Testimony to House Education Committee

1. The Leadership Challenge

    What data do we have about the causes of the turnover rates for principals and superintendents? How do these rates compare to rural states with aging populations? How do these rates compare to turnover in private sector upper-management in Vermont? What policy choices would impact the underlying causes of high turnover for principals? For superintendents?

    Why are some districts and supervisory unions high performers, and others not, within the same governance structures?

    What qualities and attributes within school administration leadership in high performing districts is missing in low performing districts? Why?

2. Data Development Agenda.

    What data are necessary for good education policy decision-making?

    Do we currently track this data? Is it accurate? Is it structured for meaningful queries? Who can query the data? Does our privacy policy allow for the maximum level of open access to the data (while protecting individual students)?

    What process do we use to integrate appropriate insights from our data in crafting policy?

    What process do we use to integrate appropriate insights from our data to inform training and improvements in teaching/administration practices? Do we have an up-down transfer of insight from AoE, or a peer-learning/ sharing transfer, or both? Do we measure which sharing model for implementation is more successful or complete?

3. Governance and Roles

    What are the respective responsibilities of the various levels of governance/administration in the educational system (town, multi-town, region, state)? In an alternative system, which of these responsibilities could be moved to a different entity and is there a rationale for doing so?

    In a system with very little centralized authority, the role of the AoE should be explicitly defined in a manner consistent with outcomes it can achieve. Is this currently true? What is the proper scope of the AoE's role? What responsibilities should it assume and what authority should it possess?

    What governance structures are minimally necessary to be able to address the question, "Who do I express my concerns/compliments/comments to, and how are they empowered to be equal to that task?"

4. Resource Sharing and Collaboration

    Have we explored consolidating business operations for all districts into a central office for basic business office functions such as invoicing, data entry, and bill payments, retaining only the business manager position in each district?

    Have we explored whether education districts could be created which expand the tax base and unify legal authorities in a region without limiting the governance to a single school board? In other words, can we decouple the governance structure and the tax/legal authorities?