

Ada Allen  
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Joint Session Education Testimony

Hello, thank you for taking the time to listen to Vermont Students' voices today. My name is Ada Allen, and I am a Freshman at Craftsbury Academy, a public PK-12 school in rural Orleans County. I have been a student at Craftsbury since 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. I wanted to share a portrait of life at a small school. As you make decisions about our state's schools, I hope you remember voices like mine. Small size does not mean small opportunities.

As a student at Craftsbury, I have been able to **expand my learning opportunities and intellectual growth**. For example, I love language and writing and was supported to add upper-level English electives to my course load this year. In addition to the traditional Freshman English, I take both Mythology and Wartime Literature electives. My teachers have offered a lot of one-on-one support to find what my passions are, and to work through stumbling blocks and challenges. As I plan for next year, I will add two AP Classes to my courseload. For my Junior and Senior years, I will have seven more AP Classes to choose from at Craftsbury.

Craftsbury Academy has allowed me to **mentor others and connect with many ages**. Because our school is linked to the middle and elementary school, we can learn and grow from all ages. I participate in the DREAM Mentorship Program where I am guiding elementary students. Also, through my classes and extracurricular activities I have gotten to know students in all high school classes. **The lines aren't rigid between classes, and we grow together.**

A critique of small schools is that they are too small to offer extracurriculars or social opportunities. My experience rebuts this. Our school collaborates to provide creative opportunities. I currently play on a combined Softball team and a combined Soccer Team. In the Winter, our Nordic Ski Team is hosted at the Craftsbury Outdoor Center and I ski with students from across the state. I also interact with my community. I volunteer at the Historical Society. I am a member of our Town's Freedom and Unity Task Force. **Because our high school is embedded in our community, education can grow from wide and deep roots.**

I would like to share my hopes. I hope Vermont keeps and supports our community schools and doesn't look for a one-size-fits all model. We can connect more and grow with each other in creative community-based ways. We can expand our viewpoint on what schools can do. It doesn't take money but just looking out for new opportunities and connections.

Sharing my fears. I fear that legislators do not understand small schools and all they offer. That student and community voices are not being heard. That opportunities come in different sizes and shapes and not from a standardized package. **My experience at Craftsbury has shown me that a small school can be opportunity rich, and I hope that I have shown you some of that today.** Thank you for your time today.