

To: Senator Champion  
Senate Education Committee

RE: Proposed changes to H. 106

Date: April 22, 2021

From: Carlen Finn, Voices for Vermont's Children and Vermont Education Equity Project members:

Martha Allen, Retired Educator  
John Castle, Superintendent, North Country Supervisory Union  
Infinite Culcleasure, Organizer and Policy Associate, Voices for Vermont's Children  
Ben Freeman, Network Coordinator, Vermont Learning for the Future  
Lindsey Halman, Executive Director, UP for Learning  
Deborah Lisi-Baker, Disability Rights Activist  
Margaret Maclean, Vermont Rural Education Collaborative  
Mugabo Uwilingiyimana, Science Teacher, Winooski School District

The following recommendations focus on four themes:

1. Community schools are most meaningful when understood as a vehicle to education equity, and should be the foundation upon which the pillars of the approach are considered.
2. Community schools are a strategy/approach and not a program. Each piece should be integrated and contextualized as part of the broader whole.
3. Community schools are a bottom-up, responsive strategy to build resources inside and outside of school with a focus on assets of students, families and communities.
4. An additional pillar is offered that elevates the importance of school climate to education equity and justice.

Proposed Recommendations to Draft No. 1.1 - H.106 4/20/21 (in yellow)

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Sec 2. Findings: Add before (a) (1) Every child should be provided with an equitable education, as defined by the AOE as access to the resources, opportunities and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, whatever their race, gender/identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, disability, family background, or family income may be. (Adapted from CCSSO, *Leading for Equity*).

Sec 2. (a) (1). Every child should be able to grow up and have the opportunity to achieve their dreams and contribute to the well-being of society. Our public schools must be

designed and equipped to fully deliver on that promise.

Page 2. Findings continued:

(3) Community schools facilitate the coordination of comprehensive programs and services that are carefully selected to meet the unique needs of students and families, and build on the assets they bring to their schools and communities so students can do their best. Community Schools combine challenging and culturally inclusive learning opportunities with the academic and social supports every student needs to reach their potential. (Eliminated language focused on deficits).

(4) According to research reports from the Learning Policy Institute, the four key pillars of the community schools approach, which are integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices, promote conditions and practices found in high-quality schools as well as address out-of-school barriers to learning. Research additionally supports the necessity of safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments to reinforce student success and well-being. These elements do not function independently, but are instead part of a unified, interconnected approach.

(5) This research also shows that community school interventions can result in improvements in a variety of student and family outcomes, including attendance, academic achievement and reducing systemic racial and economic injustices and inequities.

Page 3. Findings continued

(7) Add - These schools, at their core, are about investing in children, through quality teaching, challenging, engaging and culturally responsive curricula, wrap around supports, safe, just and equitable school climate, strong ties to family and community and a clear focus on student achievement and well-being.

Insert before (8) Community schools are important centers for building community connection and resilience. When learning extends beyond the walls of the school through active engagement with community partners as with place-based learning, relationships expand and deepen, community strengths are highlighted, and opportunities for building vitality surface through shared learning.

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(b) Purpose. This act provides funding for the implementation of community schools **(remove program)** that provide students with equitable access to high-quality **(remove education)** learning opportunities and necessary supports and creates the Task Force on Universal School Lunch.

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Sec. 3. Community Schools: Funding continued

(a) Definitions

(2) A Community school **(remove program)** means a **(remove program offered at)** A public elementary or secondary school that includes all **five** of the following:

(A) Add to integrated community supports - **and include what young people bring with them to the classroom and the ways that schools and communities working together can enhance and embrace the knowledge and capacity that students and families can offer their schools. This could include educational strategies like universal design for learning, recognition and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, and practices that focus on building and supporting relationships such as restorative practices. These are also essential to integrated student supports.**

Page 6 (2) continued.

(C) Add to active family and community engagement, which brings students' families and the community into the school as partners in children's education and makes the school a community hub, **where all students and their families feel a sense of belonging and engagement. The process for getting there must feature broad student and community participation, with a diversity of income, race, gender, newcomer status, language, ability, etc. represented in the design, implementation, and evaluation of all activities and reflected in the faces of leaders and decision-makers in schools and communities.**

(D) Add to collaborative leadership and practices... **an integrated school and community leadership team that would include youth and family representatives** after community school coordinator.



(E) Add safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments.

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(5) "Site-based leadership team – add students

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(c) Funding Administration

(1) Subject to subdivision (2) of this subsection, the Secretary of Education shall determine, by using AOE or other organizations' Equity Lens Tool, which eligible recipients shall...

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( e ) Evaluation

(1) Add Equity Lens Tool