

# EVERY HOUR COUNTS: VERMONT STUDENTS SUCCEED WITH EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



A Report from the Working Group on Expanded Learning Time  
Vermont's PreK-16 Council  
December 2014

## SUMMARY

Vermont's PreK-16 Council created the **Legislative Working Group on Expanded Learning Time** to review and evaluate issues of equity in and access to Vermont's expanded learning opportunities (ELOs), including afterschool and summer learning programs. The PreK-16 Council recently published their report, *Every Hour Counts: Vermont Students Succeed with Expanded Learning Opportunities*. The report outlines five key recommendations, including the development of statewide systems, partnerships, and funding strategies to ensure that by **2020 the children and youth in every Vermont community have access to ELOs**.

## KEY FINDINGS

Quality ELOs help students succeed in school and in life by 1) keeping children and youth safe and healthy; 2) inspiring learners; 3) helping working families; and 4) supporting Vermont's vision for education.

**Vermont's Vision for Education.** ELOs are well-positioned to support Vermont's major education initiatives, including the new Education Quality Standards, flexible pathways for graduation, personalized learning plans, proficiency based graduation requirements, and 21st century skills.

**Peak Hours.** On school days, the hours between 3-6 p.m. are the peak hours for youth to commit crimes, be in or cause an automobile accident, be victims of crime, smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs. According to the *2014 America After 3PM Report*, 24% of Vermont children and youth regularly spend time unsupervised after school for an average of 7.92 hours per week.

**Demand is High.** 24% percent of Vermont's children, grades K-12, are currently enrolled in ELOs during the school year. Of those children not currently in programs, 33% would participate if more programs were available and accessible.

**Return on Investment.** For every dollar spent on quality ELOs, Vermont gets back \$2.18 in long-term savings from reduced criminal activity and substance abuse treatment, as well as accruing additional benefits from increased high school completion and work productivity.

**Parents and Working Families.** With a 95% parent satisfaction rate, afterschool programs in Vermont are valued by parents for their quality, the services offered, and the academic supports provided. 81% of Vermont parents agree that afterschool programs help give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work, and 79% agree that ELOs help working parents keep their jobs.

**Ability to Pay.** In a recent study, Vermont ranked 51st in the nation, including the District of Columbia, for having the lowest level of low-income children in ELOs. According to that study, only 14% of Vermont children in an afterschool program qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program compared to 45% nationally. In addition, Vermont parents listed program cost as one of the predominant obstacles to enrollment in ELOs.

The full report is available online: <http://bit.ly/1yc22jp>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop systems, partnerships, and funding strategies to ensure that by 2020 the **children and youth in every Vermont community have access to ELOs.**
2. Include ELOs in the Vermont Agency of Education's **Balanced Accountability System** in order to measure access, quality, and integration with school systems.
3. As Vermont moves towards **proficiency-based graduation requirements** by 2020, fully incorporate and recognize the learning and growth that takes place in quality ELOs.
4. Include **data on student participation** in ELOs, as well as metrics for **associated student outcomes**, in state data systems and projects, including the Vermont Agency of Education's longitudinal data system, the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), and Vermont's Bright Futures Information System.
5. Explore every possible opportunity to leverage federal programs, including the Child Care Financial Assistance Program, to **help working families access ELOs** for children up to age 16.



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Members of the Working Group: Ginny Burley, Senator Don Collins, Jim Fitzpatrick, Karen Heath, Nicole Mace, Representative Ann Manwaring, Katie Mobley, Holly Morehouse, Barbara Russ, and Sarah Teel.