

Moving Vermont into the Future

An Overview of Recommended Changes to the Vermont Education Quality Standards (EQS)

Act I Working Group, Spring 2022

The Act I Working Group, also known as the Ethnic Studies and Social Equity Working Group, was created by Vermont law to bring together a group of community members and government staff to review and update education policies in Vermont.

About the Act I Projects

We, the Act I Working Group, have had two main assignments to work on over a 3-year period.

From fall of 2021 to now, we have been:

- Reviewing statutes, policies, and government rules that affect curriculum and student success, mainly reviewing a government rule called the *Vermont Education Quality Standards* (finalized by the Act I Working Group in April 2022)
- Preparing our suggested changes to this rule for Vermont lawmakers (Reviewing in June 2022)

Later this year, we will move on to reviewing state educational standards (different than the quality standards). We will work together to identify ways they can better represent the history, point of view, and experiences of different ethnic and social groups.

The EQS Updates

The *Vermont Education Quality Standards* act as a broad guide, highlighting important values for our schools and giving direction to school districts as they develop their own curricula and choose their materials. Since fall 2021, we have been talking to community members (like you!) all over Vermont to get feedback about what is important to them, working to update the standards to make sure they do the following:



Promote critical thinking around the history, contributions, and viewpoints of many different ethnic and social groups



Encourage students to explore questions about ethnic and social identities as well as issues around equality and racism



Provide welcoming spaces for all students



Develop pathways for families to talk about their child's experiences related to race, ethnic, or social group identity at school

How To Read This Document

This summary is divided into four areas:

- Overview
- Program Planning
- Student Supports
- School Administration

Each area has several sections broken down into these areas:



To read all the changes, review the [Act 1 Draft of the Proposed Updates to the Vermont Education Quality Standards](#) or this [Plain Language Version of the Draft](#).

Document Overview



Statement of Purpose (Section 2110)

What We Did...

- Added statements that commit schools to creating equitable, anti-racist, culturally responsive, anti-discriminatory, and inclusive policies in all school spaces
- Updated learning opportunities to include online learning, learning through volunteer service, learning through work, and more

Why We Did It...

To support a high-quality education system that addresses real world needs of ALL students

Definitions (Section 2114)

What We Did...

- Updated current definitions
- Added new definitions such as *culture*, *discrimination*, and *racism*

Why We Did It...

To make sure everyone has the same understanding of the document and the ideas behind it

Program Planning



Curriculum Content (Section 2120.5)

What We Did...

- Defined *literacy* to include systematic reading instruction by a qualified teacher in early grades
- Talked about the importance of valuing the diverse language backgrounds of all students
- Added that families and communities have a right to review curriculum

Why We Did It...

To make sure that all Vermont children develop strong reading and language skills no matter where they go to school

Curriculum Planning (Section 2120.6)

What We Did...

- Included research and development of age and grade appropriate Ethnic Studies content to be included in the school curriculum
- Addressed that schools must show growth in this area and include community members in processes

Why We Did It...

To make sure Ethnic Studies are included in school curriculum and local under-represented groups help develop that curriculum

Educator Support (Section 2121.3)

What We Did...

- Stated unions must build in ways for educators and other school professionals to access training within the school day to develop skills in creating an anti-racist school experience

Why We Did It...

To make sure that educators get the training and resources they need to support students

- Added that teachers must be trained to identify and respond to discrimination in the schools

Teaching Practices (Section 2120.1)

What We Did...

- Recommended clear classroom strategies

Educators will provide a strong learning environment and...

- Be clear about learning goals and their purpose
- Provide feedback to help learners understand what they are learning and what they need to work on
- Bring real world examples into the classroom
- Develop learner abilities to question and think critically
- Use data to improve learning experiences

Educators will center students' cultural identities and the journey for societal equity and...

- Examine their own cultural identities and reflect on how their identities shape their own teaching
- Create learning spaces that thoughtfully encourage students to talk about equity and real-world impacts
- Embrace and celebrate the language and literacy skills tied to learners' culture, identities, and communities

Educators will develop supportive learning spaces and...

- Model high expectations for all students
- Celebrate and engage with each student's unique abilities and strengths
- Design lessons so that learners can access information in many ways as well as show what they've learned in many ways
- Use technology to best meet student needs
- Assist students with managing emotions and feelings to support their overall growth
- Address the needs of the whole student, creating ways for learners to explore, move, and express themselves

Why We Did It...

To offer clear ways for educators to achieve goals in the classroom and to identify direct ways to better support all learners in the school environment

- Develop a classroom culture that focuses on relationships, respect, and responsibility while supporting those still developing these skills

Student Supports



Accessible Materials (Section 2122.2)

What We Did...

- Expanded the types of technology resources available at schools
- Stated the resources that must be available to English Learners

Why We Did It...

To make sure that all learners have the resources that they need to access learning

Career/Technical Ed. (Section 2120.3)

What We Did...

- Clarified information for schools with grades 9-12 offering career and technical education
- Required program information to be clear and inclusive (such as in one's first language)

Why We Did It...

To make sure that all students know opportunities available to them as they plan for their futures

Counseling/Supports (Section 2121.5)

What We Did...

- Clarified that school supports such as counseling must respect the identities of students

Why We Did It...

To make sure that support services meet the unique

- Stated that support services must create an environment that encourages students to speak up about racism or discrimination they face
- Included that schools must offer confidential gender identity and gender transition counseling

needs of learners and their varied identities

Flexible Pathways (Section 2120.2)

What We Did...

- Included art, civic engagement, and extracurricular activities as ways for students to show learning
- Expanded ways to embrace the diversity of students including cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, social, disability-related, and neurodivergent identities
- Made sure students and families know how to access different resources
- Addressed that schools must monitor who uses programs and who doesn't participate so that schools can identify and address any barriers to participation

Why We Did It...

To expand the idea of flexible pathways to better meet the needs of all students and create safeguards to make sure all students can access these pathways

Graduation (Section 2120.7)

What We Did...

- Added information outlining a district's responsibilities in supporting English Learners on their path to graduation
- Explained that schools must also document any supports and accommodations that they provide in this process

Why We Did It...

To make sure English Learners get the support they need throughout their school experience

School Administration



School Feedback (Section 2123.2)

What We Did...

- Required schools to measure the social-emotional well-being of students and incorporate these results into school learning plans
- Required schools to have clear guidelines in how they assess progress and needs of English learners
- Added details about providing information in student/family first language

Why We Did It...

To make sure that schools have plans to monitor their own progress, specifically in

School Improvement (Section 2125)

What We Did...

- Added that schools must review data for demographic or discriminatory patterns
- Required data analysis for uneven representation in any aspects of school experiences

Why We Did It...

To make sure schools use data to uncover inequitable patterns that persist

School Leadership (Section 2121.1)

What We Did...

- Stated the clear goal of creating anti-racist, culturally responsive, inclusive learning spaces
- Required school leadership, including principals, school boards, and others, to participate in professional development that increases their understanding of these goals and advances equity

Why We Did It...

To make sure that educators and learners are supported by leaders with a deep understanding of equity and its importance

State Board Reviews (Section 2126.2)

What We Did...

- Required diverse annual peer review systems of schools under Education Quality Standards review
- Made clear that the review should account for everything included in the Vermont Educational Quality Standard rule

Why We Did It...

To make sure Education Quality Standard reviews include diverse participants that examine school success through an equity lens

Have questions? Want to learn more? Connect with us!

Send an email to Amanda.Garces@vermont.gov.