

VERMONT LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

Youth-Adult Partnerships



Transforming Education for a Just, Joyful and Sustainable World.

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February 2019

OVERVIEW:

VTLFF believes that the educational environment should reflect principles of social justice and environmental sustainability, and that schools should be joyful places for young people. Twenty-first-century learning should empower young people with voice and choice in their learning.

To achieve this goal, we have developed a set of research-based guidelines on best practices, with associated rubrics designed to support the movement toward a strong, personalized learning environment in which youth and adults enjoy collaborative relationships. This should not be considered a comprehensive set of indicators, but a work in progress to which you are invited to provide feedback and suggestions that will aid other educators in making these necessary changes.

We hope that you find this a useful tool in the self-assessment of your progress toward these goals.

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ADVISORY



The heart of a successful advisory is the development of a trusting and caring community.

Building a strong relationship between an adult and youth allows every student to have at least one adult who knows and supports them. Advisories provide a culture of caring and support across social groups. An advisory system creates a point person (the advisor) with whom a relationship is built for communication between youth, parents/caretakers, and the school.

Successfully implemented advisory systems are well-supported with ongoing training and professional development. Advisories need to be incorporated into the daily schedule in ways that emphasize their important role in achieving individual and institutional goals. Frequent, consistent, and adequate meeting time built into the regular schedule is critical to success. Partnership with youth in advisory system coordination and curriculum/content development is important to the successful integration of an advisory system into the culture of a school. Designating a position to coordinate advisories and their work is used by many schools to help achieve success.

When implemented with fidelity, an advisory program will provide opportunities to:

- address students' social, emotional, behavioral, academic, and health and wellness needs;
- encourage civic/social responsibility;
- support personal learning plan development and implementation; and
- build an understanding of proficiency-based grading.

Rubric for Advisory:

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE (evidence that it exists)

NOT EVIDENT

No advisory system exists, or it exists in name only, as time allotted is inadequate.

EMERGING

An advisory system exists within the schedule, but without the necessary structure, support, and time.

Coordination of the work to develop multifaceted, unified goals for all advisories does not exist or is minimal and not ongoing.

Training and professional development for advisors does not exist or is only offered once or twice a year.

DEVELOPING

An advisory system is part of the schedule and is becoming part of the school culture.

Some work is being done to develop multifaceted, unified goals for all advisories, as well as to develop cohesive group dynamics within an advisory.

Training and professional development for advisors is offered, but it is not ongoing.

THRIVING

An advisory system is an integral part of the daily schedule and culture of the school. There is an emphasis on building strong youth-adult relationships.

Significant time is dedicated to coordinating multifaceted, unified goals for all advisories, as well as to develop cohesive group dynamics.

There is dedicated, ongoing training and professional development for adult advisors and youth leaders.

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP (how adults and students work together)

The advisory system, if it exists, is lead by adults with no input from youth.

Youth are occasionally consulted about the advisory curriculum and goals.

Youth have input in determining goals and coordinating the work of advisory.

Youth are consulted throughout the year to provide feedback on advisory.

Youth are active, authentic partners in determining the goals and coordinating the work.

Youth leaders are actively included in training and professional development.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS (Important considerations that should be resolved so that all students have access)

The needs and capacities of youth and adults are not considered.

A few youth are asked for input.

One or two adults advocate for greater access and transparency.

The school community as a whole is starting to recognize that assuring full access and input is vital to ensuring advisories work as they are intended for all youth and adults.

Activities and opportunities are designed for maximum participation. All advisories have access to the same materials and resources, including training.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Community partners actively and authentically provide resources (knowledge/expertise, opportunities, funds) at the level they can sustain over a set period of time to a school, program, educational organization, or other educational activity. In exchange, the community partner (business, nonprofit, local government, etc.) receives something they value—for example, staff opportunity, community recognition, or meeting a corporate value. Strong partnerships can increase the potency of the educational system by providing a relevant and more authentic link between the student’s education and the world beyond the school. Community partnerships can lead to expanded learning opportunities—valuable, relevant learning that leads to a greater understanding of the student’s world. These opportunities can happen outside of the school building, enhancing the connection to the community. By their very nature, community partnerships have the potential to greatly support and enhance both Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements (PBGRs) and personalized learning.

Schools can establish and nurture authentic partnerships by developing a plan and appointing a youth-adult team to be responsible for the program. Teams must be given enough time and support to truly understand how a partnership is developed. There should be a clear protocol established for community partnerships, from initial inquiries through ending of the partnership. The partner and the school must take the time and open the opportunity to understand each other, their needs, and commitments. A partnership should be approached as a collaboration, always keeping in mind the needs of both the school and the partner. Both entities must work hard to clearly understand the realms their counterparts work in, and the pressures on their time and resources. When implemented with fidelity, community partnerships will positively contribute to the climate and culture of the learning environment.

Rubric for Community Partnerships:

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE (evidence that it exists)

NOT EVIDENT

No community-based organizations or businesses have a relationship with the school, and none are being pursued or developed.

EMERGING

One or more partnerships with a community-based organization or business is developed and implemented.

While largely teacher directed, some opportunities are available for individual or group projects that are informed by one or more community partners.

DEVELOPING

It is now common practice within the school to think about how community-based partnerships can improve student learning.

Many teachers are experimenting with community partnerships as part of their practice, and involving students in planning and construction of those partnerships.

THRIVING

Projects and learning experiences that integrate community-based learning with course subject matter and the students' community are expected and consistently available to all students.

Youth and adults work closely together to identify, plan, and implement community-based experiences that enrich and deepen the corresponding course subject matter.

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP (how adults and students work together)

Adults assume full responsibility for school/classroom learning.

Adults may provide to some youth the opportunity to explore what a community partner has to offer.

Youth input into what is relevant to them, how the school can partner with their community, and project ideas for learning is sought out.

Youth and adults from the school and community partners work collaboratively to identify community-based learning that connects in relevant ways to academic subject matter.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS (Important considerations that should be resolved so that all students have access)

Community-based learning opportunities are not actively sought nor supported for any youth, and no partnerships exist. School community lacks receptiveness and capacity.

Some youth and some adults may seek out and develop community-based learning opportunities, but have limited support from their school and communities.

Community partners and schools identify community-based, relevant learning experiences for some youth. Teachers and partners receive some support in the process. Some strategic efforts are made to reach those youth who are not engaged.

All youth in the school have community partners ready to develop authentic experiences and community-based learning opportunities with them and their teachers. The community has a vision that supports partnership.

INTEGRATED LEARNING



Integrated learning has been an explicit component of Vermont educational policy for at least the past 25 years. With the Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities, schools were encouraged to move to an interdisciplinary pedagogical framework characterized by multiple modalities of learning. Disciplinary learning is characterized by modes of thinking and learning specific to a field of study. Students acquire knowledge (concepts, theories, etc.) specific to a discipline, learn methods of inquiry that characterize the field, learn about the purposes of the discipline and what kinds of problems it addresses, and become familiar with forms of expression of the discipline. Interdisciplinary learning calls upon the integration of the methodology and language of two or more disciplines to inform a learning experience, in a way that generates conceptual connections and new knowledge. Integrated learning goes further in that it implies student interest, choice, and collaborative design in their learning.

Integrated learning is often promoted as a twenty-first-century learning skill as it offers students the opportunity to explore real world issues and engage in complex problem solving. It provides one answer to the problem of student engagement, as it mirrors real life experience in ways that the separate subject curriculum cannot, and provides opportunities to pursue personally relevant questions and concerns. It also provides a solution to the fragmentation of the school day that many students experience and offers interesting ways to more fully integrate physical education, art, music, and performance with academic areas. It lends itself very well to flexible learning pathways such as work-based or service learning, and is easily aligned with the requisite transferable skills.

Rubric for Integrated Learning:

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE (evidence that it exists)

NOT EVIDENT

Classes offered as separate subjects in the traditional disciplines. Little to no overlap of subject matter.

Student work is teacher-directed and conventional—text-based, regular quizzes and tests, etc.

EMERGING

Some teacher-directed theme-based or multi-disciplinary teaching occurs.

Some opportunities for individual or group projects informed by one or more disciplines.

DEVELOPING

Many teachers are experimenting with an interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, or multi-disciplinary format. Teacher collaboration is the norm.

Students are engaged in learning activities that focus on relevant issues or topics that are inclusive of one or more academic disciplines.

THRIVING

Projects and learning experiences that integrate community-based learning with course subject matter and the student's community are expected and consistently available to all students.

Youth and adults work closely together to identify, plan, and implement community-based experiences that enrich and deepen the corresponding course subject matter.

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP (how adults and students work together)

Teachers plan coursework independently of students.

Teachers consider student interests in their choice of topics and activities.

Teachers may offer choices for individual or group learning activities that draw upon subject matter from more than one discipline.

Student input into topics, modes of exploration, and project ideas is actively solicited.

Teachers consult with students to seek out resources and materials to facilitate deep learning in projects.

Students and teachers co-create integrated road maps for achieving academic goals.

Teachers partner with students to identify extended learning opportunities that connect to topics of interest.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS (Important considerations that should be resolved so that all students have access)

Curriculum content and learning activities reflect a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Little attempt is made to respond to individual needs, interests and abilities.

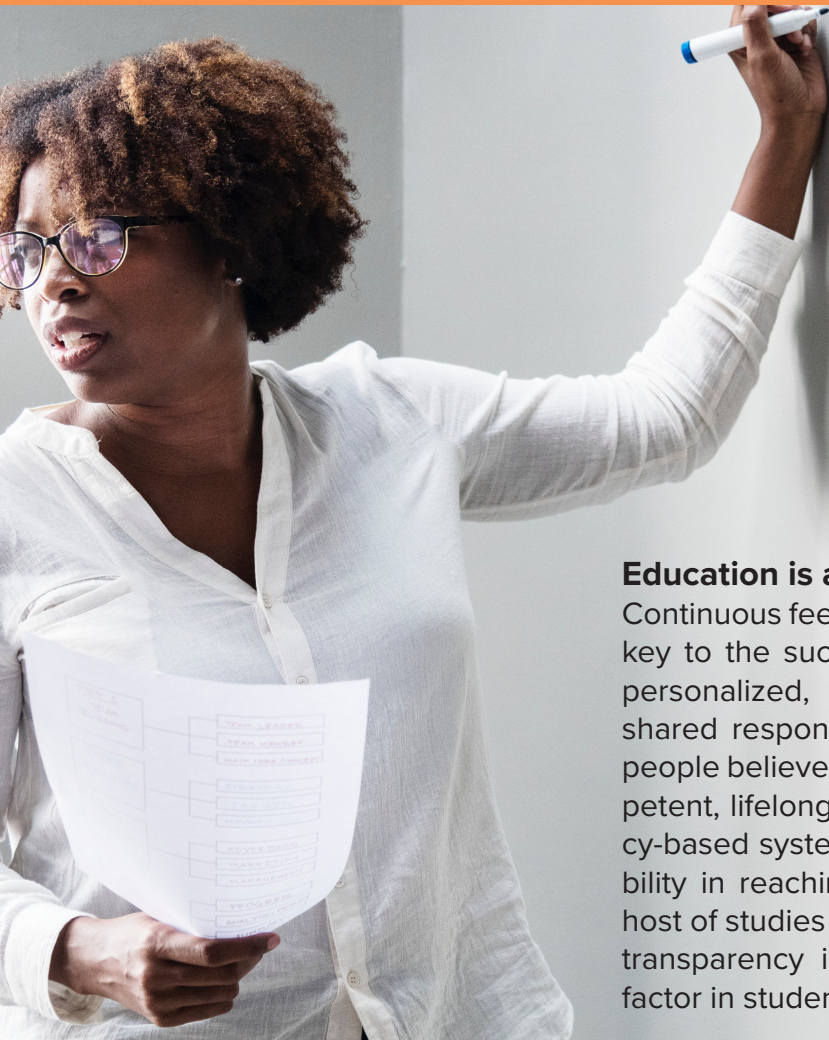
Efforts are made to differentiate both the delivery of content and the forms of expression based on student needs, interests, and abilities.

Community partners and schools identify community-based, relevant learning experiences for some youth. Teachers and partners receive some support in the process. Some strategic efforts are made to reach those youth who are not engaged.

Student/teacher collaboration in curriculum planning happens at all ability levels.

Material resources are available to all students.

LEARNER-TEACHER FEEDBACK



Education is a partnership between learners and teachers.

Continuous feedback between the two major players in learning is key to the success of that partnership. As we move to a more personalized, student-centered learning model grounded in shared responsibility, ongoing feedback ensures that all young people believe in and can fully realize their potential, and are competent, lifelong learners. It is particularly important in a proficiency-based system, where individuals assume far greater responsibility in reaching personal learning targets at varied speeds. A host of studies identify the frequency and quality of feedback and transparency in the learning environment as the most critical factor in student success.

A structured feedback system, with frequent and multiple means to assess and tune the learning process and outcomes, provides an avenue for all learners to have a voice and active role in their education. It fosters mutual respect and trust, with each young person feeling known and integral to their education. Learners have clearer goals and a means to those ends, therefore systematically advancing their own learning. Teachers have a greater understanding of each student's progress and needs and can guide them accordingly. Goal setting, which is a natural aspect of quality feedback, is a critical skill that can enhance personal, academic, and professional performance. Timely, high-quality learner-teacher feedback is a means to shift the more traditional power structure between teachers and learners, thereby increasing learner ownership and engagement and teacher satisfaction as effective guides in the learning process.

Feedback is necessary on an individual learner level. It is also essential to regularly assess and tune the classroom experience as a whole, with learners and teachers reflecting on the strengths and challenges of the learning context and adapting their roles and responsibilities accordingly.

Rubric for Learner-Teacher Feedback:

**WHAT DOES IT
LOOK LIKE
(evidence
that it exists)**

NOT EVIDENT

Learners are compliant in a teacher-centered approach to learning, accepting minimal feedback as the norm.

EMERGING

Learners feel a growing sense of ownership over the learning process and begin to seek out and utilize feedback opportunities.

Learners are beginning to take greater control over their education and shift their relationship with their teacher to one of partner.

DEVELOPING

Learners feel growing confidence that they have a shared language of learning to enrich giving and receiving feedback, which happens regularly.

Learners understand and expect the student-teacher relationship to be one of partnership and are shifting roles and responsibilities accordingly.

THRIVING

Shared responsibility in shaping the educational experience has become the norm.

**YOUTH-ADULT
PARTNERSHIP
(how adults
and students
work together)**

Learners do not feel comfortable or empowered to seek timely and personalized feedback from their teachers.

Learners begin to ask for and expect increased feedback opportunities and means to shape and control their own learning as partners.

Learners are beginning to develop the metacognitive skills to fully optimize feedback opportunities.

Learners and teachers are establishing means to share responsibility in learning by co-designing effective feedback systems.

There is growing comfort and confidence in quality feedback loops between individuals and the class as a whole.

All learners feel empowered and capable to fully participate as partners in predictable, quality feedback opportunities with their teachers.

Feedback clearly enhances individual learning and has a direct, positive impact the learning environment.

**EQUITY
CONSIDERATIONS
(Important
considerations
that should be
resolved so that
all students
have access)**

Only certain learners receive quality feedback consistently and this tends to be those who the teacher deems to have the greatest learning potential.

Teacher feedback is more evenly distributed but still is weighted to a limited number of learners who are deemed to have more potential.

The teacher is becoming aware of inequitable feedback and has committed to establishing means to ensure that all learners benefit from timely and quality feedback.

There is a continuous, timely, and quality feedback loop between ALL learners and teachers.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES



All humans are hardwired to belong. Just as we need food, shelter and clothing, we also need strong and meaningful relationships to thrive. Restorative practices (RP) is an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities.

Every member of a school community has a sphere of influence. This sphere contains an interwoven network of relationships that can influence decisions, policy and practices. The outcomes ultimately depend on the strength of the relationships between students, teachers, administrators, families, and community members. Within such a network, RP are a positive, disruptive force to realizing greater equity in education and stronger relationships.

RP provide greater balance and strength to the youth-adult partnerships in learning, and greater opportunity for building empathy, bridging differences, and strengthening more just, joyful, and sustainable communities. RP are truly a form of participatory democracy in that they build and heal communities, and serve as a means to work through, resolve, and transform conflicts.

RP largely originated as an alternative approach to punishment (restorative justice). However, as it has been implemented around the world, it has become clear that RP is most powerful when implemented before conflict arises. When implemented holistically in schools and communities, RP helps to develop a culture where everyone's voice is heard and valued and relationships become the cornerstone of the community. Instead of top-down punitive practices that further erode relationships, RP places emphasis on relationships, collaborative problem solving and collective responsibility. Students, teachers and administrators alike become facilitators of transformative discussion and develop a culture of support. In essence, RP should be understood as a way to build a culture in which healthy relationships thrive and conflict is transformed into healing and learning.

Authentic youth engagement with RP requires a shift in the mental models that both adults and youth have about each other. It requires respecting and valuing the unique gifts that come from each group, and valuing the positive results that come from working together. When implemented with fidelity, RP can improve school culture and climate for youth and adults; improve academic outcomes; close achievement gaps to keep youth in a learning environment; significantly reduce absenteeism; and ensure all students are productive, contributing members of the community.

Rubric for Restorative Practices:

	<h2>NOT EVIDENT</h2>	<h2>EMERGING</h2>	<h2>DEVELOPING</h2>	<h2>THRIVING</h2>
<h3>WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE (evidence that it exists)</h3>	<p>Adults and youth believe that the most effective way to change behavior and maintain order is through punishment.</p> <p>Staff and leadership do not know about restorative practices.</p> <p>Restorative circles are not evident in any aspect of the school community.</p> <p>Punitive disciplinary systems managed by adults only are used (suspension, detention, etc.).</p>	<p>Adults and youth have begun to examine their mental models around discipline and relationship building.</p> <p>District staff are made aware of and become interested in restorative practices and a group of staff are trained in restorative circles.</p> <p>District staff begin to experiment with ways to increase belonging and equal voice in their classrooms.</p>	<p>Together, a small group of youth and adults are trained in restorative practices and circles. This group of committed learners has developed a supported circle process for conflict resolution within the school.</p> <p>Students and staff examine existing policies, culture and climate through a restorative lens.</p> <p>Additional opportunities for training are being explored.</p> <p>Some disciplinary issues are addressed through teacher or staff-led restorative practices.</p> <p>Some staff have established community-building circles as part of their class culture.</p>	<p>Adults and youth have examined their mental models and shifted their thinking about effective ways to inspire and encourage humans to change behavior.</p> <p>Adults and youth believe that positive relationships lie at the heart of a positive school environment.</p> <p>Together, youth and adults are trained in restorative practices and circles.</p> <p>Ongoing training and practice is evident and supported systemically.</p> <p>Students and teachers are given ongoing deeper learning opportunities to become resident experts of restorative practices.</p> <p>Restorative circles are commonplace in academic classes and extracurricular experiences.</p> <p>Points of conflict, throughout the district, are addressed in a restorative manner.</p>
<h3>YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP (how adults and students work together)</h3>	<p>Adults assume full responsibility for school/classroom expectations, control, and management.</p>	<p>Selected youth are asked for input and feedback about restorative practices, serving as assistants to adults.</p>	<p>Adults plan the restorative practice agenda and youth facilitate or serve as circle keepers.</p> <p>Some youth have input into decision-making. Youth are given a voice but not a vote on policy and procedures.</p>	<p>Youth and adults plan and facilitate restorative practices as reciprocal partners.</p> <p>The organization's culture or by-laws supports youth governance.</p>
<h3>EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS (Important considerations that should be resolved so that all students have access)</h3>	<p>The school is beginning to seek ways to address issues of equity. Disciplinary measures are applied inconsistently and unfairly.</p>	<p>Youth voice and experience are occasionally valued and respected.</p>	<p>Time out of class is significantly reduced.</p> <p>There is an intentional shift to share power with youth about issues that affect them.</p>	<p>The school culture reflects inclusivity and freedom. A clear shift in power has occurred and youth and adults collaborate on issues that impact the school community.</p> <p>Every participant is treated with respect and dignity.</p>

YOUTH GOVERNANCE



When youth are given authentic opportunities to have a meaningful role in governance and decision-making in education, they bring a perspective that attests to their understanding of the educational issues within schools. Youth have consistently demonstrated that they are capable of being mature, effective leaders who strive to mitigate issues within their schools and within society itself. These are issues that they, and countless other youth, experience daily. One only has to look to examples such as the recent grassworks campaign by students from Stoneman Douglas High School, and historic cases such as the Little Rock Nine students who protested the unlawful practice of segregation in Arkansas, to note the effectiveness of their leadership. Engaging students in authentic opportunities for shared governance and decision-making is one way to ensure that youth are on a path toward reaching their full potential.

Youth are the stakeholders with the most to gain or lose from education policy change. It is important to acknowledge that they have a right to provide their perspective, insight, and wisdom in the development of solutions in their education. Vermont continues to be a pioneer for student voice in governance and decision-making at all levels. Solidifying the potential of the effort by assuring youth engagement is genuine, and that their voice receives the weighted acknowledgement comparable to those of adults in partnership, is a worthy goal.

Rubric for Youth Governance:

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE (evidence that it exists)

NOT EVIDENT

There is no opportunity for youth to share governance or be an authentic voice in decision-making.

There is no youth representation on the school board.

EMERGING

Youth input is occasionally considered and incorporated into new initiatives.

A youth is selected by a school administrator to serve as a non-voting liaison, or member with partial voting rights on the school board.

DEVELOPING

Schoolwide administrators, the district superintendent, and/or school board members consult the student body regarding new policy procedures and educational initiatives.

THRIVING

Schoolwide administrators, the district superintendent, and/or school board members actively seek the input of and engage the student body regarding new policy, procedures and educational initiatives.

A youth representative with full voting rights sits on the school board.

YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP (how adults and students work together)

Schoolwide administrators, the district superintendent, and/or school board members never seek input from the student body.

Schoolwide administrators, the district superintendent, and/or school board members rarely seek input from the student body, but occasionally hand-select a token youth.

The school administration is developing an understanding of the importance of incorporating youth voice in an authentic manner.

Youth are sought for their expertise, ideas, and insight in many levels of the decision-making process.

Youth and adults understand and commit to the fact that each is vitally important to the educational success of all students, and respect each other's input and ideas.

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS (Important considerations that should be resolved so that all students have access)

Youth are generally unaware of potential leadership opportunities in the school district.

Leadership opportunities are selective and are not advertised to the general student body.

Leadership opportunities for youth are occasionally broadly advertised throughout the school district.

The school has adequately informed all youth of leadership and empowerment opportunities.

All youth have equal access to opportunities to participate in authentic governance and decision-making processes.