



Vermont Independent
Schools Association

Positions on Pending Legislative Topics

March 7, 2014

Potential School District Consolidation Legislation

VISA takes no position on changes to the public education management model such as elimination of supervisory unions.

- VISA's concern is with the impacts any proposed education management model changes will have on students, independent schools, taxpayers and local control of education.
- VISA strongly endorses expanding, to the fullest extent, opportunities for students throughout Vermont to attend the school(s) that best fit their needs, as judged by parents.
- VISA very strongly opposes any proposal that would use school district boundary lines to prevent students from maximizing their educational opportunities by attending any public or approved independent school.
- VISA believes the independent schools community must be represented on the "Working Group" and on the "Design Team" proposed in the draft consolidation bill.

Privatization of Public Schools

VISA takes no position on the affairs or actions of public school boards.

- VISA asserts that the Vermont traditions of local control are a source of community cohesiveness and strength, particularly in the state's smaller communities.
- VISA holds that local decisions—particularly when made by vote of the entire local electorate—deserve very great respect and should be given wide scope.

Independent School Accountability

VISA opposes any state action to impose public school educational quality standards upon independent schools involuntarily.

- Vermont's independent schools have a long and successful record of accountability directly to parents for student performance and accountability to the state through their accreditation. Approved independent schools in Vermont customarily gain their state approval by gaining

accreditation from the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC). NEASC accreditation is a rigorous process aimed at lifting school standards and performance to the highest levels.

- Vermont independent schools follow standards for education quality, student support and best administrative practices as set by their accrediting organizations. That independent schools may do things differently should not obscure understanding that they meet or exceed the results sought by the public school standards.
- Independent schools often are ahead of the public schools on meeting standards recently placed on the public schools for Personal Learning Plans, educational support standards and continuous improvement.
- Every student attending a Vermont independent school does so voluntarily. In contrast, most students attending public schools live in a district that does not permit attendance at any school except one operated by the district. Voluntary attendance gives parents substantially greater power in their relationship with a child's school. The likelihood of inequities increases when power relationships are imbalanced.



The Vermont Independent Schools Association represents a community of 126 independent schools that provides educational services to approximately 11 percent of all K-12 students in Vermont. Independent schools provide services that the public schools either cannot or choose not to provide.

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