

1                   \* \* \* Commission on the Future of Public Education \* \* \*

2           Sec. 1. THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION;  
3                   REPORTS

4           (a) Creation. There is hereby created the Commission on the Future of  
5           Public Education in Vermont. The right to education is fundamental for the  
6           success of Vermont’s children in a rapidly changing society and global  
7           marketplace as well as for the State’s own economic and social prosperity.  
8           The Commission shall study the provision of education in Vermont and make  
9           recommendations for a statewide vision for Vermont’s public education system  
10           to ensure that all students are afforded substantially equal educational  
11           opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and stable education system. The  
12           Commission shall also make recommendations for the strategic policy changes  
13           necessary to make Vermont’s educational vision a reality for all Vermont  
14           students.

15           (b) Membership. The Commission shall be composed of the following  
16           members and, to the extent possible, the members shall represent the State’s  
17           geographic, gender, racial, and ethnic diversity:

18                   (1) the Secretary of Education or designee;

19                   (2) the Chair of the State Board of Education or designee;

20                   (3) the Tax Commissioner or designee;

1           (4) three current members of the House of Representatives, not all from  
2           the same political party, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

3           (5) two current members of the Senate, not from the same political  
4           party, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

5           (6) two representatives from the Vermont School Boards Association  
6           (VSBA), appointed by the VSBA Executive Director;

7           (7) two representatives from the Vermont Principals' Association  
8           (VPA), appointed by the VPA Executive Director;

9           (8) three superintendents, appointed by the Executive Director of the  
10          Vermont Superintendents Association, two of whom shall be appointed as  
11          follows:

12           (A) one superintendent of a supervisory union that operates a career  
13          and technical education center; and

14           (B) one superintendent of a supervisory union composed of at least  
15          three separate school districts;

16           (9) two representatives from the Vermont National Education  
17          Association (VTNEA), appointed by the VTNEA Executive Director;

18           (10) one representative from the Vermont Association of School  
19          Business Officials (VASBO) with experience in school construction projects,  
20          appointed by the President of VASBO;

1           (11) the Chair of the Census-Based Funding Advisory Group, created  
2           under 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173;

3           (12) the Executive Director of the Vermont Rural Education  
4           Collaborative; and

5           (13) one representative from the Vermont Independent Schools  
6           Association (VISA), appointed by the President of VISA.

7           (c) Steering group. On or before July 1, 2024, the Speaker of the House  
8           shall appoint two members of the Commission, the Committee on Committees  
9           shall appoint one member of the Commission, and the Governor shall appoint  
10           two members of the Commission, to serve as members of a steering group. No  
11           appointing authority shall appoint two members affiliated with the same  
12           organization. The steering group shall provide leadership to the Commission  
13           and shall work with a consultant to analyze the issues, challenges, and  
14           opportunities facing Vermont’s public education system, as well as develop  
15           and propose a formal action plan to drive change and innovation in the public  
16           education system. The formal action plan shall be approved by a majority of  
17           the Commission members. The steering group may form one or more  
18           subcommittees of the Commission to address key topics in greater depth.

19           (d) Collaboration and information review.

1           (1) The Commission shall seek input from and collaborate with key  
2           stakeholders, as directed by the steering group. At a minimum, the  
3           Commission shall consult with:

4                   (A) the Department of Mental Health;

5                   (B) the Department of Labor;

6                   (C) the President of the University of Vermont or designee;

7                   (D) the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges Corporation or  
8           designee;

9                   (E) a representative from the Prekindergarten Education  
10           Implementation Committee;

11                   (F) the Office of Racial Equity;

12                   (G) a representative with expertise in the Community Schools model  
13           in Vermont; and

14                   (H) the Vermont Youth Council.

15           (2) The Commission shall also review and take into consideration  
16           existing educational laws and policy, including legislative reports the  
17           Commission deems relevant to its work and, at a minimum, 2015 Acts and  
18           Resolves No. 46, 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173, 2022 Acts and Resolves  
19           No. 127, and 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 76.

20           (e) Duties of the Commission. The Commission shall study Vermont's  
21           public education system and make recommendations to ensure all students are

1 afforded quality educational opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and  
2 equitable education system that will enable students to achieve the highest  
3 academic outcomes. The result of the Commission’s work shall be a  
4 recommendation for a statewide vision for Vermont’s public education system,  
5 with recommendations for the policy changes necessary to make Vermont’s  
6 educational vision a reality. In creating and making its recommendations, the  
7 Commission shall engage in the following:

8 (1) Public engagement. The Commission shall conduct not fewer than  
9 14 public meetings to inform the work required under this section. At least one  
10 meeting of the Commission as a whole or a subcommittee of the Commission  
11 shall be held in each county. The Commission shall publish a draft of its final  
12 recommendations on or before October 1, 2025, solicit public feedback, and  
13 incorporate such feedback into its final recommendations. When submitting its  
14 final recommendations to the General Assembly, the Commission shall include  
15 all public feedback received as an addendum to its final report. The public  
16 feedback process shall include:

17 (A) a minimum 30-day public comment period, during which time  
18 the Commission shall accept written comments from the public and  
19 stakeholders; and

1           (B) a public outreach plan that maximizes public engagement and  
2           includes notice of the availability of language assistance services when  
3           requested.

4           (2) Policy considerations. In developing its recommendations, the  
5           Commission shall consider and prioritize the following topics:

6           (A) Governance, resources, and administration. The Commission  
7           shall study and make recommendations regarding education governance at the  
8           State level, including the role of the Agency of Education in the provision of  
9           services and support for the education system. Recommendations under this  
10          subdivision (A) shall include, at a minimum, the following:

11           (i) whether changes need to be made to the structure of the  
12          Agency of Education, including whether it better serves the recommended  
13          education vision of the State as an agency or a department;

14           (ii) what are the staffing needs of the Agency of Education;

15           (iii) whether changes need to be made to the composition, role,  
16          and function of the State Board of Education to better serve the recommended  
17          education vision of the State;

18           (iv) what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of  
19          local control and what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of  
20          control at the State level; and

1                   (v) the effective integration of career and technical education in  
2 the recommended education vision of the State.

3                   (B) Physical size and footprint of the system. The Commission shall  
4 study and make recommendations regarding how the unique geographical and  
5 socioeconomic needs of different communities should factor into the provision  
6 of education in Vermont, taking into account and building upon the  
7 recommendations of the State Aid to School Construction Working Group.  
8 Recommendations under this subdivision (B) shall include, at a minimum, the  
9 following:

10                   (i) an analysis of the current number and location of school  
11 buildings, school districts, and supervisory unions and whether additional  
12 consolidation is needed to achieve Vermont’s vision for education, provided  
13 that if there is a recommendation for any amount of consolidation, the  
14 recommendation shall include a recommended implementation plan;

15                   (ii) an analysis of the capacity and ability to staff all public  
16 schools with a qualified workforce, driven by data on class-size  
17 recommendations;

18                   (iii) analysis of whether, and if so, how, collaboration with  
19 Vermont’s postsecondary schools may support the development and retention  
20 of a qualified educator workforce;

1           (iv) an analysis of the current town tuition program and whether,  
2           and if so, what, changes are necessary to meet Vermont’s vision for education,  
3           including the legal and financial impact of funding independent schools and  
4           other private institutions, including consideration of the following:

5                   (I) the role designation, under 16 V.S.A. § 827, should play in  
6           the delivery of public education; and

7                   (II) the financial impact to the Education Fund of public dollars  
8           being used in schools located outside Vermont; and

9           (v) an analysis of the current use of private therapeutic schools in  
10          the provision of special education services and whether, and if so, what,  
11          changes are necessary to meet Vermont’s special education needs, including  
12          the legal and financial impact of funding private therapeutic schools.

13           (C) The role of public schools. The Commission shall study and  
14          make recommendations regarding the role public schools should play in both  
15          the provision of education and the social and emotional well-being of students.  
16          Recommendations under this subdivision (C) shall include, at a minimum, the  
17          following:

18                   (i) how public education in Vermont should be delivered;

19                   (ii) whether Vermont’s vision for public education shall include  
20          the provision of wraparound supports and collocation of services;

1                    (iii) whether, and if so, how, collaboration with Vermont’s  
2 postsecondary schools may support and strengthen the delivery of public  
3 education; and

4                    (iv) what the consequences are for the Commission’s  
5 recommendations regarding the role of public schools and other service  
6 providers, including what the role of public schools means for staffing,  
7 funding, and any other affected system, with the goal of most efficiently  
8 utilizing State funds and services and maximizing federal funding.

9                    (D) Education fund. The Commission shall explore the efficacy and  
10 potential equity gains of changes to the education funding system, including  
11 weighted educational opportunity payments as a method to fund public  
12 education. The Commission’s recommendations shall be intended to result in  
13 an education funding system designed to afford substantially equal access to a  
14 quality basic education for all Vermont students in accordance with *State v.*  
15 *Brigham*, 166 Vt. 246 (1997). Recommendations under this subdivision (D)  
16 shall include, at a minimum, the following:

17                    (i) allowable uses for the Education Fund that shall ensure  
18 sustainable and equitable use of State funds;

19                    (ii) the method for setting tax rates to sustain allowable uses of the  
20 Education Fund; and

1                    (iii) implementation details for any recommended changes to the  
2 education funding system.

3                    (E) Additional considerations. The Commission may consider any  
4 other topic, factor, or issue that it deems relevant to its work and  
5 recommendations.

6                    (f) Reports and proposed legislation. The Commission shall prepare and  
7 submit to the General Assembly the following:

8                    (1) a formal, written work plan, which shall include a communication  
9 plan to maximize public engagement, on or before September 15, 2024;

10                    (2) a written report containing its preliminary findings and  
11 recommendations, including short-term cost containment considerations for the  
12 2025 legislative session, on or before December 15, 2024;

13                    (3) a written report containing its final findings and recommendations  
14 for a statewide vision for Vermont’s public education system and the policy  
15 changes necessary to make that educational vision a reality on or before  
16 December 1, 2025; and

17                    (4) proposed legislative language to advance any recommendations for  
18 the education funding system.

19                    (g) Assistance. The Agency of Education shall contract with an  
20 independent consultant to provide technical and legal assistance to the  
21 Commission for the work required under this section. For the purposes of

1 scheduling meetings and providing administrative assistance, the Commission  
2 shall have the assistance of the Agency of Education. The Agency shall also  
3 provide the educational and financial data necessary to facilitate the work of  
4 the Commission. School districts shall comply with requests from the Agency  
5 to assist in data collections.

6 (h) Meetings.

7 (1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the  
8 Commission to occur on or before July 15, 2024.

9 (2) The Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore shall  
10 jointly select a Commission chair.

11 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

12 (4) Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Vermont's Open  
13 Meeting Law pursuant to 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.

14 (5) The Commission shall cease to exist on December 31, 2025.

15 (i) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Commission shall  
16 be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as  
17 permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 30 meetings, including  
18 subcommittee meetings. These payments shall be made from monies  
19 appropriated to the Agency of Education.