Vermont Act 67: The Community Schools Act

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Community Schools

...are not singular programs. Rather, it is an approach to schooling and represents a fundamental rethinking of how to deliver public education.

...align with Vermont’s student-centered approach to learning and existing regulatory frameworks to support proficiency-based, personalized learning and flexible pathways to graduation.

...close equity gaps through the provision of services, resources, and opportunities for students AND their families, in the school.

.... leverage Vermont’s unique context, history, and values through place based services and relational assets in rural communities emphasizing learning by doing, schools as community centers and co-location of services for students, families, and community.
Broader Policy & Initiative Connections

Implementation context of community schools in Vermont (Act 67) needs to consider intersecting leverage points connected to other progressive educational policies that support the five pillars of Community Schools:

- **Act 77** (2013): Flexible Pathways, Personalized Learning
- **Education Quality Standards (2014):**
- **Act 173** (2018): Enhancing effectiveness, availability and equity of services [...]  
- **Act 1 (2019)**: An act relating to ethnic and social equity studies standards for public schools  
- **Act 66** (2021): Expanded local wellness policy to include comprehensive health
- **Act 28 (2021)**: Literacy
- Act 35 (2021): Equitable School Discipline
- Community Resilience and Workforce Development

CS is connected to many other initiatives and bills currently being put forward. Act 67/Community Schools contributes to and extends much of the work being done across education and social service organizations.
Implementation Science has been described as the study of how evidence-based programs or interventions can be incorporated and adapted to maximize successful outcomes. (Kelly & Perkins, 2012)

“Full implementation of complex change efforts can take 5-10 years, with schools generally achieving partial implementation in the first 3-4 years of these efforts.” (Welner & Valladares, 2016)
Enabling Context: Predictable and Accessible State Level Funding

State level policy provides an opportunity to consider how different funding structures can feed into community schools framework.

Coordinated state level structure to integrate multiple funding sources across state agencies so that LEAs can predictably access and apply for funding opportunities.

Coordinated TA and support to integrate inter-agency state funding sources to support comprehensive community schools.

State level investment in coordination, community schools mindset and ethos across state agencies.
State Level Policy Can Support Community School Braiding

- Agency of Human Services
  - School Health/Health Education
  - Substance Use Prevention/Health Equity
- Department of Labor/Agency of Education
  - Workforce education, training and development
- Department of Agriculture
  - Food systems, community resiliency, farm to school
- Department of Mental Health
  - School/Community mental health prevention and treatment
- Agency of Education
  - Flexible Pathway funding for student-centered learning
  - State and Federal funding for systems-level improvement

Can coordinated and interdisciplinary policymaking at the state level support braided funding at the local level to advance community school work?
State Level Investments Support Local Braiding for Community Schools

- **Vermont Act 118**: Opiate Abatement Special Fund and [Opiate Settlement Advisory Committee](#)

- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, [Farm to School](#) Early Childhood Capacity Building Grants, Vision Grants & Community Supported Agriculture

- Vermont Agency of Education, [Tobacco Grants, Flexible Pathways Grants B.504.1](#)

- Vermont AOE, DMH & DVHA - [Options for Funding of Social Emotional Learning and School Mental Health](#)

- Vermont Department of Labor, [Work Based Learning & Training Grants](#)
Recent state level investments: community schools

There are currently 91 community schools with grant funding from NMPED. Including CS without this funding, there are an estimated 150 CS throughout NM. The NMPED CS team supports all of these community schools and all public schools (including charter schools) that wish to become a community school to support the whole child. NMPED offers community school grants: planning, implementation and renewal.

California made a historic $4.1 billion investment in planning, implementation, and coordination grants—as well as technical assistance—for the state-funded California Community Schools Partnership Program. This investment is intended to provide sufficient resources for every high-poverty school in California to become a community school within the next 5 to 7 years.

Illinois used federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to establish the Community Partnership Grant program and help address pandemic recovery efforts, similar to Vermont’s investment.

The Georgia Department of Education has begun a process to identify potential Community Schools in the state and is developing a “Whole Child Model School Certification” process, to support schools and systems working to implement the Community Schools model. In 2022, GA HB HB 201 was proposed to create a certification process for Whole Child Model schools.

Federal Full Service Community Schools Grant Program (FSCS)

The Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grant program provides support for the planning, implementation, and operation of full-service community schools that improve the coordination, integration, accessibility, and effectiveness of services for children and families, particularly for children attending high-poverty schools.

Funding and Legislation

Included in the chart below is the amount of funding per fiscal year since FY 2009.

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<th>Fiscal Year (FY)</th>
<th>Appropriation for new and continuation awards</th>
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School Choice & Improvement Programs

Overview

The Office of School Choice and Improvement Programs (SCIP) administers discretionary grant programs and delivering technical assistance to improve schools, promote choice, and engage parents. This is based on the belief that all education sectors (public schools, public charter schools, and nonpublic schools) can offer quality education experiences for students, and that each parent has the power to find the right educational option for their child.
Recent Awardees: FSCS

State Scaling (Idaho, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina)

Multi-LEAs

Capacity Building

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<th>Number of new awards</th>
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Opportunities & Challenges: Federal FSCS Funding

SEA is not an eligible applicant and prioritization of community partners

IHE partner applicant potential but financial implications

Multi-LEA applications will require CS RPP support/TA as LEAs may not be individually competitive
What Help Would Look Like at the Federal Level?

Leverage/replicate the 21CCLC Nita M. Lowey model for Full-Service Community School grant program to support:

• **Efficiency and predictability** – provide allocations to SEAs to run competitive grant program & identify connections across existing state/ federal programs to support

• **Coherence and reduce initiative fatigue** – which will also address real-time and extended concerns about educator workforce shortages and unintended inequities that arise through short-term pilots and “innovation zones” which helps

• **Scale community school implementation** -- cohorts and communities can grow and can learn from one another and an SEA can staff & support it appropriately which requires

• **Avenues for small and rural districts and schools to compete** – (which is hard to do if you’re a school that has a shared principal or a nurse once a week) which can be supported by

• **FSCS grant allocations to states/SEAs**
Congressional Direct Spending Request, FY24 - Senator Sanders

- On April 12, 2023 - Senator Sanders advanced our CS CDS request to be considered Fiscal Year 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill

- Leverage our UVM-AOE CS RPP
  - CS Continuity Grants
  - CS Development Grants
  - Bolster UVM faculty research/involvement, student internships/placements and service learning courses
  - Integrate with IFRP, FSRC, VCHIP/LCOM and existing CESS school partnerships (social work, education, counseling)

| University of Vermont | With this funding, the University of Vermont will support existing community schools through service-learning, research partnerships and grant funding, while also providing institutional support and grants to develop three new community schools. | Burlington VT | $1,999 |
Community Schools: A Return on Investment for the State
A comprehensive ROI process is planned within the VT CS RPP.

To date, extensive qualitative, experiential data has been collected regarding CS implementation and evolution. Longitudinal, quantitative data (hard numbers) are forthcoming and will be used to contribute to ROI calculations.

Synthesis of cost-benefit research “suggests an excellent return on investment of up to $15 in social value and economic benefits for every dollar spent on school based wraparound services” (Oakes, 2017)

Recent ROI research was conducted in New Mexico focused on Community School Coordinators. This report states,

The calculated ROI represents the value of the benefits contributed to the community school by the Coordinator as measured by the ratio of the net benefits to the costs. The ROI results were positive producing a 7.11 to 1 ratio, meaning for each $1 invested in the cost of the Coordinator the school received $7.11 in return.

Martinez, L., Hayes, C. D., & Silloway, T. (2013); Bloodworth & Horner, 2019
Strategies for Sustainability

Predictable funding to support capacity building grants and scaled Community School development across the state:

- Aligns with and can advance our goals for students within other student-centered education regulation and initiatives (e.g., Act 77, Act 173, Act 1, Act 28, EQS, etc.)

Appropriately resourcing state-level supports/collaborative activity for sustaining Community Schools:

- Sustainable, anchoring organization structures for equitable and transformative research and evaluation (e.g., VT CS RPP) provide scaffolding and access to networks, resources.

Figure 2. Seven reasons why a next generation of community schools will address inequality and transform education

Center for Universal Education at Brookings, 2021)
Leveraging University-SEA RPP

What can/should be the role of a IHE partner in supporting community schools implementation in Vermont?

How can IHE, like the University of Vermont, leverage their human capital, financial capital and resources to support community schools implementation and evaluation?
The VT CS RPP has also laid the groundwork for the development of a unique structure for the implementation and sustained support of community schools in the State of Vermont, a University Assisted Community School (UACS). The design and implementation of a UVM UACS would seamlessly incorporate the existing VT CS RPP within a larger system, as an ongoing bridge between the VT AOE, the UVM UACS, and the broader education community across Vermont. Such a network would also provide distinct opportunities for UVM CESS faculty in a range of disciplines to conduct service-learning courses, independent faculty research, as well as unique, contextualized, and timely community engagement efforts that meet the needs of local Vermonters.
Community colleges, colleges, and universities (public as well as private) play crucial, multi-faceted roles in their communities. The FSCS grant has a **natural integration with the goals, programs, and initiatives currently being undertaken by IHEs**. The pipeline services that are offered via the FSCS program are directly connected to institutional missions and have a long-lasting positive impact on IHEs.

**Integrated Supports**
- Physical and mental health research and services, social justice learning and advocacy, nonprofit partnerships

**Expanded & Enriched Learning Time**
- Academically based service courses, agriculture and nutrition programs, after-school tutoring, STEM training programs

**Active Family & Community Engagement**
- Vocational training, student volunteering programs, charity events, collaboration with University athletics

**Collaborative Leadership and Practices to Support High-Quality Teaching**
- Schools of Education research and practice, teaching apprenticeships, certifications and professional development

**Pipeline Service Benefits**
- Activities that support postsecondary and workforce readiness
- Community-based support for students and social, health, nutrition, services
- Support for a child’s transition to and through elementary and secondary education to postsecondary education.

The future of IHEs and their communities are deeply intertwined. Institutions that engage in the community school model stand to **benefit in a variety of ways**:

- Advance learning, research, teaching, and service
- Increased ability to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and students
- Enhanced global leadership and reputation
- Persuasive case for increased funding from donors and foundations
While SEAs aren’t an eligible applicant for FSCS, SEAs are an important partner for eligible applicants applying to an FSCS grant. Both the SEA and school district play a critical role in supporting and sustaining the full-service community school approach.

### SEAs
- Identify opportunities, and encourage eligible applicants to apply for FSCS funding
- When applicable, pair with other federal or state funding to enhance programming
- Working at the State level, serve to broker relationships and coordinate resources across systems and sectors

### Eligible Applicants
- Apply for FSCS grant and be the primary lead on implementation and oversight
- Engage with Department of Education for Technical Assistance on application and/or grant implementation when applicable
- Partner with community stakeholders to maximize impact

Several states and districts have taken steps to support community school approaches, with several states already using federal relief funds to support and expand access to full-service community schools. A few examples are highlighted below. The Department also made three awards under Absolute Priority 5 in FY22 – you can view information about these projects on the FSCS Program Site.

**California**
- California is providing $45 million, including from its Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, to start a competitive state grant program for school districts to support and expand existing community school initiatives.
- The state legislature passed a proposal providing the grant program with up to $3 billion in onetime funding to develop new and expand existing community school initiatives.

**Vermont**
- Vermont is using $3.4 million in ESSER funds to support community schools through community school coordinators, evidence-based programming, collaborative needs assessments, and more. Funds are targeted to schools where at least 40% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch
- New Mexico provides technical assistance and conducts annual evaluations of the 54 community schools in the state, each of which has a full-service community school coordinator.
- The SEA is supported by the New Mexico Community Schools State Coalition, an appointed body of educators, advocates, and researchers with community school expertise.