

TO: Zoie Saunders, Jill Briggs Campbell, Lisa Helme and Robin Castle  
CC: Mary Katherine Stone, Martina Gulick, Marc Mihaly and Richard Westman  
FROM: Vermont Adult Education & Literacy Network  
RE: Urgent Need for a Pathway to Diploma for Current Students  
DATE: December 16, 2024



The FY25 Budget passed by the General Assembly introduced significant changes to Vermont's adult education system, including the sunset of the High School Completion Program (HSCP) and the creation of a new Adult Education and Secondary Credential Program. This legislation aimed to reduce duplication, eliminate barriers, and streamline funding while preserving pathways for Vermonters to earn high school credentials through either the GED or a revamped Adult Diploma Program (ADP).

AEL Providers thank the Agency of Education and the General Assembly for working on this important issue last session. We worked for and support the legislative changes made in the FY25 Budget. However, the HSCP ended on June 30, 2024, and as of December 16, 2024, the ADP program has yet to be implemented. AEL providers did not anticipate pausing our adult education services, which are an entitlement program, during the transition from HSCP to ADP. We believe we can and should move forward using the same practices we used under the HSCP to get students their diplomas. This delay has left students without a viable path to graduation, disrupting their plans. Currently, 101 students who have completed plans written and signed under the HSCP are done or nearly done with the work outlined in their plans and cannot graduate. Additionally, 192 students who have enrolled since July 2024 face indefinite delays because the AOE has not released graduation requirements. Many have been forced to put career and educational opportunities on hold while waiting for the program to be developed.

We urge the AOE to immediately implement an interim policy allowing AEL providers to work with local high schools to develop learning plan agreements that outline what each student will do to meet that school's graduation requirements. This is the process AEL providers and local schools have been practicing for years under the HSCP, which could continue to occur in the interim and under the new ADP. Vermont risks denying students critical opportunities and stalling their futures without such a solution.

Additionally, the AOE must actively engage AEL providers and high schools in developing the new ADP to ensure it reflects students' needs. Minimal stakeholder input thus far raises concerns about the program's effectiveness. We appreciate the recent scheduling of a meeting on January 10 to include the AEL Network in developing performance assessments. We hope this is the beginning of a more inclusive process that actively engages the AEL Network. Collaborative development will result in a robust, inclusive program aligned with legislative goals.

We strongly request the AOE act immediately to prevent further harm to students and ensure Vermonters can achieve their educational and career aspirations without further delay. We stand ready to assist in creating a program that meets the needs of Vermont's adult learners.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.