leadership roles in improving educational stability and outcomes for middle and high school students.
b. Create regional youth leadership teams empowered to review local and national work on educational stability and provide recommendations based on their experiences in foster care.
c. Engage youth leadership teams in sharing their educational experiences through outlets such as video and social marketing outlets.
d. Encourage representation by youth in RC multi-disciplinary support networks and state level advisory teams.

Timeline & Primary Activities

There are four key components to achieving the goals of this project:
1. Rock the GRADES Roll out and Scale up
2. Youth Engagement and Leadership (Oct 2013 to Sep 2014)
3. Endless Dreams Training (summer 2013 and summer 2014)
4. Facilitate the cross-system collection and use of data

1. <u>Rock the GRADES Initial Roll out and Scale up</u>
Initial Development of Rock the GRADES Toolkit and Curriculum (Oct 2012 to Feb 2013)
a. Convene the VT-FUTURES state executive committee.
b. Form national advisory panel to inform the state executive committee on best practices being implemented across the nation.
c. Synthesize *Rock the GRADES* into a user-friendly toolkit available in paper and online.
d. Create interactive website and smartphone app

Initial Implementation & Development of Rock the GRADES in Northern Vermont (3/13-7/13)
a. Phase 1 implementation of *Rock the GRADES* will begin in six regions in northern Vermont: Barre, Burlington, Morrisville, Newport, St. Albans, and St. Johnsbury. (This seems to make sense as 4 of these districts have RCs who have already expressed interest in prioritizing educational stability.)
b. Provide training to all DCF Resource Coordinators (RCs) in these regions on importance of educational stability, use of the *Rock the GRADES* toolkit, the interactive website, data collection, and smartphone app.
c. Support RCs in developing multi-disciplinary support networks (with representatives from foster parents, youth, DCF, courts, and education) in their region to improve effectiveness and sustainability of implementation. Recommend beginning by leveraging support from existing recruitment teams.
d. Facilitate sharing of challenges and solutions among RCs.
e. State executive committee will regularly review and disseminate educational stability data collected by RCs.

Revise Rock the GRADES Toolkit and Curriculum (July 2013 to Sep 2013)
a. Use data and feedback from Phase 1 districts and partners to refine *Rock the GRADES* toolkit and curriculum.
b. Update website and smartphone app.

Revised Implementation & Development State-Wide (Sep 2013 to June 2014)
a. Phase 2 implementation of *Rock the GRADES* will occur in remaining six regions in southern Vermont: Bennington, Brattleboro, Hartford, Middlebury, Rutland, and Springfield.
b. Provide revised training to DCF RCs that has been refined based on feedback and data from first six regions.
c. Support RCs in developing multi-disciplinary support networks (with representatives from foster parents, youth, DCF, courts, and education) in their region to improve effectiveness and sustainability of implementation. Recommend beginning by leveraging support from existing recruitment teams.
d. Identify opportunities to connect youth leadership teams (see below) with RCs and regional support networks.
e. Facilitate expanded state-wide sharing of challenges and solutions among RCs.
f. State executive committee will regularly review and disseminate educational stability data collected by RCs through website.

Final Revision and sustainability of Rock the GRADES Curriculum (July 2014 to Sep 2014)
a. Use feedback from partners and data collected state-wide to create final version of *Rock the GRADES* toolkit and curriculum.
b. Update website and smartphone app.

2. <u>Youth Engagement and Leadership (Oct 2013 to Sep 2014)</u>
a. Hire former foster youth enrolled in college at St. Joseph's College model STEPS program.
b. Form and convene four regional youth leadership teams recruited through local district offices, schools, and the state youth development program.
c. Facilitate review of *Rock the GRADES* toolkit, curriculum, and regional implementation by youth leadership teams.
d. Provide opportunities for youth to share feedback with their regions to enhance implementation.
e. Support youth leadership teams to identify mechanisms for sharing their stories to raise awareness of the importance of educational outcomes for youth in foster care (e.g., videos, conferences, trainings, reports).

3. <u>Endless Dreams Training (summer 2013 and summer 2014)</u>
a. Partner with Casey Family Programs to conduct a train the trainer of the *Endless Dreams* Curriculum for 10 professional development coordinators and trainers in education and child welfare.
b. Offer the full length *Endless Dreams* Training at 2 Best Summer Institutes

4. <u>Facilitate cross-system data collection and use (Oct 2012-Sept 2014)</u>
a. Create a simple data collection system for RCs to enter and manage data on educational stability and placement.
b. Collaborate with Vermont Department of Education to analyze data and disseminate findings from their upcoming initiative to track educational outcomes for youth in foster care.
c. Facilitate coordination between child welfare and education to generate integrated educational stability and outcomes reports.
d. Use VT-FUTRES data to inform evolving child welfare and education information management systems to ensure sustainability.