

To: Chair Bongartz, and Senate Committee on Education Members
From: Vermont Community Schools Coalition: Contact Carlen Finn, carlenf@voicesforvtrkids.org
Date: Apr 4, 2025
Subject: Vermont Community Schools, Sustainable Funding, and Education Transformation

The Vermont Community Schools Coalition is writing to urge you to consider the vital role Vermont's Community Schools Framework¹ can play in the effort to "transform" the State's public education system. We see this framework as a powerful education transformation tool, one with a proven evidence base at the national level and one with a developing body of data and research at the state level that is worthy of investing in and scaling statewide.

As background, the Vermont Community Schools Coalition was established in 2021 to advance education equity in Vermont's community schools legislation. Our members include education policy analysts, children's policy advocates, Vermont's rural education collaborative, educators, and youth advocates. We created and successfully advanced the inclusion of Vermont's fifth community school pillar in Act 67: Safe, Equitable, and Inclusive Learning Environments. We also continue to advocate for ongoing investments in community schools through sustainable community school funding, **and we ask that your committee do the same.**

Last year, some of you heard testimony about the transformative impact of Vermont's Community Schools framework on students and school communities alike. Vermont community school grantees joined members of the [Vermont Research-Policy-Practice Partnership](#)² to [highlight promising outcomes for these schools and districts](#). Supported by community school coordinators, the five community schools pillars, and existing public education policy infrastructure like flexible pathways, Act 77, restorative approaches in schools, Act 35, and ethnic and social equity studies standards, Act 1, these school communities are building and strengthening [afterschool learning experiences](#), [student access to health care, and youth and community voice and engagement](#) (slide 23), to name a few. They are school communities supporting student well-being and education equity by building student-centered, responsive, and inclusive learning environments inside schools and within communities. These are among many Vermont public schools already implementing the Governor's [three stated goals for education transformation](#) – quality, equity, and sustainability.

We believe that the infrastructure for transforming Vermont's public education system is already in place. We hope you will take the time to learn more about how our school communities are a contributing part of education transformation and why their work should be the foundation of decisions made by this legislature. We are available to meet and share how this framework can be applied.

¹ Vermont's Community Schools Framework 's Five Pillars
Integrated Student Supports
Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities
Active Family and Community Engagement
Collaborative Leadership and Practices
Safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments

² Please note this is a link to the Catamount Community Schools Collaborative that includes links to the [Act 67 Policy Brief](#) and their [community schools digital story-telling project](#).

Catamount Community Schools Collaborative, Bernice Garnett & Peter Knox
Public Assets Institute, Stephanie Yu
Up for Learning, Lindsey Halman
Vermont Rural Education Collaborative, John Castle
Voices for Vermont's Children, Carlen Finn
Jessica DeCarolis, Public Education Consulting Services
Natasha Eckart
Kathleen Kesson, Author, [Community Schools Blueprint: Transforming the School/Community Partnership](#)
Samantha Stevens, Community Schools Coordinator, NCSU
Rebecca Tatistcheff, Principal, U32, WCUUSD (and formerly of Cabot School, CCSU)