

Monthly Spotlight: What Vermont Educators are Reading

Educators across Vermont are engaging in learning communities with their colleagues to maintain and elevate excellence in their practice, and to keep students at the center of their work. For some educators, there are two books that have taken center stage in these conversations. *Excellence Through Equity* is an inspiring look at how real-world educators are creating schools where *all* students are able to thrive. As Andy Hargreaves writes in the coda: "The opportunity for all Americans is to articulate and believe in an inspiring vision of educational change that is about what the next generation of America and Americans should become, not about a target or ranking that the nation should attain."

Students at the Center maps out a transformative model of personalization that puts students at the center and asks them to employ the set of dispositions for engagement and learning known as the Habits of Mind. The book shares the perspectives of educators engaged in this work, highlights the habits that empower students, and provides tools and recommendations for adjusting classroom practices.

Whether or not you have read these books, if these themes spark your interests and you would like to learn more, be sure to [Ask an Expert: Questions for Allison Zmuda \(electronic form\)](#). Allison Zmuda is a contributing author in *Excellence Through Equity* and one of two co-authors of *Students at the Center* and she will be answering your questions through interactive webinars (more information below).

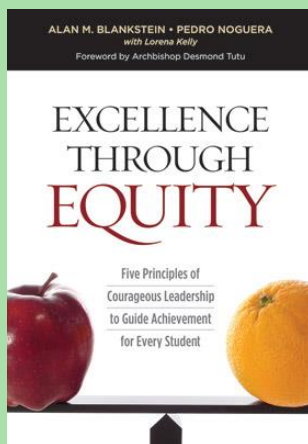


Image: Book cover for *Excellence through Equity*.

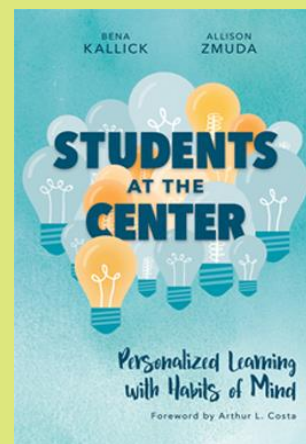


Image: Book cover for *Students at the Center*.

Upcoming VT PLN Opportunities

Allison Zmuda will be holding virtual conversations with Vermont educators to answer your questions about personalized learning. Each webinar will have a focus as a springboard for conversation. Participation in the Digging Deep Series, though encouraged, is not a prerequisite for participating in the virtual sessions with Allison.

Empowering Students: February 16, 2018; 1:00PM – 2:00PM

Student-Centered Instruction: March 9, 2018; 1:00PM – 2:00PM

Student-Designed Assessments: April 13, 2018; 1:00PM – 2:00PM

[Registration for the Allison Zmuda Webinar Series](#)

Question of the Month

HOW ARE RUBRICS DIFFERENT IN A PROFICIENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM?

Here, we are talking about using rubrics as a way to give feedback to students and to record student progress toward proficiency. We might also use rubrics to improve our own instructional practice and to collect information on school-wide proficiency development. We do not use rubrics to give students letter grades or numerical grades.

That being said, one thing to consider while creating a proficiency-based rubric is separating out the task process and deliverables from the proficiency language. When we give the assessment to students, we include a suggested process and/or a product in the student instructions. When students complete these processes and develop these products, they will be demonstrating skills in multiple proficiency areas. Including these explicitly in your student directions tells students how to act and what to do in order to demonstrate skill, and we don't need to include these in the rubric. To learn more about rubrics and proficiency-based assessment systems, be sure to explore our Developing and Applying Proficiencies self-paced course, which you can find on our [VT PLN website](#).

Coming Soon: New Self-Paced Course!

STRATEGIES FOR COMPLETING A COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

We have created a self-paced course to support schools and school unions as they engage in a cycle of continuous improvement. The goals of the new course are to provide an overview of completing a comprehensive needs assessment, and to learn, practice, and reflect on strategies involved in completing a comprehensive needs assessment. Be on the lookout for the launch of our new course, which is scheduled after the marking period, in early February.

To learn more about self-paced courses, visit our [Self-Paced Courses webpage](#).

Vermont Stories

STUDENT VOICE AND CHOICE AT SHELBURNE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

[This Vermont Stories video](#) was filmed at the Shelburne Community School, and features local teacher Sam Nelson showing how he treats curriculum as a conversation: "This year we started a student planning committee where once a week with 6th and 7th graders and once a week with 8th graders, I sit down with a group of students and they literally sit down and we discuss curriculum. *Making curriculum a conversation, not a mandate.* Not only do we decide what are we going to explore, but how are we going to explore it, what standards or proficiencies are we going to practice and attach to the learning and what are the outcomes going to be." To learn more and to find resources for using this video as a learning tool with your team, check out our [Vermont Stories webpage](#).

We strive to collect stories from schools and districts as they implement Education Quality Standards across Vermont. If you, your school, or an educator you know would like to take part in the documentation process of capturing these successes, challenges, and strategies please email us at vtclg@ccebos.org.

We Want to Feature You

Have an awesome photo, story, or resource that you think other Vermont educators would benefit from? Email us at vtclg@ccebos.org.

The Professional Learning Network (VT-PLN) is a statewide system to address the need for a coordinated, cohesive, and consistent approach to professional learning across the state with an emphasis on geographic equity and comparable quality articulated in one specific scope of work.