

What We Heard From You: A Message to Vermont Families

This winter and spring, nearly 200 people came together to talk about what's working—and what's not—for families with young children in Vermont. We're so grateful to each of you who shared your time, your stories, and your wisdom.

Together, we heard from 92 parents, grandparents, and students, and 103 early childhood professionals. We shared a meal with many of you and listened carefully during deep conversations. Many of you wrote powerful letters. A few of you even helped pilot an immersive project where a policymaker and early childhood professional shadowed each other for two days. Every voice mattered.

HERE'S WHAT WE LEARNED FROM YOU

- Families in Vermont are *resilient, resourceful, and proud*. You are doing your best to raise your children with love, even when systems don't make it easy.
- Many of you are working hard to afford basic needs—food, housing, childcare, and healthcare—while also wanting connection, joy, and a future where your children can thrive.
- You told us what's helping: trusted local programs like playgroups, community spaces, and parent-child centers, strong relationships, supportive schools, and communities that understand your culture, background, and needs.
- And, you were honest about what's not working: tight finances, not enough housing, transportation challenges, lack of health care and mental health support, confusing systems, long waitlists, discrimination, and policies that don't reflect real life.
- You asked for big changes and reminded us that change is possible. We heard you.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW

The stories and ideas you shared are being used to shape Vermont's updated strategic plan for young children and families. Your handwritten letters were read closely by a group of state leaders who felt deeply moved and honored to hear your experiences. Many said this connection meant more to them than any chart or graph ever could.

As the plan comes together, we'll keep working to make sure your voices lead the way.

Thank you for trusting us.

With gratitude,

The Creative Discourse Group & Building Bright Futures