

16 January 2017

News from Vermont Learning-Support Initiative: A No-Frills First Newsletter!

- *Annual Appeal*

Our great thanks to those who contributed to the first Annual Appeal, and to all who responded with encouragement. In a modest campaign involving fewer than 120 appeal letters, and with gifts still arriving, VLSI thus far has received more than \$6200 from 33 donors, with an average donation of \$188.

What this generosity means in practical terms is that initial program proposals made to schools in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom can begin to be implemented. The first of these will be the Parent Engagement Project, involving parents/guardians of middle- and high-school students with learning and attention issues. Through a college-night forum and subsequent meetings, families of these learners can gain clarity about pathways to college for their kids—an essential component of college preparation. This program is offered at no cost to the families, and your giving spirit makes that possible.

These donations will also be helpful in our search for grants to expand the work with parents, with goals of creating supportive home environments and of honing their advocacy skills, as well as those of their children. Additional sponsors are being sought to build a foundation through mentoring and engagement for these learners within their communities—another research-based piece in shaping a mindset for college success.

- *Closing the Loop*

In addition to the programs outlined above, which are broadly in the category of early aspirational assistance, VLSI will address the levels of support offered by Vermont colleges and universities to their students who learn differently. Research shows tremendous variation in higher education's level of commitment to meeting students where they are as learners, and it is part of our mission to close the support loop through social as well as academic programming, so that college students with learning challenges are not deprived of a fair opportunity to realize their dream of earning a degree.

- *Announcement: Board Formation*

With the period of guidance provided by VLSI's Founding Board coming to an end, we are in active recruitment mode for the creation of a full seven-member Board of Directors, one encompassing a broad generational range as well as familiarity with learning and attention challenges. Feel free to contact us for more information if you know someone who might be interested in this unique opportunity.

Brad Smith, Director & Founder

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