



*North Country Rising is a planning effort led by North Country Council to develop strategies and solutions for a more resilient, inclusive, and caring economy that can withstand, adapt, innovate, and transform in the face of natural and human disasters.*

## Education Focus Group

The Education Focus Group met in March 2021 and included participants from North Country Educational Services, Gorham Middle School, Lafayette Regional School, Profile School, NH Department of Education, White Mountain School, Gorham High School, Berlin High School, Littleton High School, Hugh L. Gallen Career and Technical Center, Milan Village School, Berlin Elementary, Bethlehem Elementary, White Mountain Community College, Granite State Independent Living, Berlin Middle School, home school educators, and superintendents from around the region.

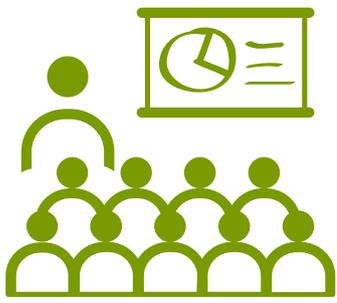
## Resiliency

Resiliency in education starts with valuing our teachers and supporting schools as the center of community not just buildings for learning. A resilient education industry provides innovative learning opportunities for students where there are opportunities to learn, and work, in the community, aligning school curriculum with workforce development training. Providing compensated time and space for educators to develop innovative curriculum for students and continued education for teachers is vital to building a resilient education system. Whereas business and industries have evolved over time, the education system, schedule, structures, and curriculum is outdated. Resiliency in education, and therefore the future workforce, is dependent on investing in innovative models and giving educators freedom to explore learning opportunities out of the classroom and into the community.



## Assets

- One of the greatest assets in our region is our natural environment and outdoor spaces to learn and share
- Our students are our greatest asset within education, and they keep us connected to the greater community
- Social capital is an asset and important for ongoing resiliency. In most cases, social capital strengthened during COVID, between colleagues and teachers, teachers and parents, teachers and students. However, we need to reconcile the socio-economic challenges that create barriers for increased social capital and education
- Even though it was unexpected, the pandemic has built flexibility into education that can work to the industry's benefit. How do we continue to be flexible and innovative beyond pivoting in challenging times?
- Training is available for teachers and it is appreciated and encouraged to continue. However, we need to ensure we are giving our teachers time to take the training, develop new models and programs, and try new programs. We need to value them and trust them to innovate and provide what is best for our students.
- We have some models for innovative education that are working such as CTE programs, core competency models over standardized tests, and innovative internships
- Creative school cultures such as rotating teachers throughout different classes, core competencies as the new "standards", trauma-sensitive schools/training have all been successful and should be encouraged throughout the region
- Great education comes from a great team within the industry. EVERYONE is important including the teachers, bus drivers, custodians, food service workers, paraeducators, school nurses, etc. It truly takes a village.



## Needs

- Creating innovation in education where learning happens in community spaces, businesses, and outdoors. Consider teaching traditional topics out in the community such as learning biology at a farm, arts in a local cultural venue, and math at a local bank. Also, create spaces for youth to innovate and empower them to create the types of jobs we will need in the future that might not currently exist.
- Advisory groups or small peer/colleague groups that can support each other within schools and across schools in the region.
- Teachers need better guidelines for Code of Ethics, boundaries, “sick days”, etc. when asked to teach in hybrid settings.
- Core Competencies and greater flexibility in how we determine “academic achievement”
- Training & Innovation Time for Teachers that is paid and supported
- Broadband/Reliable Internet Connections
- Sustainable Funding Education across the region. Provide the same funding in the region that is provided in other parts of the State. Eliminate the current model of funding education that is based on population and tax base.
- Address the socio-economic challenges/barriers to education with flexible models and online learning
- Value our Educators at the community, state, and federal level

## Project & Program Ideas and Solutions

- Develop and pilot a project-based, in-community learning program where teachers and schools can partner with community businesses and organizations to provide in-the-field learning and workforce development opportunities for our youth. Get students involved in the development of these programs and provide feedback on the success of these programs to meet their educational needs as well as prepare them for life beyond school. Share pilot project successes and lessons learned around the region, building a support network for education to innovate and try new educational programs.
- Utilizing our strong natural capital in the region, create more opportunities for outdoor learning including outdoor classrooms, and applying traditional school curriculum in outdoor spaces.
- Create a stronger relationship between the youth and schools with the community. Consider projects where students write articles and acknowledge local leadership and support (similar to the WMUR Hometown Heroes project). Also, support open houses in schools and other programs that bring the community into the schools.
- Develop a peer-to-peer support group across the region for educators. Consider educator observation days where teachers from one specialization sit in on a class from another specialization in another school to provide feedback and support to that educator. Consider programs where teachers share responsibilities in classrooms and rotate between classrooms.
- Develop a strong, supportive continued education program for all teachers in the region where time is supported and paid to continue learning and innovating as a teacher.

If you have any questions regarding the economic recovery and resiliency planning work, please contact Stacey Doll, Community Resiliency Planner, at [sdoll@nccouncil.org](mailto:sdoll@nccouncil.org).



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