



Vermont Community Learning Network

Strengthening Pathways to Postsecondary Success

Executive Summary

The Vermont Community Learning Network (VCLN) is designed to develop and test an innovative community-engaged education system that strives to overcome the challenges of poverty, isolation, and limited resources facing many Vermont young people.

VCLN will demonstrate how **communities that work collaboratively** to provide **equitable community-based learning opportunities**, with a focus on students **acquiring transferable skills**, will increase the number of students that succeed in postsecondary learning, careers and life.

The VCLN has two guiding policies:

1. **Develop "highly-engaged" communities** with ownership in a new view of the learning system needed to develop postsecondary success that emphasizes community-based learning opportunities.
2. **Place transferable skills as a central priority of learning.**

In order to support students' individual goals, learning styles, and abilities, schools need to align their resources into a cohesive network, and design new relationships with their community as a learning partner.

VCLN will help schools and communities evolve into new, cohesive learning systems that provide tailored resources to promote students' career and postsecondary learning interests and readiness, while developing the creative capacities they need to become self-reliant and build pathways to a better future for themselves.

With its strong collaboration model, VCLN focuses on five tested and proven strategies:

1. **Feature community-based learning** as a central component of schooling, including: a) youth as authentic partners in community engagement and designing community-based learning; b) creatively facilitated community workshops that expand the community's roles and capabilities to support community-based learning.
2. **Professional development** for teachers, community-based learning providers, businesses and community leaders to integrate community-based learning with a focus on transferable skills as a central component of schooling, and increase education aspiration initiatives.
3. **Connect youth with mentors** who will assist them in finding community-based learning opportunities that align with their interests.
4. **Community asset-mapping** to identify and increase community-based learning opportunities.
5. **Parent-to-parent liaison program** to amplify family engagement in their student's learning process and progress to postsecondary learning and careers.

Windsor School, Hazen Union, and Peoples Academy are the first schools served by the VCLN. The initiative's lead partners include Advance Vermont, Careers CLiC, Community Engagement Lab, Community College of Vermont, MENTOR Vermont, Tarrant Institute for Innovative Education, VSAC, Vermont Folklife Center, and the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative.

At the heart of the VCLN is a research project that will track students for seven years, beginning in middle school and through their first postsecondary year. This will provide powerful data to measure the effectiveness of our community network-building, and ongoing feedback to help guide the evolution of the initiative.

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