

## STATE PARTNER SHOWCASE: VERMONT



## Vermont Summer Learning: A Community Partnership Featuring Lexile® and Quantile® Measures

Like every other state in the country, the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic presented the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) with unanticipated challenges when it came to ensuring its students stayed on track. However, through community partnerships and an investment of extra time and hard work, Green Mountain State education leaders leveraged available tools and resources to reach students and families at home with extended learning opportunities.

Jess DeCarolis, director of the AOE's division of Student Pathways, was charged with managing the transition to remote learning. She said, "The day before our schools closed I was made responsible for the continuation of learning remotely. We faced major obstacles when it came to implementing equitable access to online system PK-12. While a system was in place for secondary learners, younger students had low levels of access, especially those in grades PK-5.



[education.vermont.gov](https://education.vermont.gov)

Montpelier, VT

- ➞ 89,624 students
- ➞ 8,403 teachers
- ➞ 264 school districts
- ➞ 318 schools

“We basically had to realign our division structure to address these challenges. We focused both on analog and online learning to reach all of our state’s students and moved quickly to leverage partnerships that we hadn’t necessarily taken full advantage of in the past, such as the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative, or contemplated before, like PBS.”

To meet the distance learning needs of students and families, the AOE and **Vermont Public Broadcasting** formed a partnership. Together, they provided access to free educational programming and curriculum over three public broadcasting channels in the state, accessible to 95 percent of Vermont households.

PBS promoted the learning shows with parents and tied them to books or activities. AOE content experts aligned resources with PBS programming. There was always a hard copy of off-line resources that parents could use. Teachers would print out copies and send them home with school lunches that were being delivered to homes while schools were closed. They quickly saw more than 1,000 teachers and 1,200 home study families visiting AOE web pages each month and Vermont PBS saw an increase in users from around 3,000 to more than 6,000 since the beginning of the partnership. This success brought to light how critical the need was for these types of resources and sparked the idea of developing hands-on learning kits to be distributed to families to support summer learning.

Emily Leute, the AOE’s ELA specialist who leads the PBS partnership, said, “Our partners at PBS showed us summer learning kits connected to programming that were available to them at the national level and, based on that model, we developed a Vermont-specific kit. It was important that our kits included offline activities because connectivity is unequitable throughout our state so we included printables and hands-on activities. Our goal was to keep summer learning fun and engaging.”



We recognized leveraging Lexile and Quantile measures was a cornerstone to addressing the challenges we were facing. We also already had a powerful network of 21st Century Community Learning Centers that served 100 school communities so we had a family engagement network in place that we could take advantage of to support any outreach we did.”

— Jess DeCarolis, Director of the AOE’s division of Student Pathways

Summer learning activities featuring **Lexile** and **Quantile** measures were included in the kits. A one-pager featured **Lexile® Find a Book**, MetaMetrics’ free book search tool that allows students and families to look for great books to read based on Lexile score and readability. Once they found a book of interest, the handout told families how to search for the book at their local public library to see if it was available.

AOE also created a one-pager featuring MetaMetrics’ free **Quantile® Summer Math Challenge** for students in grades 1–8. With the Summer Math Challenge, children can practice math by taking part in learning activities like math games, videos and worksheets and get real-time feedback on weekly quizzes.

DeCarolis said, “We wanted to be sure that we combined our student-centered learning framework with the PBS television and radio component to offer students a complete learning ‘sandwich’ – an integrated approach, not just a ‘bite’ of learning. We are lucky to have a fantastic team. Emily and Ryan each brought their subject-area expertise and took on the task. My job was to be the ‘sandwich maker’ and connect the three different pieces.”

Ryan Parkman, the state’s math specialist, said, “By going through the 21st Century Learning Centers, we were able to put the kits right in the hands of the users. We delivered them by hand to the districts, all sorted and ready to go. Educators, students and families felt they were really a part of a community effort.”

Leute shared the children’s enthusiasm for the kits, “I delivered to one site and the kids were coming outside and the director asked them if they wanted their bags now and the little kindergartners were so cute and excited.”

She continued, “For us, it was refreshing and a change of pace from the normal day at the AOE. A lot of the people who work at the agency are former teachers and know what a hard job it is in the best of times. Many of us are parents and knew the additional challenges they were facing. It was so energizing.”

The initiative caught the attention of others in Vermont government. Having worked with numerous government agencies, Ted Fisher, Vermont’s state director of communications and legislative affairs, brought an interesting perspective to what he saw. “The AOE has 167 employees, a very small agency. I have never been a part of something like this. This team did an incredible job. From March 2020 on, their attitude was ‘what can we do to make this work.’”

The partnership with PBS brought new possibilities to light for AOE leaders. Leute said, “Working with PBS gave us a way to move forward with our media literacy initiatives. We now think differently about how to use and engage with digital media for parents and teachers and our work with them continues to evolve.”

## Find a Book

Support reading over the summer months and find books by reading ability level, personal interests and more: [hub.lexile.com/fab](https://hub.lexile.com/fab).

## Summer Math Challenge

Summer Math Challenge is available at [hub.lexile.com/smc](https://hub.lexile.com/smc) and can be completed in June and July.\*

## Additional Resources

Find additional reading and math tools at the **Lexile® & Quantile® Hub**: [Hub.Lexile.com](https://Hub.Lexile.com).

\* For exact dates, please go to [hub.lexile.com/smc](https://hub.lexile.com/smc).