

Listen and Learn Tour Summary

January 10, 2025



Agenda



Why Listen and Learn?



What We Learned



What's Next?



Questions

Why the Listen and Learn Tour?

The AOE is focused on promoting equity, educational quality and sustainability. Hearing from Vermonters across the state is important to getting this right as we develop our strategic plan.

Key Objectives:

- Align Agency work to regional priorities and needs for communities across Vermont
- Identify a shared vision for the future of education in Vermont and develop a strategic plan
- Improve access to high-quality educational opportunities for all students
- Identify levers for improving student achievement
- Provide valuable perspective and data to support the work of the Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont

Listen and Learn Tour Timeline



- August through December
 - **Phase 1:** Data reports & Superintendent Coordination
 - **Phase 2:** Regional planning sessions
 - **Phase 3:** Public engagement sessions, educator sessions, and student sessions

Listen and Learn Tour BY THE NUMBERS

REGIONAL
PLANNING
SESSIONS WITH
EDUCATION
LEADERS

6



EDUCATOR
ENGAGEMENT
SESSIONS

13



PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT
SESSIONS

12

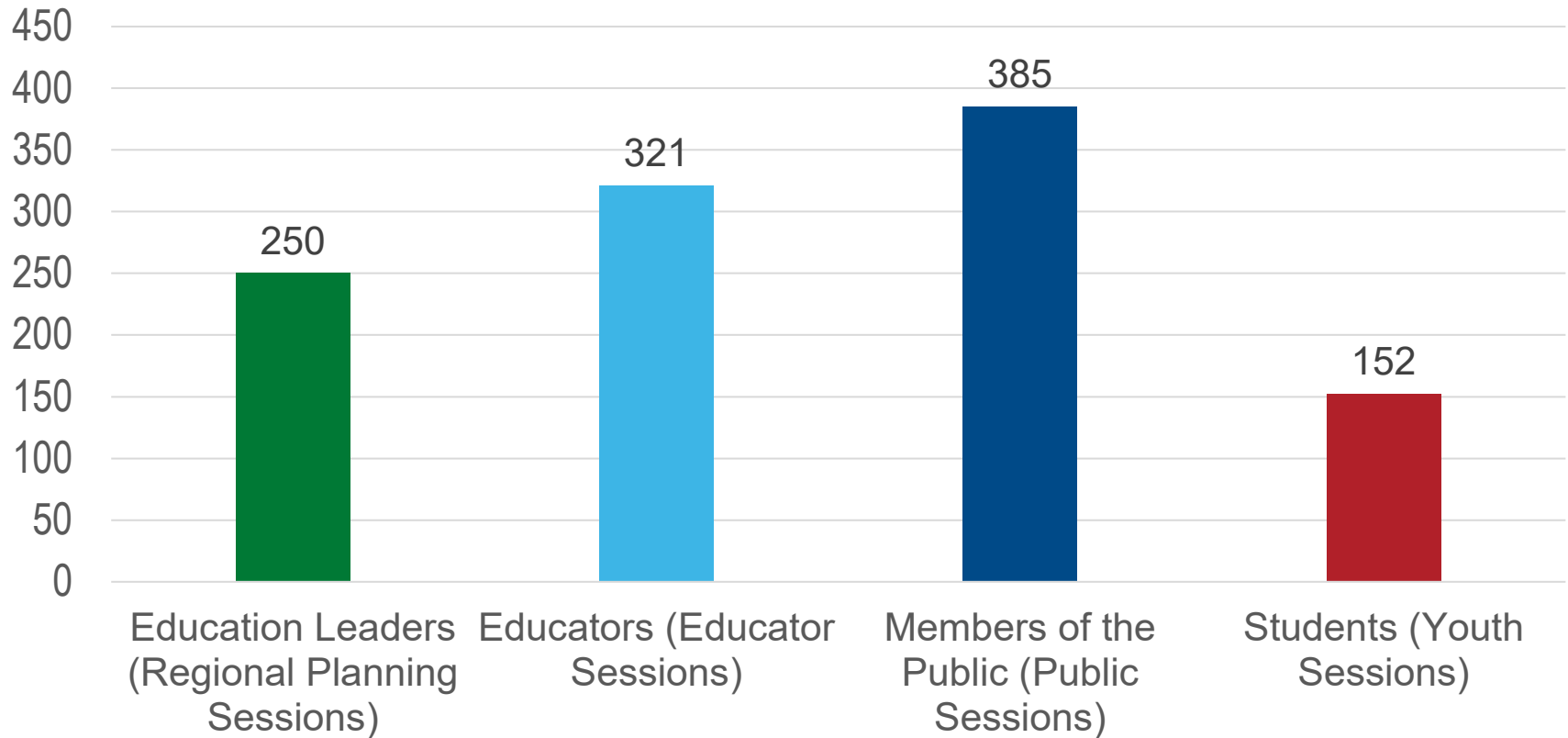


YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT
SESSIONS

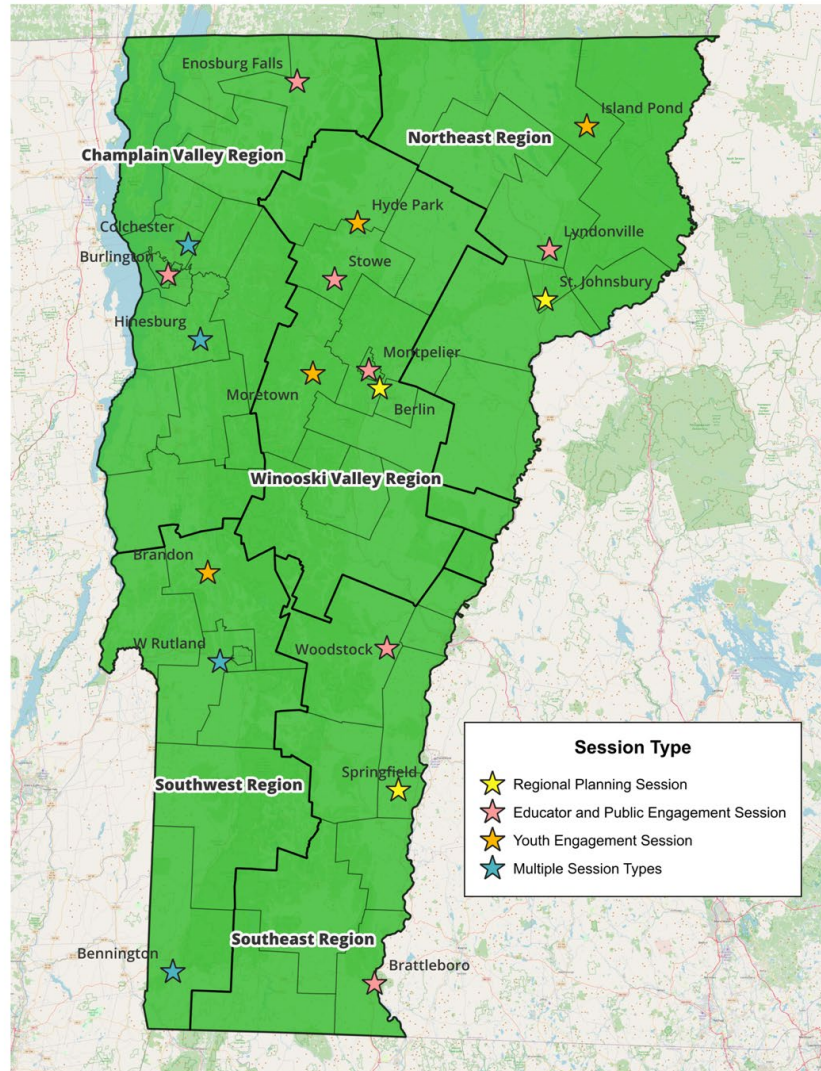
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Listen and Learn Participants



AOE In-Person Visits for the Listen & Learn Tour



Listen and Learn Tour Key Takeaways



1. It is important for the state to strike the right balance between unity and freedom around education matters
2. Vermont needs to ensure equity and expanded access to educational opportunities for all students in the state
3. Vermonters believe in a holistic definition of student success
4. Support and services for special education students is a growing need
5. There is a need for greater state leadership and an intentional focus on building stakeholder trust in the AOE



Regional Planning Sessions with Education Leaders Key Takeaways

Regional Profiles

- Champlain Valley Region
- Winooski Valley Region
- Northeast Kingdom Region
- Southeast Region
- Southwest Region (2 sessions)



Academic Performance & Accountability

- Importance of reliable, transparent, easy to understand, and timely state data
- Need greater alignment across curriculum, proficiency-based learning, local assessments and the state assessment
- Vision for holistic measure of student success
- Desire for greater direction and centralized support from AOE to improve state outcomes while still honoring local autonomy
 - Lack of direction often creates more work for the field, particularly when implementing legislative priorities and new initiatives
 - Need to define “tight” and “loose”

Creating coordinated curriculum “from scratch” is laborious, expensive, and time consuming...a statewide curriculum could serve as a foundation. LEAs could focus resources on how curriculum is implemented.

Southwest Regional Planning Session, September 24, 2024

College & Career Readiness

- Desire to expand student access to flexible pathways
- Recommend regional comprehensive high schools that combine traditional and career and technical education (CTE) offerings
- Expanding CTE proposed as a way to increase student engagement
- Communities face barriers to expanding access



Mental Health Costs and Systems of Support

- Schools are overwhelmed with growing mental health needs
- Younger students are often entering unprepared and displaying dysregulation behavior
- Staffing shortages with mental health professionals, leading to turnover and burnout
- Recommend state and regional solutions to reduce cost pressures, including a continuum of services

*[Our] youngest learners are coming in with more challenging behaviors [and] too many are legitimately qualifying for special education – a huge population with social trauma, needs not met, [who are] less ready to learn with increased expectations of rigor -
Northeast Regional Planning Session, October 2, 2024*

Data Review and Budgeting for School Boards

- Need for consistent, reliable data to support budgeting decisions
 - Concerns with data suppression, outdated information, and inconsistent reporting across districts
- Request for more state resources to learn about the budget
 - Challenge of communicating the complexity of the state education funding system
 - Need system to be more transparent and understandable to the public

There needs to be clear and reliable data. [AOE should] improve data reporting and [provide] training on data literacy.

Winooski Valley Regional Planning Session, September 17, 2024



Educator Focus Group Key Takeaways

Academic Supports

- Need for consistent guidance from AOE on supports and standards
- Concern around impact of budget cuts
- Educators value high quality professional development opportunities where they can apply their learning immediately and consistently
- High quality PreK programs are important to student success
- Need for additional support for special education students
- Multiple pathways are needed to provide student success beyond K-12 education



Non-Academic Supports

- Schools must meet students' basic needs, often partnering with community services before they can focus on academic needs
- Student behavioral support is needed in virtually all school settings
- Schools are providing mental health supports to students
- The impact of small school/communities, increasing/decreasing enrollment vary across the state

Housing and affordability impact demographic trends [and enrollment].

Brattleboro Educator Engagement Session, December 3, 2024

Educator Support and Additional AOE Supports

- Educators want to see the AOE as a partner in education
- AOE should provide consistent guidance on supports and standards
- AOE could help promote family engagement in education
- The balance between local control and statewide consistency should be revisited
- AOE should provide meaningful professional development opportunities for educators
- Teacher recruitment and retention remains an issue

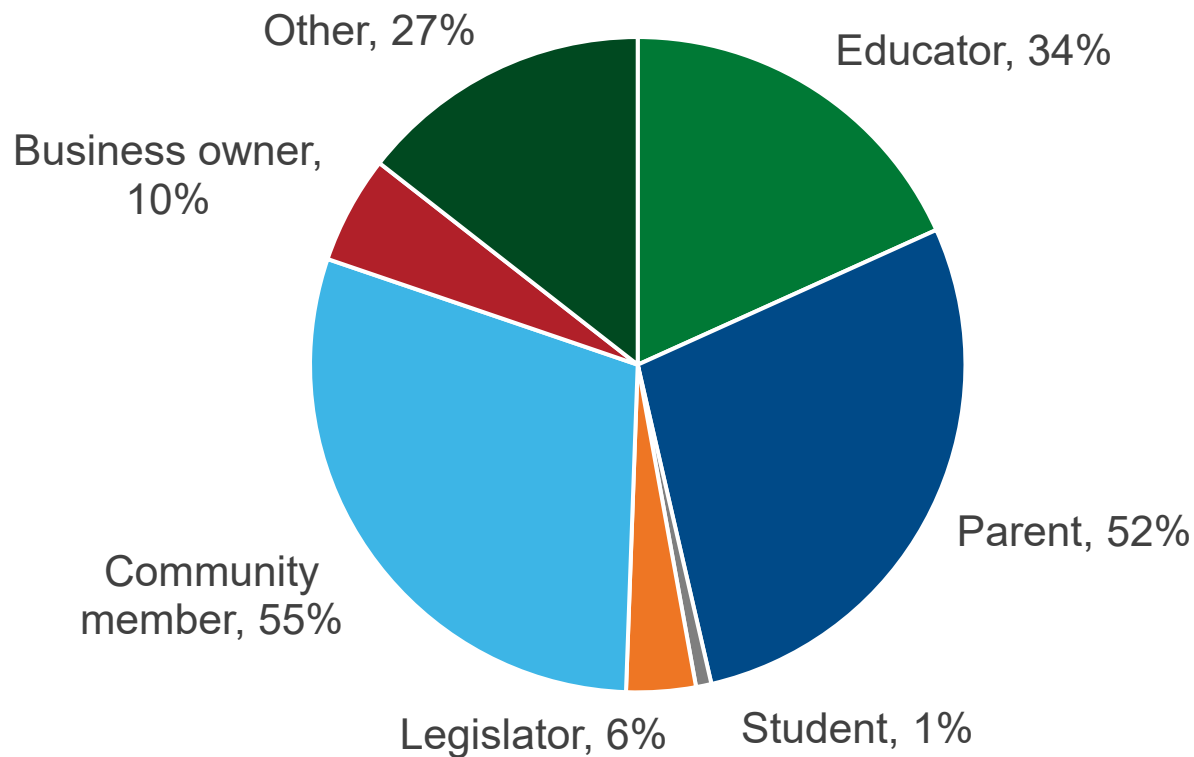
[AOE should] tighten expectations and offer limited choices though vetted assessments and curriculums.

**Lyndonville Educator Engagement Session, October 29,
2024**



Public Engagement Key Takeaways

Who Attended Public Engagement?



Key Indicators of Student Success

- Students are safe, happy and healthy
- Students are curious, excited and engaged
- Students have mastered core academic competencies, as well as developed critical “life skills”
- Students have found their own path and are postsecondary ready
- Measuring the above criteria for success requires using holistic metrics



Student Opportunities and Experiences

- All students should have equitable access to educational opportunities
- Students need to first have their foundational needs met to be ready to learn
- Students need to be supported in areas of social-emotional learning, mental health, and behavioral needs
- Students need differentiated, individualized instruction to best meet their unique needs
- Students need expanded access to real-world, hands-on instruction, as well as career exploration and preparation
- Schools need to have stronger connections with families, communities, and outside partners
- Participants called for a more unified and state-driven approach in key areas.

[Successful] students are able to access the future they see for themselves.

Woodstock Public Engagement Session, October 22, 2024

Budget Sustainability

- Communities are facing budget challenges due to factors like declining enrollment and rising costs in different areas
- Increased resource sharing and regionalization for some services were also recommended as potential means of decreasing costs
- Additional systemic considerations included improved state-level capacity and leveraging community partnerships and collaboration between state agencies

[We need] more regionalized decision making [to] break out of hyper local systems that are not working.

Burlington Public Engagement Session, December 3, 2024



Youth Engagement Key Takeaways

School Strengths and Challenges

- Strengths

- Teachers and staff
- Access to learning opportunities
- A sense of community and inclusivity

- Challenges

- Behavior issues and unclear rules/ inconsistent discipline responses
- Need for more effective restorative responses to harm and conflict
- Students' desired expanded learning opportunities, including internships, real-world experiences beyond the classroom, exposure to career possibilities, advanced courses, and project-based and personalized learning

“We’re still kids and we still deserve to have fun at school sometimes and still get to be a kid. It doesn’t always have to be ‘what’s the next topic, when’s the next test.’”

Colchester Youth Engagement Session, December 6, 2024

Resources Needed in Schools to Support Student Success

- High-quality, skilled teachers who build strong relationships with students
- Access to a wide variety of learning opportunities and choices that challenge students and support their interests
- Real-world connections to learning and opportunities to see what is out there
- Academic and mental health supports
- Well-maintained schools that are welcoming, accessible, inclusive, and safe
- Close relationships and a strong sense of community
- Chances to be a kid and have fun

“Being able to support yourself and have financial independence and a job that you enjoy, not just because you have to work to survive.”

Hinesburg Youth Engagement Session, December 4, 2024

What's Next?

What We've Done:

- Data infrastructure improvements
- Read Vermont
- Budget training and resources
- Enhanced state assessment reporting and training

Where We're Going:

- Strategic Planning with all AOE staff
- Additional data reporting
- Collaboration with the Legislature to take action to address our current system challenges

Education Transformation: How Do We Get There?



Student centered funding formula



Governance scale



Support and guardrails for school boards



Improved education quality and equity



Tax relief

Resources

- [Agency of Education Listen and Learn Tour Website](#)
- [Vermont Agency of Education Listen and Learn Tour Report Overview Video](#)
- [Listen and Learn Summary Report](#)

Questions?

