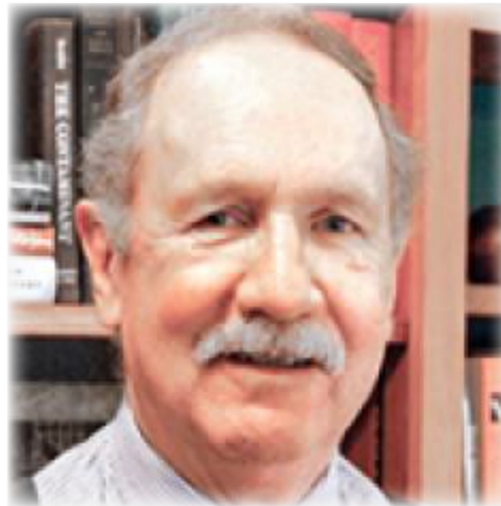




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## In Memoriam: William Mathis



[Dr. William Jefferson Mathis](#), who served for a decade as NEPC's Managing Director and then served as NEPC's Senior Policy Advisor, has passed away. He was 82.

Bill was a longtime advocate for educational equity. During his long and distinguished career, his roles included serving as a deputy assistant commissioner in New Jersey, a state and local school board member in Vermont, and, for 27 years, superintendent of the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union in Brandon, Vermont. Mathis also taught a class on educational administration as an adjunct professor at the University of Vermont.

While working in Brandon, Mathis was named Vermont Superintendent of the Year. He was also a finalist for National Superintendent of the Year. He was also the former president of The Horace Mann League and was presented with their Outstanding Public Educator Award in 2018—one of many awards and recognitions he received.

Born in Tennessee, Bill [worked](#) as a guidance counselor and substitute teacher, served in the Air Force, and pursued his education at the Uni-

versity of Tennessee (BA) and the University of Texas at Austin (PhD). He spent most of his adult life in Vermont, where he moved in 1982 for family reasons.

During Bill's years as a superintendent, he helped transform the state's system of funding K-12 education by volunteering to serve as a key expert witness in *Brigham v. State of Vermont*. The case led to the creation in 1997 of [Act 60](#), which collected and redistributed local property tax revenue among all the school districts in the state, including communities where lower property values made it difficult to maintain adequate funding.

"A true pillar of the community," Erik Pearsons commented on social media. "He was my superintendent when I was a kid. Later on, it was my pleasure to serve on the school board with him. RIP. A big loss."

From 2010 to 2020, Mathis [served](#) as a member of the Vermont Board of Education. "What made him so valuable was that he elevated the conversation," [wrote](#) Sean Marie Oller, who served on the state board alongside Bill. "He brought facts when others brought slogans. He brought historical perspective when others focused only on the moment. He reminded us that public education is not simply another government program but one of the foundations of a democratic society."

Bill wrote extensively for the National Education Policy Center during his time as managing director and senior policy advisor. "I count 32 publications linked to [Bill's NEPC page](#). But his careful advice and editing helped to shape dozens more," said NEPC's Kevin Welner. "Working with Bill was a privilege and a joy. He was tremendously smart and kind."

NEPC's Alex Molnar shared similar thoughts and memories:

Bill had a courtly folksy air about him and an incisive mind that held firm to progressive principles and ranged across multiple areas of expertise and professional practice. He was a pleasure to be around in social settings, a talented colleague in academic settings, and a model of good professional practice.

"With all his experience in the field and academics, Bill modeled intelli-

gence and persistence—and his regular use of homey expressions always made me smile,” added NEPC’s Faith Boninger.

In recent years, Mathis stepped back from work as he grappled with Parkinson’s Disease. He is survived by his wife Kathy, his daughter Alexandra, his son Will, and by thousands of children who benefitted from his persistence, leadership, and expertise.

## NEPC Resources on Education Policy and Policymaking

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The National Education Policy Center (NEPC), a university research center housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education, sponsors research, produces policy briefs, and publishes expert third-party reviews of think tank reports. NEPC publications are written in accessible language and are intended for a broad audience that includes academic experts, policymakers, the media, and the general public. Our mission is to provide high-quality information in support of democratic deliberation about education policy. We are guided by the belief that the democratic governance of public education is strengthened when policies are based on sound evidence and support a multiracial society that is inclusive, kind, and just. Visit us at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu>