

Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union
105 Main St, Suite 200
Windsor, VT 05089



Vermont Board of Education
Education Quality Standards Committee
Agency of Education
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

Re: Public comment on the Education Quality Standards (Rule Series 2000)

October 24, 2023

To: Chair Jennifer Samuelson and members of the VT State Board of Education

Dear Chair Samuelson and VT State Board of Education,

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU). At WSESU, we strive to be an educational system where students want to learn, staff want to work, and families want to live. We are invested in creating an equitable, anti-racist school culture where every student feels a sense of belonging, especially those furthest from justice. We are committed to graduating students with the essential skills of empathy, perseverance, integrity, communication and critical thinking.

We have been watching and supporting the development of the Educational Quality Standards (EQS). We have submitted public comments in favor of the focus on equity and inclusion. With four years of dedicated work that has gone into crafting these standards for the benefit of our students, we were surprised to read about a move to dilute language in the EQS in a [VT Digger article](#) from October 17th where, "Buxton told members that the original language proposed by the working group could have "potential unintended consequences.""

Although Buxton appears to have an impressive track-record of launching and engaging in many civic and community based groups, it is curious how the perspective of one white woman outweighs four years of dedicated community effort. What does this communicate about equity & inclusion when heeding Buxton's advice could be construed as action perpetuating patterns of holding power "over," with a lack of transparency in decision-making. To move a successful,

comprehensive community-based approach to one behind closed doors leaves us wondering whether it is the education of our youth or protection from liability that you are moved by. We ask the State Board to be transparent in its decision-making process and to share the legal analysis by the attorney who expressed concerns about liability.

We additionally request that you retain the strong anti-discrimination definition originally drafted by the working group in the EQS. Expanding protections offered by the working group to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of "ethnicity, caste, language and linguistic diversity, socio-economic status, religion, housing status, and non-citizenship or immigration status" should not be discarded or altered due to concerns about liability. The addition of these categories invites our broader community into the conversation. They can see themselves and the experiences of their family and children in these categories. It creates more inroads for collaboration at the community level when people feel seen. That these categories are not yet considered protected classes seems to indicate that the laws need to change NOT the language in the EQS.

At a time when we are witnessing increasing polarization in our ideologies on local and global levels, and the experience of hate and discrimination ever so present in our communities and schools, we encourage you to hold the wellbeing of our most vulnerable at the forefront of your decision-making knowing that we are stronger together. You have a responsibility to serve and respond to community needs. Those have been clearly expressed by the working group. We encourage you to embrace your role as leaders and be a model for equity and inclusion.

Thank you for your leadership and for taking our comments into consideration.

In community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Traci Price". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Traci" being more prominent than the last name "Price".

Traci Price
WSESU Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator