

Hello, My name is Mike Campbell and I would first like to thank Senator Baruth and Senator Perchlik for offering this opportunity to provide testimony on the Continuous learning that our state has been thrust into. A special shout out to Senator Parent who represents our region.

Since 1999 I have been a Social Studies teacher at Bellows Free Academy St. Albans and I have been a contributing member of the Virtual High School community since 2012. As part of my full teaching load, I facilitate a VHS Honors Psychology course and I have also taught VHS Sociology. In exchange this provides 25 BFA student seats for the nearly 200 courses at VHS. I continued with their professional development program where I completed a Certificate of Online Education through Plymouth State University, was then asked to teach two VHS graduate PD courses, and currently I help facilitate the graduate level OTM (Online Teaching Methodology) for new VHS educators from all over the globe. Additional VHS positions that I hold are as a VHS Faculty Advisor where new VHS teachers get support in their first online semesters. Finally I fulfilled a two year position on the VHS Advisory Board. My BFA classroom teaching methodology is the Blended Model where I facilitate a hybrid between the traditional and the online environments.

Therefore I fully support online education and you might expect me to follow with a long list of why the response to Covid 19 closure has been a boon. Certainly there are empowering success stories but I would also sound a note of caution in multiple areas. I fully recognize the emergency nature of this situation and I celebrate all the success that is being achieved. There is no desire nor intent to point a finger of blame at any part of this response but I think we are here for the express purpose to share what is 'actually' happening across the state. My points come from my above experience as well as observation of my colleagues and my students' responses.

First a list of the positives:

- Students are exposed to a new style of learning that they may never have explored without this situation
- Students learn to be self motivated, to take ownership of their learning, and practice time management skills
- Students are able to create meaningful and creative connections to curriculum when given these online resources and asked to construct various learning products
- This is an excellent opportunity to explore 'flexible pathway' models

Some drawbacks and concerns:

- This method of learning does not fit all students learning styles and can actually frustrate learning which creates additional anxiety during a very anxious time and during an already established epidemic of teen anxiety
- This is inherently unequal where students don't have equal technology access or even online skill sets to learn effectively. Even in families with technology access there may be more need to use the home computers than what continuous learning requires

- Students can more easily fall through the cracks as they "opt out" unlike in a classroom environment
- The education system can't simply flip classroom instruction to an online format. Teachers require PD training to properly set up, facilitate and assess online curriculum
- Mandated reporting must be considered as we use some excellent video meeting formats. We are reaching into their personal spaces and privacy issues abound.
- Nothing can replace the vital teacher to student contact that is critical for student achievement. In my opinion online learning is developmentally inappropriate for the youngest students
- In some districts educators have not had a leadership role in the creation of their Continuous Learning Plans and just as we should listen to our medical experts for advice on Covid 19 policy we must also listen to our teachers in their area of expertise.

Statewide Continuous Learning plan efforts have been well intentioned, using some of the best practice I mentioned above, yet in trying to be as simple as possible still resulted in creating undue anxiety for students, parents and teachers. BFA has largely switched to Google Classroom yet teachers still offered over two pages of their own best online programs and resources. Students must navigate a myriad of excellent online quiz systems and resources where each of these takes time to sign up for and master. You all know that even simple technology can be inconsistent, especially when it's new, you have spotty connectivity, or you are simply not thinking straight due to anxiety. Unfortunately I have too many examples of student breakdowns and parent confusion to list here today.

Students must always be the primary focus of our work and the teachers that they rely so heavily upon come to this continuous learning phase with some significant issues as well. Teachers are spending countless hours to learn new online programs, facilitate usage for struggling students, and assess only a partial percentage of these students. Some students simply aren't engaged and/or give up due to confusion or lack of access. Teachers simultaneously have their own children to help educate and also provide care for during this time. All this points to increased anxiety and potential burn out and diminished learning results.

So what to do...

- Recognize that in the short term we may be asking too much from the whole system and inadvertently causing some damage to social and emotional health and even to learning even as educators, students, and parents are cooperatively bending over backwards to make it work
- Reflect upon the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic where it came in three distinct waves. We have some time to get PD to our teachers, more deeply simplify and coordinate basic district strategies, and even practice this in the fall with our students.
- Prioritize statewide internet access even as we struggle with economic uncertainty because we owe it to our students in terms of equity. Vermont's economy boomed with

full electric access, then integration with I89 and I91, and will also through full broadband.

- Make sure that district by district the educator's voice is not only present but leads the planning of the Continuous Learning Plans that students receive.

I thank you for your attention to my testimony and I am always open to try and address your questions.