

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) one current member of the House of Representatives, appointed by
2 the Speaker of the House;

3 (5) one current member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on
4 Committees;

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

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

9 (8) one superintendent, appointed by the Executive Director of the
10 Vermont Superintendents Association;

11 (9) one representative from the Vermont National Education
12 Association (VTNEA), appointed by the VTNEA Executive Director;

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

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

18 (12) the Executive Director of the Vermont Rural Education
19 Collaborative; and

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

1 (c) Steering group. On or before July 1, 2024, the Speaker of the House
2 shall appoint two members of the Commission, the Committee on Committees
3 shall appoint one member of the Commission, and the Governor shall appoint
4 two members of the Commission to serve as members of a steering group. No
5 appointing authority shall appoint two members affiliated with the same
6 organization. The steering group shall provide leadership to the Commission
7 and shall work with a consultant or consultants to analyze the issues,
8 challenges, and opportunities facing Vermont’s public education system, as
9 well as develop and propose a work plan to formalize the process through
10 which the Commission shall seek to achieve its final recommendations. The
11 formal work plan shall be approved by a majority of the Commission
12 members. The steering group may form one or more subcommittees of the
13 Commission to address key topics in greater depth.

14 (d) Collaboration and information review.

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

18 (A) the Department of Mental Health;

19 (B) the Department of Labor;

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

1 (D) the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges Corporation or
2 designee;

3 (E) a representative from the Prekindergarten Education
4 Implementation Committee;

5 (F) the Office of Racial Equity;

6 (G) a representative with expertise in the Community Schools model
7 in Vermont; and

8 (H) the Vermont Youth Council.

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

14 (e) Duties of the Commission. The Commission shall study Vermont’s
15 public education system and make recommendations to ensure all students are
16 afforded quality educational opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and
17 equitable education system that will enable students to achieve the highest
18 academic outcomes. The result of the Commission’s work shall be a
19 recommendation for a statewide vision for Vermont’s public education system,
20 with recommendations for the policy changes necessary to make Vermont’s

1 educational vision a reality. In creating and making its recommendations, the
2 Commission shall engage in the following:

3 (1) Public engagement. The Commission shall conduct not fewer than
4 14 public meetings to inform the work required under this section. At least one
5 meeting of the Commission as a whole or a subcommittee of the Commission
6 shall be held in each county. The Commission shall publish a draft of its final
7 recommendations on or before October 1, 2025, solicit public feedback, and
8 incorporate such feedback into its final recommendations. When submitting its
9 final recommendations to the General Assembly, the Commission shall include
10 all public feedback received as an addendum to its final report. The public
11 feedback process shall include:

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

15 (B) a public outreach plan that maximizes public engagement and
16 includes notice of the availability of language assistance services when
17 requested.

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

20 (A) Governance, resources, and administration. The Commission
21 shall study and make recommendations regarding education governance at the

1 State level, including the role of the Agency of Education in the provision of
2 services and support for the education system. Recommendations under this
3 subdivision (A) shall include, at a minimum, the following:

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

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

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

11 (iv) what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of
12 local control and what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of
13 control at the State level; and

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

16 (B) Physical size and footprint of the education system. The
17 Commission shall study and make recommendations regarding how the unique
18 geographical and socioeconomic needs of different communities should factor
19 into the provision of education in Vermont, taking into account and building
20 upon the recommendations of the State Aid to School Construction Working

1 Group. Recommendations under this subdivision (B) shall include, at a
2 minimum, the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 (iii) implementation details for any recommended changes to the
14 education funding system.

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

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

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

1 (2) a written report containing its preliminary findings and
2 recommendations, including short-term cost containment considerations for the
3 2025 legislative session, on or before December 15, 2024;

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

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

10 (g) Assistance. The Agency of Education shall contract with one or more
11 independent consultants or facilitators to provide technical and legal assistance
12 to the Commission for the work required under this section. For the purposes
13 of scheduling meetings and providing administrative assistance, the
14 Commission shall have the assistance of the Agency of Education. The
15 Agency shall also provide the educational and financial data necessary to
16 facilitate the work of the Commission. School districts shall comply with
17 requests from the Agency to assist in data collections.

18 (h) Meetings.

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

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

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

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

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

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