

Supports for Students who have experienced harassment:

Stronger support is needed to build community-based partnerships between community organizations and schools (including community based domestic and sexual violence organizations, Community Justice Centers, caregiver groups, etc.) AND to increase resources for mental health care through designated agencies and in schools where possible and appropriate for prevention and crisis support.

The culture of a school will reflect the culture of the community if community members are fully integrated into the programs and social life of the school. Communities, as we know, have resources and expertise that can augment school services and support students. Schools cannot and should not be islands unto themselves. The committee encourages schools to receive the resources they need to fully map out their community assets with an eye toward mental and physical health supports, respecting ethnic and cultural diversity, and promoting professional development, trauma-informed and crisis-intervention care, and collaborations with existing caregiver groups. These efforts, in turn, will also help identify the broader needs within a community. Further, a statewide asset map, created by AOE, would help identify the resources and support systems within the state that might be expanded to better address needs in Vermont where there are resource deficits.

In coordination with school-based social worker(s) trained and skilled in community outreach, teams can be developed to organize and coordinate programs with community organizations and individuals to best serve the needs of students at any given time or in any situation. Funding at the state level to develop and maintain these education support teams will be necessary.

We envision schools that create a culture of belonging and connectedness. When students are connected to supportive adults and communities, they are less likely to bully and harass others, and when confronted themselves by bullying or harassment, they are more resilient in the face of it and recover more quickly from its effects.

We envision schools that, by design, bring the community and its resources into the school to improve and expand the reach of school programs. Schools and children benefit when students' academic and cocurricular pursuits, family cultures, and social and civic interests are mirrored and supported by the actions of others.

We envision schools that prioritize prevention of harassment, suicide, violence, discrimination, drug use, and other forms of avoidable personal and social harm. Education support teams, as recommended in the Education Quality Standards Manual, can be multi-faceted in their approach to address and prevent the challenges that interfere with a student's ability to access a high-quality, creative, respectful and rigorous education.