

To: The Vermont House Education Committee  
From: Elizabeth Daley, Member of The Vermont State Youth Council,  
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Date: February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Re: Education in Vermont

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Elizabeth Daley, and I am proud to call Johnson, Lamoille County home. I am here to share my perspective on what Vermont's youth believe public education should look like, what an ideal school system might include, and the strengths and challenges of both large and small schools.

Public education should reflect Vermont's values and communities. As someone who loves and thrives in my rural community, I deeply appreciate the close-knit relationships, deep-rooted values, and sense of belonging that rural Vermont provides. I believe our public education system should reflect those same values, community, opportunity, and equity. Young people across Vermont want an education system that engages us, prepares us for the future, and gives every student a fair chance to succeed, no matter where they live. We believe in a system that balances academic excellence, career readiness, and emotional well-being, while also respecting and enhancing the unique strengths of Vermont's rural communities.

If I could design a public education system from scratch, it would prioritize the following:

- Small schools should be protected and supported, not consolidated out of existence.
- Students should have more control over their learning paths, with opportunities for easier independent studies and internships.
- Hands on, engaging and frequent field trips occurring not only in younger years but throughout the K-12 experience.
- Expansion of transportation options to allow rural students access to technical centers, arts programs, and extracurricular activities.
- More state-level funding to support AP courses, STEM programs, and career-training opportunities in small schools.
- Closer, individualized learning for those attending large institutions.
- More school counselors and mental health professionals are easily available in schools.
- Schools should provide resources for students facing economic hardship, food insecurity, and transportation barriers.

As someone who has personally experienced the strengths of a small school, I know firsthand the benefits of individualized attention, strong teacher-student relationships, and a tight-knit community. However, I also recognize the challenges that come with fewer resources.

Advantages of Small Schools:

- Strong community connections. Students and teachers know each other personally, creating a supportive learning environment.
  - More opportunities for leadership and extracurricular involvement, since students are not competing against hundreds of others for spots on teams, clubs, and activities.
  - A culture of support and accountability, where students feel seen, valued, and encouraged to succeed.
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#### Disadvantages of Small Schools:

- Limited course offerings, especially in AP, language, and specialized subjects.
- Fewer extracurriculars, meaning students sometimes have to travel long distances to participate in activities.

#### Advantages of Large Schools:

- More academic and extracurricular opportunities, including a wider range of classes, clubs, and career training programs.
- Greater diversity of perspectives, exposing students to different ideas and backgrounds.
- Stronger funding and resources, allowing for better facilities, technology, and support services.

#### Disadvantages of Large Schools:

- Less personal attention, as students may feel like just a number in a system with hundreds or thousands of peers.
- More competition for leadership roles, scholarships, and opportunities.
- Disconnect from community values, as larger schools may not reflect the culture of the surrounding area.

Thank you.

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