

Presentation Material - David Luce, Member State Advisory Board
Community High School of Vermont (CHSVT)

My name is David Luce and I am a resident of Waterbury, VT. I am currently a member of the State Advisory Board of CHSVT and am also currently a member of the local advisory education board for Northwest Correctional Facility (NWCF).

I wish to speak tonight about the FY2017 proposed state budget and specifically about possible cuts to eliminate funding for the so-called CHSVT "Street Sites" from the budget.

The eight (8) street sites (half of our state-wide school campus) are co-located in local Probation and Parole offices, which works extremely well for the individual. The sites generally consist of a classroom which is staffed by a CHSVT teacher. Co-location allows a convenient place for students who have completed their term of incarceration and have been released, but who may not as yet have completed the classroom work required to obtain either a high school diploma or industry certification. As they are no longer incarcerated, but still under control of the Dept. of Corrections (and need to register with P&P), they can no longer attend the regular CHSVT program in the local correctional facility, due to the security restrictions imposed on the general public, of which they would now be considered a part. The only choice they have is to attend classroom instruction at a "street site". Let me reiterate; incomplete credit means the individual will have no diploma or certification and, therefore, a limited ability to obtain a job which would allow the individual to earn a living and, hopefully, stay out of prison.

We understand the budget crisis the state is in and CHSVT believes we need to demonstrate a willingness to do what we can to save taxpayer dollars. We already do a number of things in our many programs which clearly result in savings. We believe that things which make our instructional process more efficient and readily available to a population which is constantly in transition do save money. The following are some of the cost-saving measures the faculty at NWCF (my facility) implement every day:

- In the automotive shop, the faculty uses educational software to teach and test automotive repair skills to students, who because of the inflexibility of DOC regulations, cannot always attend a regularly scheduled class, and would otherwise require individual instruction. Students operate under rules requiring rigorous self discipline in maintaining credit completion requirements. Also students are responsible for maintaining tool inventories and condition. What is the worth of that?
- The auto shop recently refurbished a van for the Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (in full compliance with VT non-compete law). More of this will be done at little or no cost to the state as soon as vehicles for other agencies are incorporated. What is the worth of that?

- The faculty at NWCF convinced the facility food service personnel to use produce grown, harvested and prepared for storage by inmates, thereby providing both organic and nutritious food in the dining hall. A record 1260 gals of tomato sauce was put up from a recent successful year in the garden. What is the worth of that?
- Anecdotally, long-term faculty at NWCF advise that in those families where the parents have had prior prison terms, but who, while incarcerated, successfully acquired either a high diploma or industry certificate, the parents do not return to the system and, best yet, their children do not enter the system. What is the worth of that?

Further, with an average 30 students/year who move from street site to job site (after completion of credit requirements), it is estimated that the state would receive at least \$40,000/yr in state income tax revenue and save an estimated \$900,000/yr in re-incarceration costs.

In summary, my question simply is, are we willing to tell any student who has committed the time and effort required to prepare themselves to leave prison and become a productive citizen, that we regret the circumstances, but that he/she will have to take the problem of an incomplete school record elsewhere. Further, the elimination of the street sites means the state's promise of an education required by the legislation establishing CHSVT is effectively withdrawn unless all the work required to finish is done by the end of their incarceration, which cannot be guaranteed. What, therefore, is the incentive to go to school?

Thank you,

David Luce, member state Advisory Board CHSVT and NWCF Advisory Board NWCF