

## Appendix G

### *We Believe:*

# Recommendations from the Vermont High School Task Force

1. Schools need to develop long-term plans to implement the Twelve Principles identified by the High School Task Force.
2. Schools need to work to develop a culture of continuous improvement, consistently evaluating and improving effectiveness of their activities.
3. A review of rules, state policies, legislation and employment contracts must be conducted to identify necessary modifications that will allow for implementation of the Twelve Principles.
4. Schools should adopt achievement of the standards outlined in *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* as a graduation requirement and allow students to demonstrate achievement through rigorous multiple measures and challenging pathways.
5. Schools should avoid the use of high stakes testing as a route for assessing student achievement.
6. Schools should implement an array of standards-based graduation requirements such as content-area courses, independent studies, portfolios, NSREs, dual enrollment options, capstone or senior projects and community- and work-based experiences.
7. Schools need to redesign their courses and learning experiences to allow students to create evidence that they have met the standards in Vermont's *Framework*.
8. Vermont schools need to develop and implement a standards-based transcript that is useful to the student and his or her family, post-secondary institutions and employers as a record of a student's accomplishments and skills.
9. Schools should identify and provide supports for students to ensure success early in their education.





10. Schools need to support and expand students' aspirations by providing each student with access to an effective support system.
11. Communities need to engage in the process of high school renewal and to develop local and community structures that provide each student with meaningful adult support.
12. Communities should develop multi-year plans that outline how they will phase out practices that inhibit high school graduation and that suggest practices to replace them with elements of the Twelve Principles.
13. Communities and schools need to work together to ensure that organized learning experiences for students exist throughout a community.
14. Clearly articulated educational initiatives and educational tools must exist and be used for school improvement.
15. Schools should strive to develop leadership that values connectivity and collaboration to meet the needs of each student.
16. Support systems for school leaders that promote consistency in leadership and provide tools to support and manage change need to be developed.
17. Schools need sustainable funding plans to support implementation of the Twelve Principles.
18. Structures and supports that give each student access to meaningful adults must be created.
19. Achievement should be fostered through rigorous standards and challenging pathways not through high stakes testing.
20. Efforts to support truancy and dropout prevention through valuing each student and his or her aspirations and interests should be developed; early identification, intervention and support become priorities.
21. Collaborative efforts, such as developing coordinated interagency services that will help all Vermont youth transition successfully to adulthood and significantly lower the dropout rate, must be developed and implemented. These efforts would engage resources of various partners such as the Department of Education, Department of Employment and Training, Economic Development, Agency of Human Services, Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC), Workforce Investment Boards (WIB), HRIC Youth Council and other interested parties.

# Challenges

**Challenge:** To continue to raise the proportion of students graduating and to graduate youth who are at risk or who are no longer in our schools; to increase the value of a high school diploma by ensuring that all graduates can perform at skill and knowledge levels described in *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*.

**Challenge:** To know well and to value every student and her or his learning style, needs, and aspirations; to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse youth population living in communities that may be unaccustomed to change.

**Challenge:** To ensure access to personalized learning for all students regardless of socioeconomic background, gender or educational history without overtaxing the fiscal and human resources of our secondary schools.

**Challenge:** To develop meaningful, effective and economical models for rigorous statewide assessments of student performance that recognize the unique characteristics of students and school districts while promoting mastery of Vermont's standards.

**Challenge:** To provide leadership, resources and conditions for students, educators and parents in all Vermont communities that will offer students varied opportunities to master Vermont's standards and to achieve their own personal learning goals; to permit achievement of the goal of statewide standards-based graduation; to ensure alignment of learning goals through a pre-K-16 continuum in each community.

**Challenge:** To authentically engage students, teachers and parents in learning experiences that are rigorous and that students find relevant to their current needs and future ambitions.

**Challenge:** To develop systems for students and their parents to make important decisions about current educational activities and future goals and to encourage participation in shaping school procedures that significantly affect student learning.

**Challenge:** To incorporate post-secondary achievement data into the pre-K-12 assessment framework; to use that data to develop support systems and learning opportunities throughout the transitional years that will assist every Vermont youth in preparing for a productive and fulfilling life.

**Challenge:** To focus the primary resources and energies of every Vermont secondary school on learning, which is its most central mission; to refocus school activities to serve the central mission coherently; to validate multiple accountability systems and requirements imposed on our schools.

