



## VSAC Aspirations Partnerships



**VSAC's Aspirations Partnerships goal is to build a school's capacity to graduate all students with a plan for their future education and career.**

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) is a public nonprofit agency that works to ensure that Vermonters have the information and financial supports necessary to achieve their education goals after high school. VSAC's mission is to create opportunities for all Vermont students, but particularly for those—of any age—who believe that the doors to higher education are closed to them.

In 2014, VSAC produced a white paper titled "Gaps in postsecondary education aspiration: A report on disparities among Vermont's high school graduates." Based on the report, the Vermont State Legislature asked VSAC to work with schools to help close the aspiration gap between first-generation college-going Vermonters and their peers.

**VSAC Aspirations Partnerships** are collaborations between VSAC and Vermont schools. Through the partnerships, a diverse group of school stakeholders strengthen each school's capacity to **graduate all students with a plan for their future education and career.**

The Aspirations Partnerships work with schools to cultivate a vibrant college and career going culture. We orient our work around the belief that for any change to happen in education, students and educators need to have a voice and be an integral part of the conversation and change process. We aim to engage faculty by facilitating on-going professional learning and conversations, where their ideas, insights, and passions become the focus of our collective work. We aim to engage students through focus groups, surveys, and conversations. Student ideas, insight, and needs will drive our planning and curriculum integration work.

We believe: "Dialogue—having a meaningful two-way conversation—is an essential ingredient in any change process." The work we do with schools stems from the dialogue our school steering committees and stakeholder groups have, and it is relevant to the specific schools with which we work. A school's particular needs, practices, strengths, voice, and skills are the foundation for the curriculum, resources, events, and opportunities we design with schools.

*Source: [Studentsatthecenterhub.org](http://Studentsatthecenterhub.org)*

The goal of the Aspirations Partnership is to build a school's capacity to graduate all students with a plan for their future education and career.

**VSAC's Aspirations team uses the definition of college and career readiness from the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE): Student's ability to enter the workforce and/or pursue postsecondary education or training without the need for remediation.**

**In 2018–19, all Vermont schools began to assess students' readiness for college and careers using the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) College and Career Readiness Indicators reported in the AOE Annual Snapshot. We believe that the Aspirations Partnership can help schools address and improve their outcomes on these indicators.**

### **Why college and career readiness matters**

Education and training after high school is necessary for the people of Vermont to secure jobs that meet their individual needs. Such jobs are the building blocks of fulfilling, healthy lives that in turn produce vibrant communities and a resilient state economy. Education beyond high school is a key determinant of economic opportunity and social mobility; however, access, affordability, and attainment are not equitable. The Aspirations Project works with schools to improve access to college and career planning that all students deserve.

#### **Only 16%**

of Vermont's Class of 2012 first-generation boys obtained a 2- or 4-year degree within 4 years of high school graduation.

#### **75%**

of Vermonters age 16–34 who do not possess a credential of value are interested in starting or finishing a college degree.

#### **100%**

of Vermont's high-growth, high-wage jobs through 2028 are projected to require education or training after high school.

*Sources: VSAC, Advance Vermont, J. Warren & Lois McClure Foundation*

### **VSAC Aspirations Partnership outcomes**

In partnering with a school, we share the following vision of success after 3–4 years. While there are myriad possible outcomes we might hope to achieve together, we measure our success against the following 3 primary outcomes:

- College & career information and lens are integrated into school systems and practices
- Increased teacher engagement in college and career readiness, practices, and activities
- Increased practice, skill, and comfort with college and career knowledge, conversations, planning, and communication for teachers, students and families

### **VSAC Aspirations Partnership schools**

VSAC has worked with the following schools for 3-4 years to improve their aspiration rates.

Lamoille Union High School	2014–2017
Bellows Falls High School	2015–2019
Hazen Union High School	2016–2020
Twinfield Union High School	2017–Present
Spaulding High School	2018–Present
Central Vermont Career Center	2018–Present

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