

Comments on H.615: Public Education Innovation Zones

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The current policy context for Vermont public education is being influenced by three major factors:

1. Personalized Learning - Technology has changed the structure of knowledge and learning. These changes are now impacting the structure of schooling. Vermont's schooling system is quickly becoming obsolete in that its instructional systems rely on outdated modes of organization.
2. NCLBA Approach to School Reform - The NCLBA concludes in 2014. Its AYP and standards-based program of school improvement has been unsuccessful. These policies have exacerbated achievement gaps among student subgroups, and have done little to address the growing inequity of learning opportunities among Vermont's schools.
3. Education Costs and Demographics - Vermont's public education system is quickly approaching a financial crisis. Many districts are not well managed due to significant organizational complexity and frequent leadership turnover. The current system has proven to be ineffective in reducing costs as the number of students has declined.

Conclusions - Why Innovation and H.615?

1. The current context of our public education system relative to the three factors listed above points to the need to make urgent changes if the system is to avoid a significant crisis.
2. A system of disciplined innovation scaled across larger school systems could address the need for rapid change while at the same time being responsive to desired outcomes both in terms of educational outcomes and efficiency outcomes.
3. As the legislature contemplates making significant structural changes to Vermont's public education delivery system, it should consider disciplined innovation as a fundamental design principle. If we once again have reached a moment in Vermont's history when the public education delivery system needs to be restructured, it should be done so based on an understanding of personalized learning and the modern organizational design principles which leverage innovation.
4. H.615, like the Transformation Policy Commission Report and Act 153, supports the continued transformation of Vermont's public education system into a World Class education system, a system which can be more efficient and effective than the current system.