

## **Closing Public Schools and Reopening as Independent Schools**

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1. Public schools are the mechanism for delivery of the constitutional right to education. Constitutional rights remain regardless of disability or other protected class designation.
2. Public schools in Vermont are a strong part of our democracy. To close them and re-open them as independent schools pulls away community involvement and voice, which is not in the best interest of our state, our communities, our schools or our students and their families.
3. Independent schools in Vermont are not required to meet federal or state guidelines with respect to FRM (Free and Reduced Meals), Special Education, EST (Educational Support Team) services or other supports and preventative measures contained within Vermont's educational law and practice.
4. Independent schools in Vermont are not required to provide equitable access to students and therefore should not replace the public school system. To do so would limit equitable student's access.
5. We have a responsibility to all our children; options and needed intervention must be available to all children. It is impossible to predict when students will or won't need intervention. Life events can create unusual and unanticipated circumstances. Our obligation to our students extends whenever we provide education with public dollars. If students are publicly funded and do not have access to needed services we are not meeting a foundational standard of care.
6. An area of challenge in providing special education within independent schools includes the reality that the LEA (Local Education Agency) is legally responsible but does not have authority regarding instructional supervision, staff training, oversight and evaluation.
7. Given the complexities attendant to S.91 as currently proposed VCSEA would support further input both legal and programmatic from the Agency of Education in moving this legislation forward. A moratorium on additional public schools being turned into independent schools is a reasonable step to explore under current circumstances.