



October 6, 2014

**SUBJECT: SAVE THE DATE, November 17-18, 2014  
Green Mountain Imperative: A Breakthrough Summit on Public Education  
DoubleTree Conference Center, South Burlington, Vermont**

**Summit Conveners**

Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary  
Agency of Education

Stephan Morse, Chair  
State Board of Education

Shap Smith, Speaker  
VT House of Representatives

Julie Coffey, Executive Director  
Building Bright Futures

Stuart Comstock-Gay, President  
Vermont Community Foundation

Steve Dale, Executive Director  
Vermont School Board  
Association

Jeff Francis, Executive Director  
Vermont Superintendents  
Association

Scott Giles, President and CEO  
Vermont Student Assistance  
Corporation

Lisa Ventriss, President and CEO  
Vermont Business Roundtable

Greetings:

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to help guide the future of public education in Vermont and to determine the actions that are needed to make this future a reality. This effort will start with two days together on November 17-18<sup>th</sup>, and will continue thereafter with a collective commitment to improving our system of public education.

We have an obligation to provide Vermont's children with the quality of educational experiences that will prepare them to be successful in life. But, today, Vermont's educational quality varies greatly and our fiscal capacity is strained.

We must be resolved in our efforts toward equity in opportunity and efficiency - in order to preserve public education as a public good. Our state's small size presents us with a tremendous opportunity to have among the finest public education systems in the world - one that responds to the unique needs and interests of every child, at a cost Vermont taxpayers can afford.

We believe every child matters. We also believe that learning starts early and happens everywhere, and that every child learns differently. Our collective charge is to find new and better ways to design and deliver Vermont's public education, in a manner that is collaborative across sectors and that benefits our children, our economy, and our global society.

This is no ordinary conference or workshop.

Unlike traditional conferences of talking heads and panels, this summit will be highly interactive, engaging approximately 200 people from across the state using a strength-based, solution-focused, and participatory approach to planning and change (known as Appreciative Inquiry, or AI).

Appreciative Inquiry is based on two deceptively simple concepts:

(1) *What we look for, we find; and what we pay attention to grows.*

The more positive and affirmative (solution-seeking) the conversations, the more positive and sustainable the follow-through and action.

(2) *People commit to what they help to create.*

The more involved people are in planning the changes needed, the more committed they will be in seeing them through to success.

### What Are We Asking of You?

*First, we want your attendance.*

Given the significant outreach and planning that is necessary in order to ensure diverse stakeholder participation, summit invitations are not transferrable. However, opportunities will be made available for you and others to meaningfully engage, regardless of one's ability to participate in person at the summit.

*Second, we require participants to commit to the full two days.*

Our design ensures that each activity builds on and feeds directly into the next in a manner that is highly participatory and interactive – so participating for just specific parts of the agenda would be disruptive to the overall flow of the summit. Arrive with an open mind and leave with momentum – a readiness to implement concrete ideas and action.

*Third, we ask you to set aside your preconceptions and your organizational positions and to be willing to create real solutions to real problems.*

Appreciative Inquiry requires everyone to be both congenial and collegial as we find paths to meaningful change that keep our children's interests, not our own, in the center of the policy discussion.

There is no silver bullet to improving our education system. This summit is a critical commencement; an essential starting point to shifting how we think about and positively influence the future of education in Vermont. **We ask for your ideas and best thinking during the summit, but more importantly we're counting on your leadership after the summit in transforming the future of education in Vermont.** We have a lot of work to do, and our children, our communities, and the future of our economy are counting on us to work together – NOW. ***Please join us!***

**RSVP no later than October 10<sup>th</sup> to Lisa Ventriss at [lisa@vtroundtable.org](mailto:lisa@vtroundtable.org) to confirm your interest and ability to participate for the full two days, November 17-18, 2014.**

We hope you can join us and we look forward to your ideas and your energy in November and well beyond.

Sincerely,

## The Summit Conveners

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