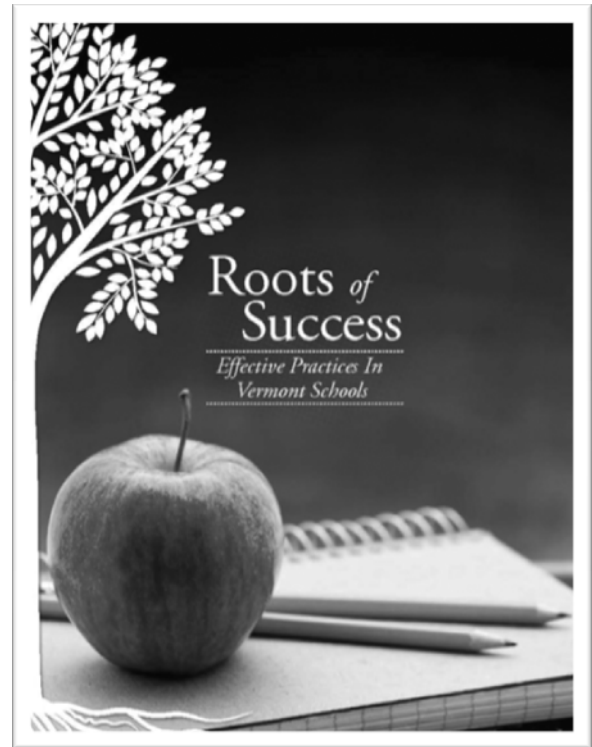


Vermont Study of Poverty and Effective Schools Released

The Vermont Department of Education released a study, *Roots of Success: Effective Practices in Vermont Schools*, in October. The department research team, with the help of an advisory panel representing K-12 schools and higher education, studied what it takes for schools—and therefore students, particularly low-income students,—to succeed. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed to identify the characteristics common to effective schools.

Through a large-scale survey of more than 2,000 Vermont teachers in 87 schools across the state, as well as intensive site visits to three schools that are “beating the odds” (schools whose Reading and Mathematics scores on state assessments defy expectations and exceed those of other schools with similar demographics), the study uncovered a set of attitudes and beliefs, as well as specific school practices, that are associated with student, particularly low-income, success. These characteristics form the foundation for school effectiveness and are essential to ensuring that all children, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, reach their full potential.



“What makes this work unique is that we turned to members of our own community to affirm what other studies have been telling us for years—it is possible to reach all children, regardless of background,” said Commissioner Armando Vilaseca. “Our charge is to listen to the stories and lessons of Vermont educators and administrators and commit to the hard work of implementing these findings in all of our schools. Demographics are not destiny, unless we allow them to be.”

Eight characteristics of Effective Schools (from Roots of Success):

1. The belief that all students can succeed.
2. The belief that school staff are ultimately responsible for students’ success and must therefore continually improve their practice.
3. Effective school leadership that helps translate these beliefs into practice.
4. Ongoing use of data to provide feedback to staff as well as monitor and support students.
5. A professional teaching culture that supports high-quality instruction and is characterized by staff collaboration, trust among staff members, strong staff commitment and dedication, and effective paraprofessionals.

6. A comprehensive and highly functioning support system for students who struggle academically, emotionally, behaviorally, or socially, including early intervention programs.
7. A supportive school climate that makes all students, as well as adults, feel valued and safe.
8. A commitment to building constructive relationships with families and involving them in their child's learning.

The full report, as well as an executive summary is available online at the VSBA website (www.vtvsba.org).