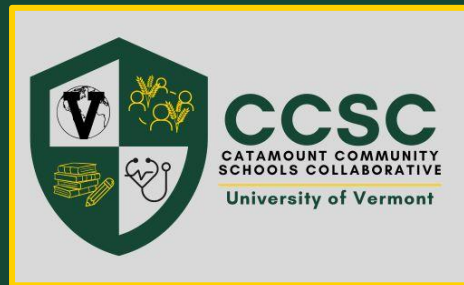


Community Schools Through Digital Storytelling

*Supporting & Advocating for the Community
Schools Approach with Modern Media*

Peter Knox – University of Vermont
Bernice Garnett – University of Vermont
Colby Kervick – University of Vermont
Barbie Collette – University of Vermont
Cynthia Herbert – University of Vermont
Shelly Lanou – Newport Town School
Jack Hodzic – Newport Town School
Johannes Haensch – VT Agency of Education



Agenda

Introductions

**VT Community Schools & Digital
Storytelling**

The Newport Town School Story

Table/Group Work

Exit Survey

Session Goals

Discuss ways digital stories relate/contribute to community schools research

Understand how can digital stories be used - With whom and for what purposes

Understand how the CCSC created and disseminated community school digital stories

Consider together how digital stories might support community schools work in other contexts

The Vermont Context

The Catamount Community Schools Collaborative (CCSC) is a dynamic and longstanding research-policy-practice-partnership (RP³) between the University of Vermont, the Vermont Agency of Education, and state and community partners to support a sustainable ecosystem of community schools across Vermont.



Who Is In the Room?

Before we dive in, we would love to know who is joining us today.

Who is here today as...

- **A practitioner** (educator, administrator, Community Schools coordinator)?
- **A researcher** (faculty member, student, research org. member)?
- **An advocate/policy-focused partner** (state agency employee, elected official, community organizer)?

What tools, methods, or messages have you used (or currently use) to communicate your Community Schools work?

The Vermont Context

- **55 Supervisory Unions/Districts**
- **Local Control**
- **Demographic and Social Considerations**
 - Small (645,570)
 - Rural
 - Geographically sparse
 - White (94.2%) & Aging (third oldest state in the nation)
- **Refugee Resettlement**
- **Demographic Shifts** that are geographically place-based
- **Housing Crisis**
- **Opiate Epidemic**
 - State-placed students
 - Itinerant
 - Justice-involved families and students

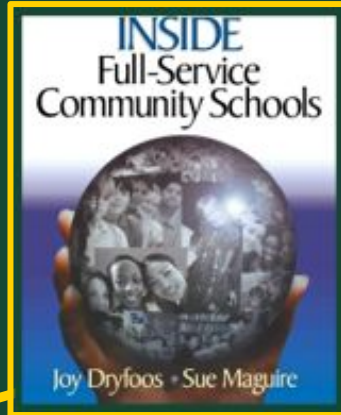


John Dewey, UVM graduate (1879), "Schools as Social Centres (1902)"

Molly Stark School, Bennington, VT - "Community of Learners"

- Principal leadership, community-based needs assessment, family resource center, expanded learning, and health partnerships
- Affiliated with Yale University Schools of the 21st Century & Harvard Collaborative for Integrated School Services

Joy Dryfoos (1998) - "The State of Vermont appears to be ready to communicate these ideas to other schools and to encourage and plan a network of full-service community schools."



Chapter 8

THE MOLLY STARK SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY

JOY DRYFOOS

Whether a youngster needs health services, social services, tutoring or simply after- hour activities, the school stands ready to provide it. In addition, Molly Stark's evening hour programs offer advice and counseling to parents as well.

Bennington Banner, Editorial, Feb. 4, 1998

Vermont Act 67 - The Community Schools Act

The State of Vermont has a long-running, robust, and progressive educational policy landscape that set the path toward the Community Schools approach in its current form.

Vermont Community Schools



The historical landscape of Vermont and various acts/policies implemented over the past two decades have all led to the current Community Schools moment.

Vermont Act 67 and Community Schools are the embodiment of all the work conducted over the past two decades.



CATAMOUNT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE

The evolutionary timeline of a University-Assisted Community School in the State of Vermont.

2021

VT Act 67 - The Community Schools Act



In 2021, the VT State Legislature passed Act 67 - The Community Schools Act; UVM faculty establish relationship with VT Agency of Education (AOE).

2022

Community Schools Research-Practice Partnership



VT AOE and UVM increase personnel supporting Community Schools implementation; Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) is officially established through MOUs, consistent meeting/site visit attendance; Evaluation and research support.

2023

Evolution to Research-Policy-Practice Partnership (RP3)



Increased UVM visibility through evaluation and research support; Collaborative research agenda established with AOE and Community School partners; Increased participation in national forums, state policy development, networks, and conferences telling the Vermont CS story.

2024

Catamount Community Schools Collaborative (CCSC)



Internal UVM funding, continued VT Legislative funding, and significant external funding through the U.S. DoE allows for increased infrastructure, support, and expansion of CS in VT; Sparks the official formation of a UACS model in VT - the CCSC.

The Catamount Community Schools Collaborative

Catamount Community Schools Collaborative (CCSC)

The AOE/UVM Community Schools Research- Policy -Practice Partnership



Purposeful inclusion of SEAs to facilitate state-wide systems for support & policy implementation.

A UACS partnership model that has led into a Research *Policy* Practice Partnership – what we call an RP³.

Intentional, Interdisciplinary Approach that Leverages UVM Expertise:

- Food Systems
- Community Development & Applied Economics
- Counseling
- School-Based Health Centers

UVM Student Internship Program

- meeting specific, school-led needs, programs, policies

Telling the Community Schools Story

15. CS Mindset

- Acknowledgment of CS structure, culture, resources provided by CS work, etc.
- Thinking in a new way about 'doing school': Including other community organizations, resources, and opportunities; Values, vision, and tone of CS.
- Instances of non-admin., coord., or suppt. professionals discussing, demonstrating, or embodying the CS structure.
- Identity* - conversations, mentions of school identity development, community identity, and self-perception.
 - CS Internalization and Actualization!

16. CS Championing

- CS advocacy and communication with the broader community (e.g., family, school board, community partners)
- Advocating for CS approach, communicating CS

17. CS Artifacts (CS in Action; Tangible Evidence of CS)

- Board reports are organized by pillars, community schools, CS structure, etc.
- Strategic planning documents inclusive of CS pillars
- Community-based services offered; Comm. partner duties/responsibilities; Three-year goals/expectations; messaging/advocacy.

18. CS Challenges/Barriers

- Obstacles faced in implementing CS work; Red tape/bottlenecks that slow down efforts.

19. CS Visioning / Sustainability / Future Thinking

- Goals for the future; Ways to sustain CS program



State & National Partners, Networks

Local School Boards

Parent, Family, & Community Groups

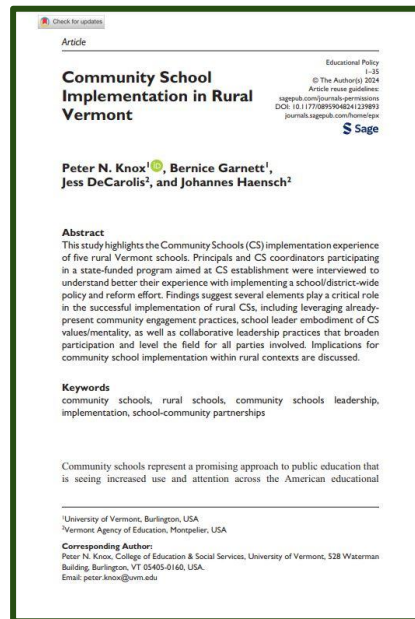
Vermont State Legislature

- Senate Education Committee
- House Education Committee

Research / Scholarship

Institutions of Higher Education

- Interdisciplinary Research
- Student Internship Programs



What are Digital Stories?

Digital stories are short, multimedia narratives that combine personal voice, images, video, music, and text to tell a story.

The need for digital stories became apparent after Y1 data collection and state policy advocacy.

Inspired by [“StoryCorps”](#) and existing multi-media professional development on [restorative practices in VT schools](#).

Why Use Them?

Center Community Voice: Captures authentic narratives from students, families, educators, and community partners.

Highlight Context: Makes the unique assets, challenges, cultures, and innovations of communities visible.

Supports Evaluation: Adds depth and human perspective to data-heavy, complex reports and education work.

Unique Advocacy Tool: Appeals to multiple stakeholders including policymakers, school professionals/boards, and researchers, and families by making impacts tangible and authentic.

Accessible Format: Easy to share on websites, social media, and during presentations or school board meetings.

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Leveraging our RP³ to Support Digital Story Creation

Developing Themes for digital storytelling and evaluation

FY24 THEME DEVELOPMENT BY SITE

THEMES	OSSU - Hazen HS	CCSU - Cabot K-12	ANWSD - Vergennes ES	WRVSU - WRV MS/HS	NCSU
LEGACY - Preserving, Protecting, Sustaining the local community(ies) and their "stories" - Combat loneliness and despair					
COMMUNICATION & BRANDING - explicit vs implicit - internal vs external facing - evident in documents/ formal communications					
LOOSE/TIGHT TENSION - risk-taking - autonomy of the community, staff, students - partnership processes and leadership characteristics					
PJBL & CONNECTED LITERACIES - Project-based - place/community/work-based - interdisciplinary learning					

Supportive Accountability & Collective Reflection → Storyboard and Theming

- Annual Community School Site Visits & CS Coordinator and Principal Interviews
- SEA interviews
- Community forums (RISE, VCRD)

Multiple Story Formats for Different Goals

- Community School vignettes
- Policy Explainer Videos – Impact of Act 67
- RP3 Mini-Documentary (supportive infrastructure explanation)
- Community member checks
- Titling, naming and use of text

Leveraged Partnership to Support Data Collection

- CS Coordinator and Principal Roles and Responsibilities

Our Process

Act 67 - CS Event/Programming Filming Sign-up

AT	A	B	C	D	E	F
	SITE	Priority	Time	Date	Event Description	Location (CS, Community Org., Etc.)
17	CABOT	DONE	5-6pm	3/20	Cabot Middle School Student Exhibition	Cabot School
20	CABOT	DONE	3-5PM	3/25	After school program (M, T, Th, F) - 3-5PM [ONGOING]	Cabot
22	CABOT	DONE	3-5PM	4/1	STEM Club - White Mountain Science, Inc	Cabot
23	CABOT	DONE	630-730PM	5/9/24	Senior Internship Presentations	Cabot HS
24	CABOT	Y	12-8pm	5/29	All School Exhibition - classes demonstrating learning... posters, presentations, community dinner	Cabot
26	CABOT	Y?		TBD - May	Poetry Trail - creating the stands, installation (mid-May)	Cabot
27	HAZEN	DONE		3/14	Harwood student health center visit	HUHS
28	HAZEN	DONE		4/18	Community Lunches: Fourth Thursday of every month, starts at noon, hosted at United Church of Harwick	
29	HAZEN	DONE		4/19	Do Days: Community Service Project Day: April 19th	
29	HAZEN	DONE		5/13	Community Partnership Coalition Meetings: May 13th	
30	HAZEN	Y	10:00AM - 1:00PM	TBD	Telehealth Standing Unit Operational Footage (w/ Lisa)	Hazen
31	HAZEN	Y?		TBD - April	Student Wellness Center Conversations: April	
32	HAZEN	Y?		TBD - June	2-Term: Project based and Experiential Learning: June	
33	HAZEN			TBD - June	Yesterday Outdoor Stage Build: June	
36	HAZEN			TBD - May	Hardwick Spring Parade/ PRIDE Float for GSA: End of May	
38	HAZEN	Y*		TBD - Thursday	Community Lunches: Fourth Thursday of every month, starts at noon, hosted at United Church of Harwick	All sites
40	NCISU	DONE	5-7pm	3/30	Art VanSO! (Wednesdays)	Troy Town Clerk's Office
40	NCISU	DONE	230-430PM	3/30	Family Mentoring [TBD - Wednesdays]	Location TBD
51	NCISU	DONE	5-7pm	4/2	STEAM Night (Tuesdays) - FIRE	Newport Town School

Act 67 - CS Event/Programming Filming Sign-up

F2	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	STATIC LINK	STATUS	REVIEW	FINAL REVIEW	FINAL	FINAL [CAPTIONS]	RP3 Notes
2	Act 67 - The Pillars	FINAL REVIEW	NA	Act 67 - The Pillars	Act 67 - The Pillars	Act 67 - The Pillars	Added comments throughout, soo good! If possible, would love to get the footage of the school nurse from NSCU talking about raising communities. I also think there might be footage of the school board member and parent that re-engaged in the school from Hazen that would be really powerful to splice in. Added school nurse as opener - also parent and board member in the final third.
3	Act 67 - The Pilot [FULL]	FINAL REVIEW	Act 67 - Impact	Act 67 - The Pilot [FULL]	Act 67 - The Pilot [FULL]	Act 67 - The Pilot [FULL]	
4	Act 67 - The Pilot [SHRT]	FINAL REVIEW	NA	Act 67 - The Pilot [SHRT]	Act 67 - The Pilot [SHRT]	Act 67 - The Pilot [SHRT]	On the first slide can we edit to Vermont CS Research-Policy-Practice Partnership (RP3) and name UVM's Catamount Community Schools Collaborative instead of College of Education and Social Services and the final slide be all of our logos with similar acknowledgements and ending to the Act 67 impact video Done.
5	RP3 [SHRT]	FINAL REVIEW	NA	RP3 [SHRT]	RP3 [SHRT]	RP3 [SHRT]	This would be a great video to send along to the Committees as well as I think it gives a behind the scenes look at the amount of intention and effort that goes in to making something successful.
6	RP3 [FULL]	FINAL REVIEW	RPP - Full Length	RP3 [FULL]	RP3 [FULL]	RP3 [FULL]	
7	Cabot - Non-CS	NA	NA				
8	Vergennes - Vote	NA	NA				
9	Cabot - CS	FINAL REVIEW	Cabot - CS	Cabot - CS	Cabot - CS	Cabot - CS	
10	Vergennes - CS	FINAL REVIEW	Vergennes - CS	Vergennes - CS	Vergennes - CS	Vergennes - CS	This one is SOO good!
11	WRVSU - CS	FINAL REVIEW	WRVSU - CS	WRVSU - CS	WRVSU - CS	WRVSU - CS	necastle@gmail.com is there any more of Dick McCormack footage re public education/democracy that might fit in this piece of above in the Impact video? Added same clip used in the "Impact" video. necastle@gmail.com pretty muc + Convert to table

Establishing the Partnership

- Collaborated with Ned Castle, an ethnographic documentarian, to bring visual storytelling into our Community Schools work.

Collaborative Filmmaking Process

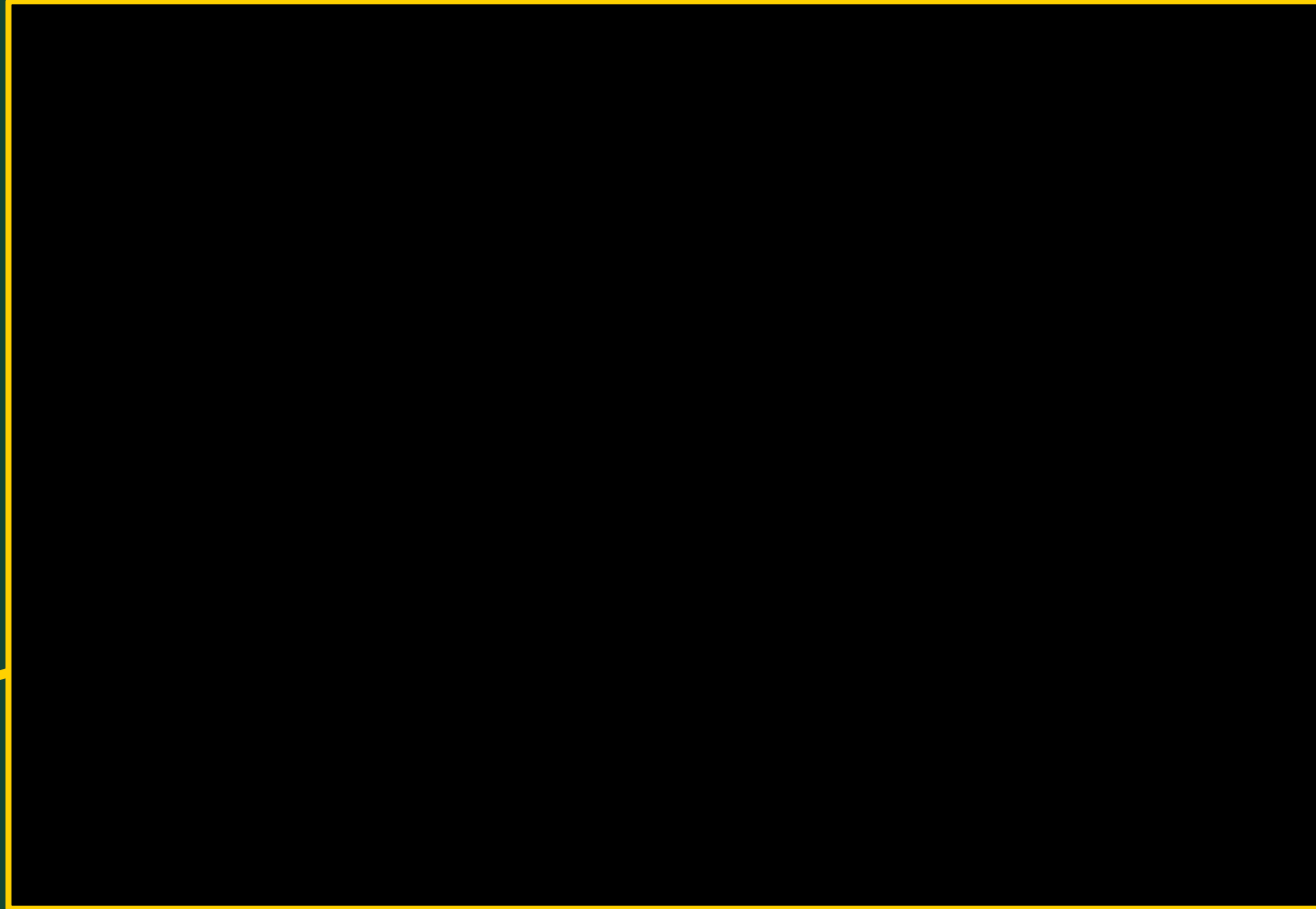
- Employed a co-creation, iterative process including site visits, interviews, collaborative data/footage review, and shared editing decisions to ensure accuracy in various Community School perspectives.

Logistics

- Scheduling filming
- School buy in & Consent

The VT Act 67 Digital Story

Showcasing impact
of statewide
community schools
policy in Vermont.
(2021-2024)



Digital Storytelling

Strategic Use for Advocacy & Systems Change

- Digital stories have evolved into tools for grant writing, legislative reporting/testimony, community engagement, and public-facing campaigns.

Future Directions & Broader Application

- Plans to integrate digital stories into university coursework, professional development, and leadership training to deepen understanding of Community Schools and explore cross-sector partnerships (e.g., healthcare, public policy, STEM, economic/community development)

Community School Spotlight:

Newport Town School Multigenerational Meals Program

Newport Center, VT



Leveraging Our Digital Story



- Community Buy-In
- Civic Engagement
- Long-Term Sustainability
- Broader Awareness
- Diversifying Audiences
- Connections to Parallel Community Schools Initiatives, Goals

Vermont Community School Spotlight





Enhancing a Community School with a capacity building mindset



ASSESS NEED WITH
SURVEYS, FORUMS, ETC

CONNECT WITH LOCAL
UNIVERSITY

DETERMINE NEED
BRAINSTORM

ENGAGE SCHOOL
BOARD

MEET WITH POTENTIAL
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

LOGISTICS -WHO,
WHAT,
WHERE, WHEN

SECURE FUNDING

IMPLEMENTATION

COMMUNICATE OFFERINGS
SCHEDULE

ACTION RESEARCH -
DATA FOR CHANGE

INTERNAL SYSTEMS
DEVELOPED AND REFINED

SECURE FUNDING

SECURE
SUSTAINABILITY

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

LEGISLATIVE
CONSIDERATIONS

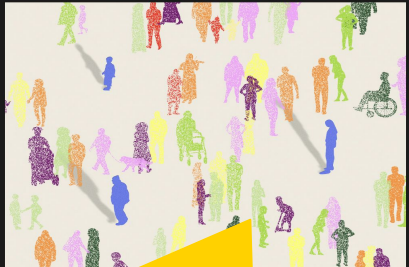


University Assisted Focus on Community School Assets & Areas of Need

Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation

2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the
Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community



A New Campaign Against Loneliness Starts With a Potluck

The surgeon general, José Andrés
and other luminaries gathered over
dinner to start a new effort to get
Americans to eat together.

 Listen to this article - 7:23 min [Learn more](#)



**“Show up,
keep showing
up, don’t ask
for anything.”**
(B.Garnett, 9–2024)

**“Match people with projects
that really will engage them
and build enthusiasm and
get them excited as
researcher and scholar.”**

(S. Lanou, 4–2025)



Needs Focus: School Counselor Lens

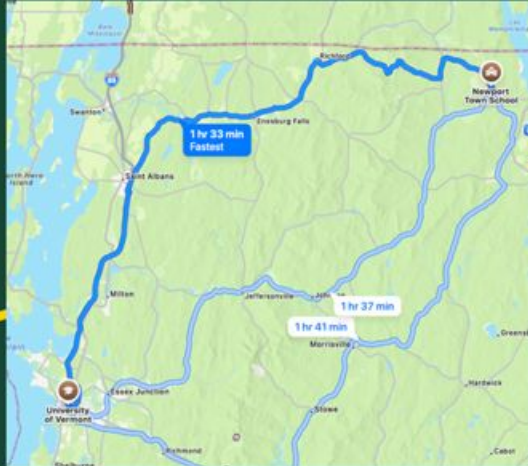
- **Connection and Belonging**
- **Mental Health Awareness**
- **Access to resources**
- **Cultural Sensitivity**
- **Crisis Support**

Determine Need & Brainstorm: from an Administrator Practitioner lens



- COVID initiated focus on need
- Connect economic, nutrition and Social need
- Foster connections with
- Intentionality: conversational skills, bonding activities

Partnering for the Future of rural schools and communities...



Newport Town
Elementary School



University
of Vermont

Theoretical Application & Implementation: Community Engaged University Approach

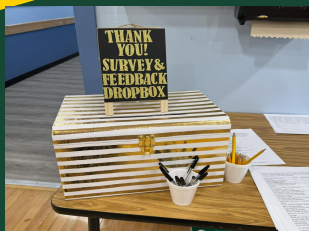
First



And



Then



First – People & Community
And – Improvement Science (Plan, Do, Study, Act Cycles)
Then – Collect Data
Translate knowledge



Infographic from January, 2025

MULTIGENERATIONAL MEALS IN NEWPORT TOWN SCHOOL

JANUARY 2025

The Newport Town school began hosting bi-monthly multigenerational meals with community elders and elementary students in September 2024 to support community connection, food security and intergenerational mentorship. In partnership with the University of Vermont's Catamount Community Schools Collaborative, a pilot research study is exploring the impact of this program.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY?

Teacher

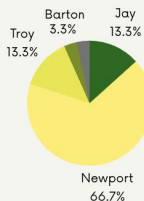
Flier

Local store

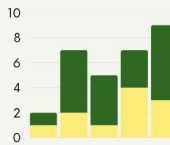
family

When asked how guests found out about the meals, many said it was through teachers or family at the school or fliers in stores, or the newspaper.

WHO HAS ATTENDED THE MULTIGENERATIONAL MEALS?



When asked where the seniors lived, most lived in Newport and all lived within 20 minutes of Newport Town School.

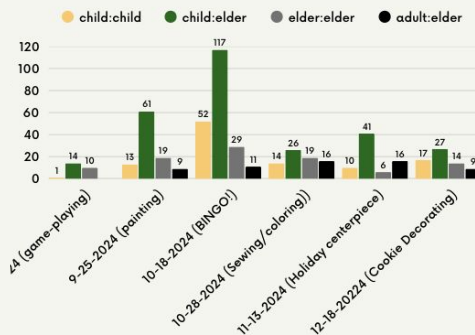


This graphic shows the ages of participants along with gender. Male (Yellow) & Female (Green) as answered on the survey.

When asked about their housing situation, almost 94% of the seniors reported they live independently either alone or with a spouse



diversation



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ational meal program at Newport Town School is supported by a grant from the University of Vermont's Catamount Community Schools Collaborative. The program is also supported by the Lehigh Institute for Rural Partnerships and the North Country Supervisory Union and North East Kingdom Community Action.



Lehigh Institute for Rural Partnerships



“This program definitely doesn’t just benefit the children. It benefits, especially, us the seniors”

“The Program treats us as if, oh my goodness, you have a wealth of knowledge”



Shown in this photo are 4-6th grade students, Superintendent Elaine Collins, UVM faculty Dr. Bernice Garnett, Secretary of Education Zoie Saunders, NCSU Community Schools Coordinator Samantha Stevens and two school affiliated seniors.

“It gives me a lot of hope for the future. It is also commendable that the adults and teachers are helping to raise them. It also reminds me that I have a purpose, a place to help raise these children too. I may not be their relative, but in that interaction, I am and have now become part of their life.”

- PARTICIPATING SENIOR



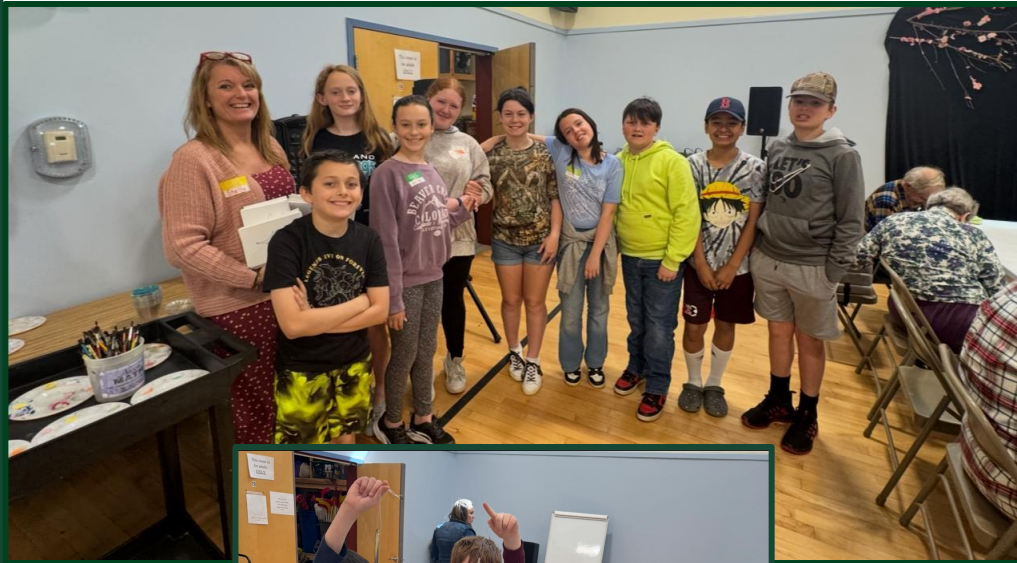
In October, this group photo was taken at the end of one of our Multigenerational meals with guests from the Lehigh Institute for Rural Partnerships in attendance.



The activity at this meal was creating fall centerpieces many of which were donated to the Bel-Aire Genesis Center.



Implementation: School Counselor Lens

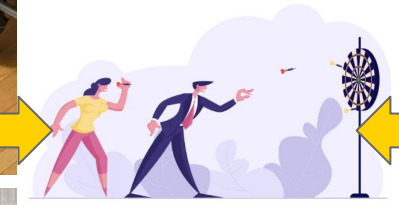


Implementation: from an Administrative Practitioner lens



- Outline Logistics
- Onboard partners
- Communicate new opportunity and elicit participation
- Action research to flex
- Adapt to need during implementation process

UACS Focus for Sustainability



Sustainability: School Counselor Lens

- **Bring People Together to Build Connection**
- **Use These Gatherings to Support Mental Health**
- **Make the School a Community Hub**
- **Encourage Sharing of Skills and Wisdom**
- **Make Meals Accessible and Welcoming for All**
- **Work with Local Partners to Strengthen Community**
- **Be Ready to Help When Life Gets Tough**
- **Teach and Practice Social-Emotional Skills Together**

Sustainability: from an Administrative Practitioner lens



- Advocacy for Change –
- Legal, legislative, procedural
- Research – partners in funding, need shifts over time
- Expand upon need – care for all – “Cradle to Grave”

**There is no power for change
greater than a community
discovering what it cares about.**

- Margaret J. Wheatley



“Having a Community School is the perfect way to ensure that the system answers to the community, not the other way around”

– Kerie Motovilof



Opportunity for Collaboration

How might you engage with digital stories to support community school implementation and sustainability?

Purpose:

- What purpose might digital stories serve your own community school connections?
- What might folx highlight in their own schools using digital stories?

Partnerships:

- What resources (people, places or technology) can support digital story creation?
- What organizations and community partners would connect with to create AND disseminate the digital stories?

Process:

- What barriers or facilitators of digital storytelling or new media use, in a Community Schools setting, might apply to your own schools and communities?

Session Recap & Looking Ahead

What avenues might we all consider going forward to support this work?

Are there areas for collective action?
Regional collaborations?

Takeaways:

- Community Schools Digital Stories are a **powerful tool to animate CS in action**
- Humanizes the work and uplifts voices of students, educators, families and community partners
- Supplement CS data collection efforts (**Science + Art + Journey**)
- Critical tool for **Little P and Big P policy engagement** (school boards, state legislation, University engagement)
- Accessible and aligned with **transformational community based participatory action research**

Next Steps: CCSC and VT Digital Stories

- Cohort 2 Community School Vignette Digital Stories
- CCSC Summer Residential Undergraduate Intern Cohort Model @ rural community school partner
- School based health centers in VT
- Broad Dissemination!

Digital Story Compendium!

Connected Voices: A Community Schools Digital Storytelling Project

Vermont Act 67 -

The Pilot

[Short Version](#)

[Full Length Version](#)



[The Five Pillars of
Vermont Community
Schools](#)

The VT Community Schools Research-Policy-Practice Partnership (RP3)

[Short Version](#)

[Full Length Version](#)



Connected Voices: A Community Schools Digital Storytelling Project

★ [North Country
Supervisory Union](#)

★ [Hazen Union School](#)

★ [Cabot School](#)

★ [Vergennes Union
Elementary School](#)

★ [White River Valley
Middle School](#)

**Follow the links above to see and
hear the experiences of Vermont
Community Schools students,
families, educators, and leaders.**

*This digital storytelling project is a collaboration between the **Vermont Agency of Education**, the **Catamount Community Schools Collaborative** at the **University of Vermont**, and **Vermont Community Schools**.*

*Video Production by Ned Castle at **Frames to Life**.*

Participant Survey

We want to hear from you!

Please take a few minutes to **complete this short participant survey** which asks questions about your own thinking and efforts around telling your Community Schools stories...



THANK YOU!

Questions? Comments?
We would love to hear from you!

Please email Dr. Peter Knox – peter.knox@uvm.edu or visit our website – **[Catamount Community Schools Collaborative \(CCSC\)](#)** with UACS questions.

Curious about Multigenerational Meals? Please email Shelly Lanou, Newport Town Principal – shelly.lanou@ncsuvt.org.

Interested in State Education Agency perspectives? Please email Johannes Haensch – johannes.haensch@vermont.gov.



CCSC
CATAMOUNT COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE
University of Vermont

