

**John A. Castle** [Vermont Rural Education Collaborative](#)

House Education Committee Testimony (April 14, 2026)

## **Investing in Vermont’s Educator Workforce**

### **VREC support for Teacher Workforce Development**

- Collaborated with the AOE, DOL, VTNEA and six or our eight SU/SDs to develop and pilot Vermont’s first Registered Apprenticeship Program.
- Engaged in the initial exploration and promotion of “para-pathway” to a BA and teacher licensure—currently being developed by Vermont State University.
- Coordinated the initial exploration and promotion of Residency programs with the AOE, Vermont Math Initiative and Champlain College thanks to an Emerging Pathways grant.
- Created and Coordinate [NEK Next Gen Teachers](#) to promote careers in education at the secondary level. Including collaboration with Joyce Kemp on Ed Raising activities.
- Developed [VREC Teacher Innovation Grants](#) to spark and support teacher growth and retention thanks to the generous support of the Rowland Foundation New Teacher Fund.
- Hosting ongoing regional professional development including launching our first [VREC Teacher Reflection & Rejuvenation Retreat](#) this summer focused on retention of veteran teachers.

### **Introduction/Background**

Articulated in [16 V.S.A. § 1](#), which states that, “[t]o keep Vermont’s democracy competitive and thriving, Vermont students must be afforded substantially equal access to a quality basic education.” All too often we tend to measure this by spending per pupil, course availability or standardized test scores. There needs to be an understanding of the demographic profile of school communities and consideration of the teachers.

A large and long-standing body of research indicates that **teacher quality is a major predictor of student achievement and success**. In fact, a 50-state analysis concluded the following:

*“Quantitative analyses indicate that measures of teacher preparation and certification are by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics, both before and after controlling for student poverty and language status. [...] This analysis suggests that policies adopted by states regarding teacher education, licensing, hiring, and professional development may make an important difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work”* ([Darling-Hammon, 2000](#)).

While the pandemic officially ended in 2023, the education system and workforce is still struggling to recover from its long-tail effects. State education policy changes contribute to instability in the educator workforce. This turnover has a negative impact on student

achievement. Research models that controlled for school contexts have found that **teacher turnover has “marked, and lasting, negative consequences for the quality of the instructional staff and student achievement”** [Cost of teacher turnover](#) & (Sorenson & Ladd, 2019, p.2). According to [The McClure Foundation’s 2025-2026 Most Promising Jobs](#), Vermont’s 10-year projected openings for K-12 education is 7,460 - nearly a 100% teacher turnover. Vermont continues to onboard more teachers via “non-traditional pathways” who begin teaching while on emergency or provisional licenses than through traditional educator prep programs.

### **Previous Workforce Development Investments**

- Fall 2023 through June 2025 \$200,000 grant to VREC to explore potential workforce development via “grow your own” pathways. Resulted in Registered Apprenticeship Peer Review pathway currently in place with defined SU/SDs.
- 2023 the VT Legislature appropriated \$2,500,000 for a forgivable loan program to be administered by VSAC.
- 2023 Emerging Pathways appropriation of \$500,000. \*grant funds were not accessible until the late fall of 2024.
- Ongoing Federal DOL State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula Grant dedicated to education workforce initiatives.

### **Legislative Action Requested**

In support of Vermont’s goals *to have a highly trained teacher workforce*, the State requires leadership from the Administration and Secretary of Education along with legislative action to expand access to trained and certified effective educators. We suggest the following achievable policy steps in service to Vermont students:

**I. Re-establish the Emerging Pathways Grant Program** (see [Act 78 of 2023](#), pp.101-103) **as an annual grant program with an annual appropriation of \$500,000** to encourage and support the development and retention of qualified and effective Vermont educators with the goal of increased program completion rates and increased rates of licensure of underrepresented demographics. These grants are to expand support, mentoring, and professional development to prospective educators seeking licensure through the Agency of Education’s emerging pathways including: creative approaches for education preparation, peer review, registered apprentice programs, [teacher residency and other pathways](#). Residency Programs are one of the most proven pathways to onboarding highly trained teachers with high retention rates. Residency programs require start up funds to develop and allow for a demonstrated proof of concept.

#### Why this can work:

- **The State has provided funding and implemented this program once,**
- **The State has an existing infrastructure and (grant-funded) Emerging Pathways Program Coordinator** in place to implement this program quickly and efficiently.

- **AOE staff have developed and sustained partnerships to support creating and expanding pilot programs** with institutions of higher education, SU/SDs and additional partners such as VTNEA and VREC.

## **II. Ensure leadership, management capacity and and support for a comprehensive approach to the development of the teacher workforce.** By:

- Funding the Emerging Pathways position in the AOE budget. This position, currently funded through Department of Labor Funds, is essential to the ongoing exploration, development, partnership cultivation and coordination of pathways to teacher licensure. Most of the recommendations below necessitate this position.
- Continuing to grow the Registered Apprenticeship Program and implement the grow your own para-pathway with VSU.
- Committing to the development and implementation of Residency pathways, especially in rural areas.
- Exploring the potential for a Vermont college or university to develop a [Rural Teacher Corps](#) program to promote teaching in rural school communities and the value of place-based learning.
- working with State Standard’s board on refining licensing requirements and pathways. We need to continue to reduce financial and access hurdles while maintaining rigorous preparation.
- Developing comprehensive mentoring capacity and coordination. We often don’t recognize the systems, training and support necessary to build out things like effective mentoring programs.
- Ensuring attention is paid to cultivating and supporting educator diversity across Vermont. Efforts are being made through ongoing convening by Great Schools Partnership to promote educator diversity that will require resources and attention by the Agency.
- Developing and maintaining a one top web based resource Teach Vermont, modeled after [Teach Colorado](#).
- Continue to support Ed Raising and promotion of work-based learning opportunities for secondary students.
- Pursuing competitive grant funds from Federal Department of Labor.
- Coordinating and collaborating with Vermont philanthropic foundations to braid funding for new initiatives.

## **III. Re-establish the Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program** (see [Act 78 of 2023](#), pp.103-105) **with an annual appropriation** to provide forgivable loans to students enrolled in an eligible school who commit to working in Vermont K-12 public schools.

**Investment in Vermont Educator Workforce** requires administrative leadership, capacity at the Agency, policy attention and modest funding across all educator career phases. This is not just about a administrative processes to get more folks licensed quickly–its about strategic and comprehensive approach to building the highest quality workforce our students deserve. **If we truly wish to make a difference in improving student outcomes, we need to invest in the entire educator ecosystem from recruitment, preparation, early career development to retention and rejuvenation of career teachers.**