

Using GIS Mapping to Build and Strengthen Coherent Systems of Student Support

ED# 2019-R1-I-0004



High-Leverage Problem

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has prioritized initiatives that help promote regional equity across the state. In Year 2, AOE wanted to continue using geographic information systems (GIS) data to support policymaking and requested using GOS to understand the landscape of student mental health support providers in schools and districts across the state. Data collected throughout the 2020–21 school year indicated a need for increased support services focused on student social, emotional, and mental health. Anticipating state legislature policy focused on this topic, the AOE wanted to understand where students currently access mental health services and where additional supports may be needed.

In addition, the GIS mapping of PreK data that was completed in Year 1 used data that was collected prior to the COVID pandemic. To ensure that the policy decisions related to PreK were informed by the most accurate data, AOE also requested the R1CC update the map data with new data collected. Finally, AOE wanted to make the PreK data maps publicly available and requested small display revisions to increase stakeholder usability once they became public.



R1CC Approach

This project builds on the work started in Year 1 to use GIS mapping as a tool to understand the regional distribution of services and how access to those supports could inform policymaking. The project identified two areas of focus with GIS mapping:

1. Update PreK GIS Map data to include pre-COVID data and post-COVID data. This data provided more accurate information on the quality PreK programs available in the state during COVID. Because many programs were suspended or closed during this time, updating the data was important to ensure PreK policymakers could make informed decisions.
2. Begin mapping the locations and ways students access mental health services (in[1]school, outsourced, outsourced outside the district). This work will continue through Year 3.

Finally, the Region 1 Comprehensive Center (R1CC) team created a user-friendly dashboard interface on the GIS map and shared access to the map through the AOE website. The R1CC team collaborated with AOE to identify areas of map expansion that can enhance its value as a tool for decision-making.

Key Partner(s): Vermont Agency of Education

● — ◎ — ◎ → Key Milestones

- Identified additional data sources that can be incorporated into map and updated PreK data from fall 2020.
- Developed a dashboard interface for the GIS map.
- Presented the PreK map to the legislature.
- Finalized the communication and dissemination plan for the map.

❓ → Outputs

- Updated GIS map that incorporates new data (post-COVID PreK programming data) and data dashboards
- Communication and dissemination plan for sharing the GIS map with stakeholders
- Wireframe for integrating student mental health data into the GIS map

Outcomes

“We didn’t have to do a lot of explanation of the policy context of Vermont or the delivery model of education in the state since we’ve worked in the landscape previously with [R1CC]. They come to the table ready to interact at that level but very dependable in terms of schedule and using time wisely. And certainly, we do rely on them as an external resource to provide the evidence, to ground our policy in best practices in what’s out there in research.”