

NEK GYO Pathways

Program Design & Implementation -- JANUARY 2025

Together, the Agency of Education, Department of Labor, and VREC have made strong progress in our work to pursue various GYO Pathways since September 2023. We are a well-established partnership and have implemented an Registered Apprenticeship Program in six SU/SDs in the NEK. We greatly appreciate the responsive communication and collaborative problem solving to advance multiple initiatives. It is also important to acknowledge that the VT-NEA is also an instrumental partner in advancing this initiative. This is new to all of us and value the commitment to our collective work and collective interest in teacher workforce development and the success of our public schools.

We continue to engage the field and value the input we receive from superintendents and HR Coordinators. We continue to explore opportunities with institutions of higher education across Vermont, and beyond, and are optimistic that active partnerships will continue to develop. We are excited that we have moved into an implementation stage and continue to gain momentum in advancing various pathways.

We are pleased to report we launched a pilot Registered Apprenticeship Program in seven of the eight SU/SDs within the Collaborative with 28 apprentices initially participating. (we now have six SU/SDs with 26 apprentices)

By September 30, 2024, submit a summary report to the AOE that will include, at minimum:

a) A description of the GYO program structure and implementation plan inclusive of elements described in 2.a-f;

--Currently the NEK GYO Pathways is implementing a pilot Registered Apprenticeship Program for initial licensure for those on Emergency & Provisional Licenses.

[*See VT RAP Website](#)

[*NEK GYO Pathways RAP Overview & Guidelines](#)

--We are hoping to have a pilot “Earn & Learn” or “para pathway” program for those employed in support staff roles (generally para-educators & instructional assistants) to obtain a BA and develop their competencies to become licensed educators by the fall of

2025. We are currently working with Vermont State University to explore this option and have had some communication with Western Governor's University as well.

--VREC has received an Emerging Pathways Grant to support the exploration of a teacher residency model. This may or may not need to be a registered apprenticeship program and that will be determined as we move this process forward. We currently have UVM, Vermont Higher Education Collaborative, Vermont Math Initiative and Champlain College that agreed to participate in an exploration process guided by the National Center for Teacher Residencies. The goal is to have one or more residency programs operating by the Fall of 2026.

b) Number of participating GYO schools/districts:

--Six of the eight SU/SDS within VREC have at least one apprentice participating in the pilot. One SD with one participant withdrew. The eighth SU experienced a change in Superintendent and HR Coordinator and were not able to get up to speed to participate in this first cohort, along having expressed an interest.

C) Number of GYO candidates identified/onboarded per school/district:

- Caledonia Central SU - 0
- Essex North Supervisory Union - 1
- Kingdom East SD - 2 *one has left their position
- North Country SU - 9
- Orange East SU - 1
- Orleans Central SU - 8
- Orleans Southwest SU - 6
- St Johnsbury SD - 1 *has left the program

i) number of mentor/cooperating educators recruited and trained:

--we have 26 apprentice mentors in place. Many mentors were previously trained. VT NEA provided a training for apprentice mentors in August and September.

ii) training hours for participants and mentors that may have occurred:

- A two hour long online orientation session was provided for all apprentices
- A two hour long online orientation session was provided for all mentors
- A one hour long online orientation session was provided for all administrators
- 5 new mentors were trained in August and 1 is taking the fall course.
- Mentors are able to connect directly with someone from VTNEA and a support person provided by VREC.
- VREC is providing outreach to mentors & school administrators with apprentices to help them understand their roles. *paid for from DOL grant.

iii) participant/mentor survey data:

- We conducted surveys of apprentices, mentors and building administrators at the beginning of January.
- [Short Answer Feedback](#)
- VTNEA is soliciting feedback from apprentices on a weekly basis. See an example [here](#)

D) testimonials or other responses from Superintendents or other educators in participating SU/SDs;

--ENSU: Canaan Memorial High School is excited to have our first registered apprentice teacher this year. The process for onboarding for the RAP program is going very smoothly and we are so appreciative of the opportunity to grow a dedicated and talented employee into a professional educator. We are looking forward to expanding our options to include an "earn and learn" program. We have several skilled paraprofessionals that are eager to participate in this program. These flexible programs are essential to growing and sustaining a professional teaching workforce in rural Vermont. Thank you to VREC, the Agency of Education, and the Department of Labor for your joint effort.

--NCSU: We currently have approximately 50 - 60 emergency and provisional licenses in our supervisory union. In some cases, we have candidates who don't even qualify for an emergency license who are covering a class, like PE on a semi-permanent basis. In our current context of little to no housing available for teaching candidates, it is in our best interests to "grow our own" candidates and support them to become qualified and talented educators. We have 9 RAP participants, with a potential for a 10th to onboard soon. This will only strengthen and support our ability to hire and retain our own people to do the admirable job of educating our NEK students.

--OESU: Programs like the NEK GYO Pathways offer a critical lifeline to rural schools like ours where finding quality educators is not always an easy task and often impossible. The candidates involved in such programs are familiar with the rural setting, knowledgeable about the culture of our geographically unique schools, and already integrated into the communities we serve. These factors, as well as being paired with seasoned educators who are able to mentor and guide them as they learn, make such programs invaluable to us as we seek to offer the very best programming to our students.

StJSD: The St. Johnsbury School District currently has one employee enrolled in the NEK GYO Pathways program seeking licensure. However, I am confident that we will be able to enroll several more staff members as the program expands to include those with no degree or an associate degree. Many of our paraprofessionals are eager to become teachers, and this type of pathway would provide them with the ideal opportunity to advance their careers. The "earn and learn" model, in particular, offers a flexible and supportive approach for those balancing work, life commitments, and professional growth as they work toward a bachelor's degree and licensure. I can definitely see this initiative beneficial for our current paraprofessionals, who are already gaining valuable hands-on experience in classrooms alongside certified professionals. The potential for growth and development within our school through this program expansion is immense and will be a tremendous asset in nurturing and fostering internal talent. Alternative pathways like these are essential for broadening access to education and addressing the ongoing need for qualified educators in our school community.

OCSU: OCSU supports the need to have alternative pathways for educators to enter the public system.

--We will continue to solicit input from the field as we make adjustments to our existing program and plan for a new cohort of our current RAP and initiate new pathways.

[Vince Razionale--Hardwick story](#)

E) Recommendations and lessons learned from the implementation of the pilot program including recommendations for ongoing funding to continue or expand the Grow Your Own pilot program.

--Power of Partnerships: We believe this initiative illustrates the importance of partnerships. This is truly a case where all parties have brought important perspective and knowledge and resources to the table. Although challenging to navigate multiple organizations, there has been a clear common interest that has promoted a collaborative disposition. It is also important to recognize that coordinating up to eight SU/SDS is also not easy given their unique contexts and just given the number of organizations to engage.

--Being Data Informed: This is truly a case of being responsive to the field based on both qualitative and quantitative data. VREC was hearing from superintendents of the challenges in filling positions, while clearly the aggregated data demonstrated there was a substantial need. Given the decline in new educators graduating from Educational Prep Programs and large increase in individuals pursuing initial licensure through peer review, it was evident that additional alternate pathways were necessary to increase a pathway for new teachers.

--Higher Ed Needs to Step Up: Although there are some examples of adjustments to educator prep programs, there is still a need for institutions of higher education to be more creative in addressing the need. Frankly, it has been difficult to establish meaningful partnerships with Vermont higher education, while higher ed in a number of states have taken a leadership role in developing new pathways.

--Sustained effort and attention needed: This is complex work with many direct and indirect partners to consider. There is a need for constant research and exploration to know what practices are emerging in other states. There is a need to continually nudge folks for responses, follow up on meetings and provide up to date information. This required someone fully dedicated to this work.

--Funding Recommendations:

--There is a need for both continued and expanded funding to support various pathways to becoming a teacher at multiple levels. Simply, although there have been some investments in the past couple of years, there is a need to increase that investment to assure a quality workforce

1. Reinstitute the “Forgivable Loan funding that was administered by VSAC. The \$2,000,000 appropriated by the Legislature in 2023 was a meaningful investment. Unfortunately, this was one-time money and the funds have all been allocated. An increased amount needs to be appropriated to cover a longer period of time and commitment to sustain. There also needs to ensure it applies to a full range of BA & MA pathways.

2. The Emerging Pathways Grant of \$500,000 was a meaningful amount to promote new pathways. An increased level of investment needs to be made on an annual basis for multiple years to support the development and implementation of new pathways. The

establishment of new programs by higher education require resources and implementing something such as a residency program will need substantial upfront investments to support a model that has a proven return on investment. Perhaps expanding and breaking the funding into planning grants and implementation grants. It is also important that funding like this is made available in a timely manner. An entire year (maybe two) was lost in potentially developing and implementing new pathways due to the long delay in making these funds accessible.

3. Invest in Capacity at the Agency of Education. The establishment of the Emerging Pathways position is encouraging. The understanding is that Department of Labor is providing the funding to support this position. It is essential for this work to move forward that this position is sustained. There is also a need to provide more support to the field for professional learning and technical assistance if we truly want a high quality educator workforce.

4. Collaborate with the Department of Labor to pursue Workforce Innovation and Opportunity funds and competitive Federal Grants that can support the full range of pathways. VREC was provided with a DOL grant for \$159,000 to support implementation.

5. Collaborate with Vermont-based philanthropic organizations to develop innovative programs such as teacher residencies. VREC receives funding from the McClure Foundation to support some of its initiatives around teacher workforce development (NEK Next Gen. Teachers) and we are pursuing additional funding through another foundation.

6. Reach out to Vermont's delegation in Congress to seek Congressionally Directed Funding. VREC did submit a request to Senator Sanders, yet it did not advance through appropriations despite the Senator's support.

7. Encourage local school boards and Associations to consider addressing investments in workforce development to enhance teacher recruitment and onboarding through collective bargaining agreements.

Program Design Provided in June

1. Submit a Grow Your Own program design to the Agency of Education by June 30, 2024. This program design should include the following elements:

a. Identification of additional funding/potential sources of funds (local, State and federal) to sustain a local GYO program beyond September 2024;

--The Department of Labor is providing a grant of \$159,468 in funding through June of 2025 to support implementation of registered apprenticeship pathways across the Collaborative. We will also work closely with the VT Department of Labor on their application process for continued funding focused on apprenticeship programs, including competitive grants from the US Department of Labor. Whereas we support the expansion of programming to other areas of the State, we appreciate the consideration for continued support for the initiative underway in the NEK.

--VREC was awarded an Emerging Pathways Grant of \$75,000 through the AOE to support the development and implementation of a "residency model" for a registered

apprenticeship program. We anticipate braiding the use of these funds with others to implement a program the fall of 2025.

--VREC awarded \$8000 from McClure Foundation to support the NEK Next Gen Teachers collaboration with area high schools and CTE centers. It is our intention to begin to directly engage existing Educator Prep Programs (EPPs) in Vermont to look for ways we can support students who come from schools within the Kingdom.

--VREC received a grant for \$245,000 from the Rowland Foundation to develop a comprehensive Vision for Growing and Sustaining a High-Quality Educator Workforce in Vermont. This grant will provide substantial capacity to allow VREC to extend and expand its partnership with the Agency of Education.

--Although Senator Bernie Sanders' office supported a \$552,000 Congressionally Directed Spending request by VREC in support of a residency model, it did not move forward through appropriations

---We will continue to explore and pursue potential funding streams from at the State and Federal level along with foundations in Vermont. Although this was not the year to solicit more funding from the Legislature, there is a need to seek additional support in a new "Emerging Pathways" fund that will support expansion of various approaches of registered apprenticeship programs statewide. VREC will play an active role in advocating for these resources.

b. An established leadership partnership structure to sustain coordination with participating school/district and IHE partners;

--VREC has a well-established relationship with our eight SU/SDs within the Collaborative. We have dedicated substantial effort to cultivate partnerships with institutions of higher education. We have developed a strong partnership with the VT AOE and DOL and VT NEA. We recognize the need for more engagement with institutions of higher education in Vermont. We propose a convening this fall with respective IHE partners in the hopes of educating them on the promise of registered apprenticeship programs and the role that they can play in supporting them. We do not envision establishing a unified group to collaborate on this work beyond our current partners (VREC, AOE, DOL & VT-NEA), but certainly remain open to this possibility in the event that more interest emerges from established education preparation programs.

c. An established MOU(s) to support partnerships with one or more Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) that support aligned coursework and supervision consistent with requirements for educator credentialing;

Higher Education Partnership Development

The response from higher ed in Vermont has been disappointing. There are many states where actually higher ed has led the way in developing non-traditional pathways to licensure. We will continue to pursue partnership opportunities with various institutions of higher education both in and out of Vermont.

- *University of Vermont*—UVM is expressing an interest in a “rural residency” model with the potential for funding emerging. The VREC Director has met with the Dean of the College of Education & Social Services to explore options and is following up with various staff this summer.
 - *Vermont State University*—We have reached out this spring and have received a minimal interest in reengaging with an intent to consider opportunities for collaboration. We will continue to “knock on the door” with the hopes that at some point someone is willing to open it to explore possibilities.
 - *Community College of Vermont*—They remain supportive as an entry point to those pursuing a BA. They have indicated that they are considering an Associates in Education in the hopes of a 2 + 2 relationship with VTSU. We reengage this summer.
 - *Western Governors University*—Based on several conversations with WGU, we now are moving forward to partner with them to offer a pathway to a BA for individuals in a registered apprenticeship program beginning in January of 2025. We also believe their MA program will be of interest to teachers in our region. They have been extremely supportive and VREC will collaborate with them to present at a national conference in January.
 - *Champlain College*—The Champlain College TAP program provides a viable pathway to licensure for those who can afford the time and cost to engage in this student teaching pathway. They have indicated a strong interest in supporting a cohort of apprentices in in the NEK and are willing to provide a hybrid of delivery, including in person in the NEK.
 - *Vermont Higher Education Collaborative*—HEC was very interested in developing a seminar series to provide supplemental instruction for those who have a BA and seeking licensure via the registered apprenticeship pathway. The VT HEC has a particular strength in their ability to support candidates in special education and early education. We are picking up on conversations from the spring this summer.
 - *University of New England*—We have had an initial discussion about both post-Bac & potential BA pathways. It appears that a pathway to licensure through an asynchronistic Post-Bac/MA is most accessible and flexible. They have recently indicated that they are developing an online BA pathway and thought that by the fall of 2025 they might have this program up and running.
 - *Southern New Hampshire University*—SNHU is interested in supporting individuals who wish to pursue a Masters. Their MA in Educational Studies would be a good fit for certain individuals who have a BA and looking to become licensed through the apprenticeship program. They have expressed interest in developing a rural residency cohort model as well.
- d. ***Program design that outlines key elements of the core GYO pathway developed that will provide essential training for non-traditional candidates including the training program and course sequences and practicum aligned with core teaching and endorsement-specific competencies (in consultation with AOE staff as needed), minimum hours required to demonstrate those proficiencies, and mentorship/cooperating teaching practices;***

--VREC has collaborated with the AOE & DOL to establish that the Vermont Core Teaching Standards are the foundation all registered apprentices will need to obtain. The registered apprentice program is considered a hybrid of time and competencies and the DOL has confirmed that individuals will be considered “completers” of the RAP by participating for one calendar year (August to August). Individuals will need to complete approximately an additional 144 hours of supplemental instruction. We are developing a menu of options for supplemental instructions to include local inservice training, course work, workshops and include options for programs designed specifically for apprentices from VTNEA, Champlain TAP & VT Higher Education Collaborative.

--The AOE has confirmed that an apprentice can submit their VLP for initial licensure when they have obtained meeting the VT Core Teaching Standards and will not have to wait until being a RAP completer.

--VREC is committed to collaborating to develop a para pathway to a BA and initial licensure. This type of program will need to be personalized depending on area of endorsement and if individuals are transferring in any credits from prior courses. We continue to hear from superintendents in our region that they believe this is potentially one of the most promising opportunities for teacher development.

--VREC will continue to explore a “residency model” and the subsequent funding to launch in the hopes that a Vermont institution of Higher Education will pilot program in the fall of 2026.

--VREC will continue to expand upon our NEK Next Gen. Teachers initiative in working with high schools and CTE centers in our region. We are worked with the AOE and DOL in developing a one-day conference for this fall and will devote more time to engaging potential partners from high education.

e. ***Communication plan, tools, and strategies for recruiting GYO participants and cooperating teachers/mentors; and***

--VREC works directly with our Collaborative SU/SDs in the recruitment of potential apprentices. SU/SDs are responsible for assigning cooperating teachers and mentors. VREC is also in the process of hiring content coaches who can work with apprentices based on their anticipated area of endorsement or areas identified for additional support. We will network with our Collaborative SU/SDs in recruiting content coaches along with posting for open positions via local papers and social media.

--We will work with CTE centers in the NEK to promote a marketing competition. We see this as a great opportunity for students to take on a relevant project. We will ask for proposals to market careers in education to high school students and to promote our various NEK GYO Pathways.

-- In addition, we will continue to develop our website to serve as a “clearinghouse” of information related to pathways to licensure.

f. *A proposed model for sustainable mentoring that includes training and compensation for cooperating teachers serving as mentors to apprentices.*

--The VT Department of Labor grant will provide support for mentor compensation and training through FY25. We have asked the DOL to consider a similar level of funding in the future specific to our regional coordination. Mentors for those on a provisional or emergency license are provided and paid for by SU/SDS. VREC is providing an additional stipend of \$1500.00 for those who will serve as "Apprentice Mentors" in the registered apprenticeship program.

-- We identified someone who will provide additional support to mentors of apprentices and serve in the role of certifying the achievement of competencies. Building administrators will provide additional support, supervision and evaluation. "Supervising Administrators will be responsible for verifying an Apprentice has obtained the core teaching standards and content standards when applicable.

--Vermont NEA currently provides mentor training for many of our SU/SDs and has agreed to support any training and orientation for Apprentice Mentors.