

Vermont Learning-Support Initiative

College Strategies for Diverse Learners



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Announcing Launch of First-Ever NEK Neuroabilities Convergence Project for 8th & 9th Grade Students

Hardwick/Lyndonville, VT—The first-ever Northeast Kingdom Neuroabilities Convergence Project, for area eighth- and ninth-grade students who learn differently and have a dream of going to college, will launch in Summer 2021. The project offers participants an opportunity to feel good about who they are and to see their own potential through a week of collaborative science and storytelling along with plenty of social time, reflection and fun. This program is offered at no cost to participants, thanks to generous foundation and community support.

The first program session, July 26-30, takes place in Hardwick at the Grass Roots Art and Community Effort (GRACE) Center. The second session, August 2-6, will be at the Lyndon Outing Club in Lyndonville. Vermont Learning-Support Initiative (VLSI) has joined with Brownington's Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village, and Sunshine Silver Lining, LLC, a consultancy based in Newport supporting youth and family mental health, to present this innovative empowerment program.

“VLSI is thrilled to be working with these partners on the Convergence,” Brad Smith, VLSI Executive Director, said. “Our mission to support college-aspiring, neurodiverse learners—in this instance at a key inflection point, the transition from middle school to high school—is teamed with a bold museum initiative to expand the legacy of Alexander Lucius Twilight by actively promoting diversity and equity in our learning communities, and a talented independent professional with a strong creative engagement and workshop background who just lights up a room.”

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The Convergence co-leaders for Summer 2021 are Sunny Naughton, creator of Sunshine Silver Lining, who will guide participants in a reflective storytelling project; and Drew Bush, Assistant Director of the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village, who will utilize project-based engineering and outdoor learning to explore identity and belonging. They will be assisted by Northern Vermont University-Lyndon undergraduate Erik Savard, of Waterford, among others.

“Working on this project is an exciting opportunity,” Naughton said. “Being part of an experience for our next generation as we all re-enter the world in a new way is hopeful. I am thankful for the chance to encourage these students to learn more about themselves on their journey.”

“We’ll do some engineering, some team-building, and maybe make a few things go boom,” Bush, who also conducts research in the Department of Geography at McGill University in Montreal, QC, said. “I’m excited to lead on the science part of the Convergence and to help students feel they can be successful in college by using their own strengths and abilities.”

The Northeast Kingdom Neuroabilities Convergence Project is sponsored in part by the Lyndon Outing Club and Greensboro’s Rural ARTS Collaborative, with generous financial support provided by the Vermont COVID-19 Response Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, the Vermont Department of Labor, and a number of local businesses and individuals.

“The Lyndon Outing Club is happy to support the Vermont Learning-Support Initiative in its efforts toward inclusion for all those with diverse learning styles and programming to help them achieve their goals,” Wendy Beattie, Lyndon Outing Club President, said.

For more information, please contact VLSI’s Brad Smith, (802) 310-5374 or bsmith@vermontlearningsupport.org

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About the Vermont Learning-Support Initiative:

For a great number of neurodiverse learners and their families still on that road, still in search of a way to that place where anguished cries can be subdued by a more joyous and mindful noise of self-discovery, it remains a difficult journey. Not only in Vermont, but everywhere humans exist in all their diversity. Fortunately, there are tested and true methods to encourage those who experience their learning and attention issues daily.

The mission of Vermont Learning-Support Initiative is to assist each diverse learner who comes to us with college in mind to attain that goal. This is how:

- Create a sense of belonging, through friends and community.
- Provide positive support at home.
- Most of all, the strength that comes from believing in yourself--the power of the heart--makes all else possible: nurture it.