

## **ELO Working Group**

### **Notes from August-September Meetings/Conversations**

**September 14, 2015**

#### Notes from conversation with Stuart Comstock-Gay, Vermont Community Foundation

*H. Morehouse (8/26/2015)- paraphrased, summarized, and shared with permission*

- State has to decide if this is a public good or not; if the state cares about this issue and sees it as important, then the state will need to fund it; without government commitment it will be hard to make this last through philanthropy
- Philanthropy can play a role but it's incorrect to assume that there is easy big money in philanthropy in VT
- How does VCF select issue areas? We look for where we have the opportunity to actually make a difference; where a private funder has some resources to put behind a particular issue; depends on the interests/concerns/preferences of the funder
- Private funders by and large want to give locally; want to have control over funding decisions; usually fund things for the short-run (3-4 years max); they like to get things up and going- looking for innovative ideas and will give to get something started; they look at making upstream changes by funding things that they feel will substantially address the root cause
- Private funds could be raised/used to fill in around the edges; easier to get added \$ if funding process is already attached to a particular community (e.g., some money coming from state/federal that requires a local match to make happen)
- What's different about Early Ed? It's an example of the power of one individual to lead change, and other funders also buying into that vision; Rick Davis has put his own money behind it for over a decade, and has been able to convince other private funders to do so as well. This is pretty unusual
- In the end, people give to people. Relationships are important.
- These things don't happen overnight, but when it's important you shouldn't give up (e.g., covered truck bill in Maryland passing after 26 years)

#### Notes from meeting with Fagan Hart, Vermont Children's Trust Foundation

*H. Morehouse and D. Gurtman (9/2/2015)- paraphrased, summarized, and shared with permission*

- Every state has a Children's Trust Fund; VT might be the only one with an associated foundation
- The foundation was created to be able to raise private \$ that could be added to the Fund
- The Fund receives federal funds from Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) ( the dollar amount has fluctuated between 80,000- 170,000 over the past several years); \$100,651/year from a state allocation; and about \$65,000/year from the tax check off (this will

decline to \$50,000 next year), the Foundation will contribute \$225,000 in 2016.

VCTF also distributes \$239,000/year of federal funds from CBCAP (Community Based Child Abuse Prevention)

- The Foundation has very small overhead which is a plus when talking with potential donors; three part-time people and a part-time office assistant
- VCTF grants support new programs or expansions of existing programs; funds are meant for entrepreneurial, innovative ideas and are required to build sustainability on their own over the period of a 3 year grant), pilot programs are one year grants and average \$5,000 and equipment grants (under \$1,000) are also available
- Grant applicants are encouraged to submit requests for funding for community based programs and should describe how the particular applicant/program will serve a need within their community. Funds are granted to programs that meet one or more of the following AHS outcomes: Pregnant women, infants and children thrive. Children are ready for and succeed in school. Children live in stable and supported families. Youth choose healthy behaviors. Decisions are not made based on something that the state feels communities should be doing; rather it is up to the local community to come up with what they want/need
- Sometimes funders call them for ideas on where to give money; this might be a continuing annual request or one-time money; VCTF gives recommendations based on the list of programs/ organizations that they've already vetted or funded before; part of this is matching funder's interests/priorities to potential programs/organizations

#### Notes from conversation with Helen Beattie, Up for Learning

*H. Frank and H. Morehouse (9/10/2015)- paraphrased, summarized, and shared with permission*

- Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) and proficiency-based graduation requirements, when done well and with the original intention of Act 77, require a fundamental shift in how learning happens
- One way to think of it is “amplifying learning in VT by helping students pursue a purpose with intention”
- There are implications we need to consider when placing students “out in the community” including:
  - Security/ finger printing
  - Transportation
  - Liability
  - Funding
  - Training
- However, we can't let the focus on logistics take all the energy; we need to also spend time on communication, and building a broad, community-wide understanding of what this change is

and why it's important; we need to help people not only see a need for changing the learning paradigm in this way but also provoke a desire in them to get involved

- Helen is talking with the United Way about a potential project with them around how to work with businesses so that they can better understand Act 77; looking at how you get the broader community mobilized to support student learning and PLPs
- It's easy to think of all the resources in Chittenden County, but rural Vermont also has an incredible array of entrepreneurs and small business owners
- Communication is important; need to focus on "The Why"; PLP's can strengthen communities by providing students with learning experiences and mentors and by giving business owners and community members a meaningful way to give back and to be involved; student interns can also help by making real contributions in the business
- Make note of the distinction between curiosity and passion; often we talk about students pursuing their passions through personalized learning; passion is difficult to get your head around and to sustain; sparking their curiosity about different options may be where we should be aiming
- Consider a continuum of experience and layers of exposure; also think across the age groups. For example:
  - Start with guest speakers and small programs at the elementary level to develop initial awareness
  - Use group programs afterschool at the middle level to expand interests and spark curiosity
  - Move to internships and personalized opportunities to go even deeper at the high school level
- Think of a similar gradation for community members as well. For example, doing a guest talk to get first exposure to connecting with school and students → then teaching a course in an afterschool program one hour a week for six weeks → later moving on to taking on a student intern in your company; different levels of involvement, time, risk, etc. over time; also build in scaffolding and training
- Be careful and clear about defining appropriate roles for different constituencies (e.g., teacher, parent, student, community partner); Helen likes to use the term "partnership" when building teacher-student collaborations; the roles are distinct
- Possible recommendations and/or leverage points:
  - Look at AOE's new assessment process and see if/how expanded learning opportunities are incorporated
  - Focus on communication and what resources and scaffolding are needed- both for the schools reaching out to community partners and for community partners to be effectively engaged

- Get the “experts” in the room together and learn from their experience; a number of schools have individuals who are already doing this work finding community resources, making connections, placing students, documenting learning, etc.; create a forum to capture their wisdom and resources; could be combined with the ELO providers summit that is tentatively in the works; should include students who have benefited from ELOs as well (maybe have each ELO coordinator bring one student); Vermont Afterschool and Up for Learning could partner on organizing this together; the objective would be to build a road map for PLP/ELO connections in support of learning that includes all perspectives (school-based, student-based, and community/ELO provider-based)