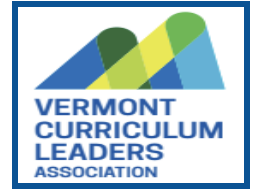


**Testimony To:** House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resilience, and Forestry  
**Respectfully Submitted By:** Jeff Evans, VTCLA Executive Director &  
Gwen Carmolli, VTCLA President  
**Subject:** H.274  
**Date:** April 5, 2023



Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the topic of nutrition and agriculture education as defined in H.274.

H-0274 would ask the AOE and Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets *“to develop a statewide agriculture and nutrition education curriculum and the State Board of Education and supervisory unions to ensure agriculture and nutrition education is included in education quality standards and union wide curriculum”*

VTCLA appreciates the value of a robust agriculture and nutrition education for all Vermont students. The same can be said about the value of financial literacy, Holocaust education, and computer science, all of which are curriculum-related bills under consideration this legislative session. If you think of our public school systems as buckets, it is not hyperbole to say that all buckets are full and some may be overflowing; to legislate more curricula would exacerbate an already tenuous situation. There are three essential elements we’d like you to consider.

**There are current statewide requirements to cover specific content, leaving the curriculum design to local school systems:**

- Content standards, adopted by the State Board of Education and outlined in Education Quality Standards (EQS), require schools to teach specific learning standards
  - *“Each school shall provide appropriate learning opportunities to all students to support their attainment of the standards approved by the State Board of Education.”*
- Education Quality Standards (EQS) & Act 77 require local school boards to establish “a written and delivered curriculum that ... allows them to demonstrate proficiency in...”
  - literacy
  - mathematical content and practices
  - science
  - global citizenship
  - physical education and health education
  - artistic expression

**Existing Science and Health standards cover topics on nutrition, agriculture, and sustainability:**

- Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), our state adopted science standards includes
  - Disciplinary Core Ideas in the area of Earth and Space Systems that include Natural Resources (ESS3.B) and Human Impacts on Earth’s Systems (ESS3.C) covers content in grades K-12.
  - Human Sustainability ([HS.Human Sustainability](#)) as an interdisciplinary topic for students to demonstrate learning on the relationships between natural resources and human activity as content for grades K-12.
- SHAPE Physical Education and Health standards includes

- Nutrition standards and topics in grades K-12

**The social-emotional learning (SEL) needs of our students has placed additional demands on time, curriculum and student support within the school day and week.**

- COVID and many other factors have precipitated the need to emphasize more social-emotional learning (SEL) curricula in schools. SEL curriculum includes things like morning meetings, closing circles, restorative circles, advisories, and other pedagogical philosophies and protocols that teachers embed into all content instruction. This added emphasis has been an essential component to meeting student and family needs, but it has also impacted time within the learning day and week, as well as schools' abilities to *"provide appropriate learning opportunities to all students to support their attainment of the standards approved by the State Board of Education."*
- Districts are experiencing unprecedented staffing challenges that are making it extremely difficult to deliver the existing curriculum.

### **Considerations**

School systems design curriculum and learning experiences based on existing state standards and requirements that cover nutrition and agriculture content. This curriculum is designed at the local level, as outlined in the Vermont Education Quality Standards. Adding content to the existing requirements results in additional work to develop local curriculum and adjustment to schedules that takes time and resources away from existing curriculum and supports for learners - time and resources our schools systems do not have. With the education systems and educators' buckets overflowing, the need for time and support to meet existing requirements and learning needs is critical in order to fulfill the promise of a thriving educational system.

Knowing the shared commitment of your committee and curriculum leaders educators across the state to students' health and well-being and Vermont's amazing agricultural system, VTCLA suggests some funding ideas to consider in place of additional requirements:

- Provide funding to build exemplar units of study in nutrition and agriculture for school systems to the existing state standards for science and health
- Offer grants for schools to participate in programs such as Farm-to-School, take field trips to local growers and agriculture, and build nutrition and agriculture project-based learning opportunities
- Incentivize the participation in successful partnership programs, such as Farm-to-School

Thank you for your interest and consideration.