



Testimony to the Vermont House Education Committee
Presented by Karen Taylor Mitchell, MPA
Executive Director of the Governor's Institutes of Vermont (GIV)
Member of the Vermont Workforce Development Council
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Thank you for inviting me here to speak today on behalf of Vermont's talented teenagers and our state's critical education and workforce needs.

Why does Vermont have a statewide, residential summer enrichment program for high-potential high school students?

- Vermont's small schools almost always lack sufficient teaching resources and peer groups for young people who need challenge, acceleration and depth.
- Small communities limit rural students' awareness of and confidence to pursue advanced academic and career pathways.
- Rural geography and economic disparities bar many Vermonters' access to traditional out-of-school programming.

There is a myth about high-potential students - that they will succeed on their own. The reality is that every student needs and deserves the opportunity to engage at his or her own pace with topics that foster that child's love of learning. Without it, high-potential students are at great risk of disengagement, underachievement, deficits in self-confidence and self-esteem, and even dropping out of school.

What is the Governor's Institutes of Vermont (GIV)?

- A 30-year-old independent 501(c)3 founded collaboratively by VT Department of Education and VT Arts Council and operating in partnership with all Vermont high schools, nine Vermont colleges, the Agency of Education, VSAC, VT EPSCoR, and private funders.
- Financially and geographically accessible to all Vermont students via an innovative sliding scale tuition model that drops to \$10.
- Vermont's largest provider of hands-on, in-depth STEM learning to Vermont students outside of schools and tech centers.
- A recognized leader among Governor's Schools nationwide currently offering nine topical Institutes in Math, Engineering, Information Technology, the Arts, Entrepreneurship, Asian Cultures, Environmental Science, Current Issues and Food Systems.
- Successfully serving a diverse population with targeted initiatives to attract and include students from underrepresented geographic, economic, gender, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and varying degrees of physical ability.

GIV reaches more than 500 students each year from 78 Vermont high schools and home schools. Thousands of students and parents call it "*life-changing*." Recent graduates have written us things like:

"I remember how my brain felt like a sponge filled with knowledge every night, and how I woke up every morning hungry to know more...The Governor's Institute

helped me to realize that I may be just a 15 year old girl in small town Vermont, but I am not powerless.”

“Having the opportunity to delve into interesting fields of mathematics with equally interested and passionate peers was a rare and precious experience.”

“The experience and connections I have made through GIV have had, and will continue to have, a huge impact on the decisions I make, the opportunities I find, and path I decide to take in life.”

“I feel like I matter.”

Is there quantitative proof that it works?

Yes. GIV is a leader in results-based accountability, and recently strove to quantify the impact it has had on young people by conducting an externally supervised two-year long-term impacts study of alumni who had participated in an Institute between 1983 and 2007. 98% of respondents reported substantive gains. Specifics included:

- 85% reported that GIV increased their self-confidence.
- 83% reported that GIV increased their academic or creative motivation.
- 80% said that GIV increased their academic or creative focus.
- 79% became more aware of interesting educational or career opportunities.

Results were consistent among male and female respondents. 93% told us that GIV had influenced them as they made choices about their future, and 88% stated that GIV was one of the most important experiences of their high school years.

The report also offers evidence for specific transformational education practices that may be useful in gaining acceptance for Common Core. Please join us for a report release event two weeks from now in the Statehouse Cedar Creek Room, Tuesday, February 25, 2014 from 4-6 pm.

Is the Governor’s Institutes optimally scaled given its track record and potential?

- GIV currently serves 2% of the Vermont high school population and over the past five years has added 200+ new slots/yr to better meet student demand. But many students eager to spend extra time learning are still turned away each year due to lack of space, particularly in the STEM Institutes.
- GIV launched a successful campaign to expand enrollment by 10% each year since 2010 because we estimate that up to 30% of Vermont high schoolers overall could benefit from participating in GIV.
- To ensure accessibility, tuition levels are kept low. In 2014, 84% of students paid less than cost to attend based on their income qualifications.
- GIV’s legislative appropriation dropped 5% to \$192,654 in 2009 and has since remained level. Thanks to vigorous fundraising that helps us match every state dollar 4:1, the state’s cost has dropped from \$571 per student in 2010 to \$384 per student.
- We ask the legislature to consider increasing GIV’s funding by \$40,846 starting in 2014. \$233,500 will enable GIV to reach 80 more students yearly by 2015.

To read more:

General website and information for current high schoolers: www.giv.org

GIV’s sliding scale tuition model: www.giv.org/tuition

Long-term outcomes report: www.giv.org/GIVat30

Governor's Institutes of Vermont - Recent Student Quote Sampler

“I don’t think I will ever experience learning like I did that week at GIV. It was two different universes for me. In one, I sit in my classroom at school, waiting for anything that will challenge and interest me, but my hope is for naught. At GIV, I was always challenged to the amount that is right for me, and I was also able to, for the first time, really take the academics seriously.... I also brought what I learned home, to my family and town, to share.”

“We had long days full of lectures and speeches, we hardly had any free time, and we had homework. That’s what made it great. This wasn’t just some run-of-the-mill summer camp. The people who had put together the program really wanted us to learn and take something away with us.... It is a great program and I was very lucky to be able to participate in it.”

"The Governor's Institute offered me a chance to explore the possibility of a scientific career in a way I probably wouldn't find anywhere else...I feel like I'm better prepared for my college search."

“During my time at GIV, my partner and I made a fully-functional wind turbine. I have memories and knowledge that will stay with me throughout my entire life.”

“This wasn’t only an opportunity for learning and making friends, but also a doorway to furthering our knowledge about how we can improve the future of our planet.”

“Before I attended GIV, I was a regular teenager, still learning about who I was and how to handle and perceive the world around me. On my first day at GIV, one of the administrators said, ‘From here on out, it doesn’t matter what other people have said about their experience here. This is your experience. It’s what you make it.’ To me, this was a valuable piece of advice. For the remainder of my stay, I not only listened to critique and improved my own art, I took risks, such as getting to know new people, and letting people know me. Because of my openness to my peers, not only did I meet some really unique and different people, I also met people who were like me... This is a lesson I can carry over into other parts of my life.”

“The best thing was that I was able to connect with and learn from people who shared similar interests and passions in an encouraging environment.”

“My GI experience was a once in a lifetime event. I made many new connections, and learned more than I thought I could in a week time period.”

“It was refreshing to be part of something where everyone else is interested in learning.”

“I was expecting a few classroom classes for applied math, but I got skills and A PURPOSE TO LIVE.”