



# Community Connections

Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, Montpelier, Worcester

## Highlights, Winter 2004

Community Connections is a bridge between schools and communities in Central Vermont. Funded by a federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant, Community Connections has provided high quality out-of-school time programs for youth and adults at learning centers in Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, Worcester, and Montpelier for the past 2 ½ years. Each learning center offers a balance of educational, enrichment, and life-skill building

programming. Last year, 908 elementary school children, 755 middle and high school youth, and 438 adults participated in 514 different Community Connections activities, ranging from reading and homework help to theater, computers, cooking, snowboarding, canoeing, rock climbing, Spanish, guitar, Lego league, knitting, painting, summer camp and more. Last summer Community Connections ran four to six-week long summer programs at each of the district elementary schools, providing an important service for working families. It's the goal of Community Connections to ensure that programs are accessible to all families.

In addition to out-of-school time programming, Community Connections spearheads key youth-mentoring initiatives. Community Connections collaborates with the Central Vermont New Directions Coalition to run the Girls First/Boyz First! Mentoring Program. Last year 31 youth, between the ages of ten and fourteen, were matched with

community volunteers and met regularly once each week. Community Connections' Youth Outreach Coordinator works with out-of-school youth, and those who are at risk of dropping out of school, to explore alternative education options and employment opportunities, and guide them in making healthy life choices.

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*Forty percent of students who attended Community Connections programs thirty days or more last year increased language arts grades by at least a half of a grade.*

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Students who participate in Community Connections out-of-school time programs improve their school performance.

Teachers reporting on students who participated in Community Connections programs for thirty days or more identified improvements in completion of homework, class participation, and classroom behavior – all components of academic success.

Forty percent of students who attended Community Connections programs thirty days or more last year increased language arts grades by at least a half of a grade. Thirty two percent of

students who attended Community Connections programs thirty days or more last year increased their math grades by at least a half of a grade. Other positive outcomes from participation in Community Connections programs: students came to schools more prepared to learn, were more attentive in class, and demonstrated academic performance that was satisfactory or better.

Community Connections is shaping its programming to further promote academic success, particularly important given the expectations outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act.



*Teamwork.*

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## Site Highlights

### Berlin Community Connections

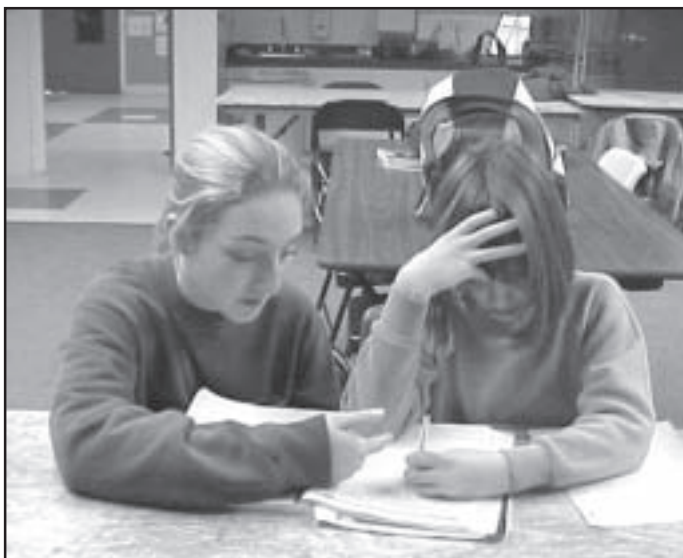
Five days per week during the school year and during school vacations, an average of 30 families participate in a variety of educational programs including: homework and math clubs, community connectors volunteer club, winter adventures, Spanish and French Conversation, Sign Language, arts and crafts, reading club, web design, journalism club, soccer, and science. Community education program offerings include computer courses in Word, PowerPoint, and Excel, and one-time family events. Over 100 community members attended family game night last November. More than 151 of Berlin Elementary's 244 students participated in after school and summer programming last year.

### Calais Community Connections

Three days a week, between 12 and 16 students attend homework club and tutoring where they receive academic support. Academic, enrichment and recreational activities happen after school throughout the year. Some of the most popular activities are Lego robotics, bead making, knitting, and Thai dance. More than 72 adults participated in evening and weekend programs, such as movie night, evening stargazing, and a family sleigh ride. Community Connections is beginning a series of free community forums open to community members who want to discuss important topics affecting our families, such as substance abuse and the effects of media on children. More than 81% of all Calais Elementary School students participated in after school and summer programming last year.

### Doty Community Connections

Last year 40 of Doty Elementary's 76 students participated in Community Connections programs including 25 who participated for 30 days or more. Programs range from woodcarving, mosaics, digital video and cookie making to archery, tae kwondo, guitar and Pagemasters, a reading based program. Community education programs are equally popular,



*Montpelier High School junior Jamie Goodell helps a Calais Elementary student in homework club.*

"The programs and people supported by Community Connections have allowed us to work toward our goal of truly becoming a full service community school working to meet the needs of our many students." - Montpelier High School Principal Peter Evans

with more than 37 adults participating in evening and weekend programs, such as knitting, yoga and computer lab. This year there has been more of a focus on one-time programs and once a month family get-togethers. More than 75% of all Doty students participated in after-school and summer programming during the past two years.

### East Montpelier Community Connections

The East Montpelier Community Connections program continues to flourish. After school each day, between 12 and 15 students attend homework club and receive academic support. Other students attend a variety of enrichment programs including club explore, cooking, theater games, model construction, capital city capers and much more. In addition, more than 94 adults participated in activities that included wreath making workshops and "Parents' Day Off" camp. More than 74% of all East Montpelier Elementary School students have participated in after school and summer programming last year.

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## Main Street Middle School Community Connections

Last year 235 (75% of MSMS students) middle school students participated in after-school activities at Main Street Middle School ranging from book club, art, whistle making, computer lab, jewelry making, girls' club, and hip hop to jammin' with Judd, unified sports, Lego league and skiing/snowboarding. MSMS Community Connections partnered with U-32 to provide summer activities for middle school youth.

## Montpelier High School Community Connections

At Montpelier High School 285 students and 146 adults participated in after-school and evening Community Connections classes. In addition, sixteen students received academic credit by attending 5-week, hands-on summer field schools in archeology, and waterways.

MHS Community Connections programs including outing club, diversity club, Solon dance club, philosophy club, weight training, fencing, build and design team and community service club are developed and led by students, faculty and



*Cooking after school.*

community members. Students are currently teaching cooking and Spanish and helping with homework club at Berlin, Calais and Union Elementary schools. The program has expanded the meaning of school to extend beyond the classroom and school day and has brought community members who do not have children into the building.

More than 58% of all Montpelier students participated in after-school and summer programming last year.

## Rumney Community Connections

This fall Rumney Community Connections served 70 students. These 70 students participated in morning program (before-school), after school clubs and classes, field trips, and in-service day camps. These

programs include enrichment, academic, and life skill-building activities. More than 85% of Rumney students participated in after school and summer programming last year. Rumney Community Connections also produces local and Vermont performing artists at "The Listening Room." Music performances, theater workshops, family and children programming are featured with the goal of creating greater opportunities for community events and the performing arts in Middlesex.

## Union Elementary Community Connections

Community Connections at Union Elementary School serves about 45 children a day with academically oriented after-school programs including Homework club, Spanish, computer lab, and storytelling. Through a strong partnership with Montpelier Recreation Department, 114 children attended summer camp last year. Community education programs are equally popular, with opportunities for parents and children to participate weekly in activities like fiber arts, ceramics, and other art workshops.



*Senior citizens take part in the empty bowl project at Union Elementary.*

## U-32 Community Connections

U-32 Community Connections has established a foundation of programs as well as an ever changing array of activities for young and old. Programs range from poetry, homework club, teen center, furniture making, cooking, and ski/snowboarding at Bolton Valley. Over 100 students utilized the teen center during the fall trimester, 20-30 students participated in hockey and the Bolton program has grown to 49 students in 2003-04. U-32 also offers classes in woodcarving, chess, banjo, blues guitar and harmonica taught by talented U-32 staff. U-32 Community Connections hosted a successful Self Defense course for over 13 women this fall.

### Summer Field School

Something funny happened to a group of U-32 and Montpelier high school students on their way to vacation this past summer. They got up early and went to school! These students attended the **Waterways Summer Field School** at U-32, and the **Archeology Summer Field School** at Montpelier High School – five-week long credit-bearing hands-on classes open to 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students from both high schools.

Students attended for a variety of reasons. Some were looking for something to do for the summer, some wished to lighten up their class load during the regular school year, and some were in need of academic reinforcement.

Waterways students mucked around in wetlands, waded in streams, splashed in waterfalls, canoed down the Winooski River, swam in the middle of Lake Champlain, cruised on the University

Community Connections fosters collaboration between the schools and communities of WCSU and Montpelier to work in partnership with organizations and community members to:

- ◆ Provide expanded learning enrichment opportunities
- ◆ Increase healthy behaviors
- ◆ Expand the schools' role as a community resource

of Vermont's research vessel-Melosira, and followed whales in the St. Lawrence seaway. They collected dragonflies, butterflies and leaf hoppers, caught frogs, salamanders and leeches. They learned to test the levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, turbidity, and the pH, and what those tests meant and the impacts on humans. They walked on the ledges and rock of an ancient time long before humans, and examined a whale skeleton found in the Champlain shoreline soils. They wrote pages of observations, painted what they saw, and put together fantastic projects.

Archeology students scrambled around in the woods looking at stone walls and sifting through dirt and rocks. They took pictures, made drawings and developed ideas about what they were seeing. Then they went to the state archives to research for more clues and possibly answers in written deeds and letters. Explorations focused primarily on a site in the Montpelier area, but students also had the chance to visit and sift at an active archeological site at Mount Independence on Lake Champlain. The ground is rich with artifacts and history of the Revolutionary War in Vermont, and the students had the opportunity to work alongside professionals in the field.

### Other Summer Schools

Community Connections partners with Literacy Lab School and WCSU summer schools to provide a full day of activities, making it easier for students to participate in critical academic summer support.

Contact us at:  
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*Students on a dig site learning archeology techniques first-hand at Community Connections' Archeology Field School, last summer.*