

Senate Education Committee
Wednesday, February 11, 2015

Scott Farr, Superintendent/Director
River Valley Technical Center School District

Background and History

Hello, my name is Scott Farr, and I am the Superintendent/Director for the River Valley Technical Center School District in Springfield, VT. We are one of three independent technical center school districts in the State of Vermont. With regard to student tuition costs, RVTC is consistently in the bottom third of the fifteen technical centers in Vermont. I wanted to make sure I got that in there.....RVTC serves about 320 students from Green Mountain Union High, Bellows Falls Union High, Black River High School and Fall Mountain Regional High School from New Hampshire. We are located within the Howard Dean Education Center, sharing the space as co-location partners with the Community College of Vermont, Vermont Interactive Television, Vermont Technical College, World of Discovery III Childcare Center, Springfield High School, and the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative.

So you may ask, I thought we were here to hear about Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative? Well you are, and let me explain through a brief history. Back in 2000, when the Howard Dean Education Center was under construction, Jeff Renard, VTVC Director, was hired as the Distance Learning Coordinator to expand online and video conferencing to reach our sending schools. He developed an Electronics Program that was offered throughout the state. Enrollments consistently grew year to year and were at capacity, so we hired an additional teacher. We added several high schools up the Connecticut River Valley, basically the Interstate 91 corridor; this was necessary to facilitate the synchronous or face to face instruction. Instruction was done via teleconferencing daily, with the weekly site visits to the students at the sending schools. Enrollment grew to over thirty total students from Vermont and New Hampshire.

In March of 2007, the voters of the RVTC service region approved the creation of the new technical center school district; RVTC began operating as a separate district on July 1, 2007. RVTC soon began a collaborative goal setting process, and on March 7, 2008 our district board set four goals. Two goals related to using our independent status and distance education they are:

- RVTC will take full advantage of its newfound status as an independent regional technical-education school district to better meet the needs of students.
- RVTC will exemplify state-of-the-art programming and technology, including distance-learning opportunities, updated equipment and operating systems, and new technologies as needed.

In 2007 and 2008, Jeff Renard was a member of a Distance Education Sub Committee formed by the Agency of Education and Tracy Gallo, Director of the Life Long Learning Division. In 2009, a competitive RFP funded by American Recovery Act grants was made available. A proposal was submitted and grants were awarded to start the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative. I will hand it off to Jeff Renard for the “rest of the story.”

Closing

We have submitted a formal request to the Department of Education in mid-January for guidance in order to have VTVLC be an integrated part of the Vermont education system. We believe that VTVLC can be part of the answer to some of the equity and access challenges, and the ability to grant diplomas can also serve some students as they look for an alternative pathway. We have had ongoing discussion with John Fischer from the Agency, and we are optimistic that we can find the way.