

House Education Committee Testimony: Connectivity

Good Morning! My name is Sharon Davison and I have the privilege of being a public school teacher in Vermont. I have had this honor of working alongside my students, families, and colleagues both locally and globally for over 3 decades. I am in my 11th year of teaching kindergarten at the Allen Brook School in Williston.

I have been using a variety of digital platforms and digital tools for a long time in lots of different ways. I am passionate about online experiences and feel that they offer invitations for connectivity, reflection, and endless ways to explore service-learning opportunities within our communities that connect to a larger global need.

I am a former NEA edcommunities online facilitator where I facilitated online groups for 3 years. This is a large professional, national platform where teachers can connect and collaborate. This work immersed me in online learning and the endless opportunities that are available for all students and educators globally to help facilitate and inspire learning.

I am most grateful to all of you for the invitation to share my experiences as a connected educator and how myself, my students, their families, and my school community is dealing with the onset of this pandemic.

On Sunday evening like numerous other schools in the state, I was notified that school was closing. I remember thinking about what I needed to do to make sure that all of

my students were safe, had food, and had resources they needed which included connectivity. The connectivity is vital because in Kindergarten my students and families are familiar and used to using many digital platforms daily to connect with their child's learning. The connectivity is where I would continue to build on relationships, offer support, provide online resources for learning, and a synchronous platform where all families and students would be able to see me and connect with me each school day.

Then yesterday thanks to the amazing VT NEA they offered a K-2 Remote Learning Webinar for educators. I had the pleasure of being able to present and share my story with the 254 educators that registered for this event. I am a proud Vermont educator. With great passion I shared and was able to represent my school, district, and share how CVSD supports innovation, creativity, and supports learning for everyone. It saddened me to hear yesterday about the many teachers and students in our state that do not have the opportunities that my kindergarten students do. This does not feel fair. Many of the educators that were present in the webinar yesterday shared their frustrations about not having access and the tools they need and how this is impacting their relationships and continuity with the children and families they are responsible for. Let's change this now through positive actions of providing an equitable landscape for all!

This pandemic is a hardship for all of us. We all have had to make adjustments and endless sacrifices to make sure we are taking care of ourselves, our families, which includes our health, food, and our education. I think this is also an opportunity. An opportunity for our state to take positive action immediately and provide internet access and devices to schools, for their students, and educators so everyone can begin to get connected and engage in learning experiences that will help provide endless paths for growth.

The time is now. Vermont children can not wait. Vermont educators are a committed, dedicated, caring, and professional group of leaders who want to offer the world to their students. We can help with that. You have the ability to make this happen.

I feel fortunate because my district has been nothing less than amazing. The leadership at our district level and our schools has been wonderful. I hear frequently from my leadership team about next steps, resources for families, opportunities to connect with my digital learning leader to help me and my team navigate the many online platforms will have opportunities to use, and most importantly our leadership in our district always asks 1st: "How are you? What can I do to help?" As an educator the message is: **My leadership team cares about my well being. They understand that this impacts everything I do. I am grateful.**

As a kindergarten teacher in the Champlain Valley School District I have always had access to the tools that I need to teach, learn, create, and open my classroom globally. My district has always supported my professional growth as an educator to help deepen my own learning so I am able to collaborate and teach with the tools I need at the moment. My classroom is global and my students have access to many opportunities that support, enrich, and enhance their learning because my district has supported me and my students with permission to use a variety of platforms, devices that invite participation and collaboration, and the professional time needed for myself to continue growing and learning as an educator. All educators need this support for growth.

I was very fortunate because all of my families had a device and internet so my transition to online learning was a challenge, but not as much of a challenge like I imagined for my colleagues in schools and communities in Vermont who do not have internet access and the ability to help provide families with devices if they needed one.

Again, the time is now. Please show your support for all Vermont children. Thank you all so much for the opportunity to share my voice in support of all children, their families, and educators in Vermont.