

Starting place for answers to questions on your list

1. Will this close schools? No the bill is not intended to close schools. The bill is intended to provide for better utilization of resources in order to create more equitable learning opportunities.

2. Why is Montpelier thinking that they know better than us what we need? The General Assembly grapples with a wide array of issues of interest to the state as a whole. The education of the State's schoolchildren is one of the more important public issues. We invest a large share of public resources on education - \$1.5 billion a year - and it is appropriate to examine the system through which we deliver it.

3. Why are we doing this, the system isn't broken? A number of facts would lead one to the conclusion that the system should be examined - we have the highest per-pupil spending in the country, lowest teacher-student ratios, yet our student achievement has not increased at the same rate our spending has, especially among students who face barriers such as poverty, disability or language. Our structure is not conducive to stable educational leadership - we have 30% turnover rate of principals and superintendents. Our cost structure limits our ability to deploy resources flexibly to meet the needs of students. We spend a lot of money per student but do not pay our teachers very well. Our local spending decisions are often about which programs to cut, not how to expand opportunities for students.

4. How will this help my kids? Town? In many school districts across Vermont the options for children are limited by the geographic boundaries of their town. The ability to share resources will create more options for systems to respond to the needs of individual learners. Principals will be able to spend their time focused on the critical work of improving teaching and learning, rather than on activities such as building maintenance or federal/state reporting activities. Taxpayers will see more predictability in tax rates and should see the rate of annual cost increases slow. During the initial voluntary period, towns will have the ability to shape articles of agreement that will reflect local values and will determine how issues such as representation on boards, school closure, and school choice will be dealt with. Montpelier will not be making those decisions - communities will.

5. Won't this mean hiring more administrators? No. There is nothing about this proposal that would necessitate the hiring of more administrators. Most central offices have sufficient staff.

6. We won't have board representation or will have only one vote? During the initial voluntary period, towns will have the ability to shape articles of agreement that will reflect local values and will determine how issues such as representation on boards will be dealt with. Articles will have to comply with legal requirements, but other than that, Montpelier will not be making those decisions - communities will.

7. How will this impact school choice? During the initial voluntary period, towns will have the ability to shape articles of agreement that will reflect local values and will determine how issues such as school choice will be dealt with. Articles will have to comply with legal requirements, but other than that, Montpelier will not be making those decisions - communities will. Statewide

8. Will my kids be bussed now and how far? This bill is not about closing schools - the only time a student would have to be transported in a different manner would be if they no longer attend their current school. Those issues will be sorted out locally, not in Montpelier.

9. What are these parent advisory groups? The bill calls for each school to have a community-based council. During the initial voluntary period, towns will have the ability to shape articles of agreement that will reflect local values and will determine what those councils are, how they are appointed, and what their responsibilities are. Articles will have to comply with legal requirements, but other than that, Montpelier will not be making those decisions - communities will.

10. What will this do to my property tax? The bill has a provision that protects communities from seeing more than 5% increase or decrease in their taxes for the first _____ years of the new district.

11. Will the Necap be used to measure? No, the NECAP will not be administered statewide starting next year. That test will be replaced by the SBAC, which is the new standardized assessment that will be administered by the state. The AOE is working on a new balanced accountability system that will examine multiple measures of student achievement, including performance-based assessments, parent and student surveys, teacher evaluation results, in addition to the SBAC. The new system - in addition to locally-developed assessment systems - will be used to measure student progress moving forward.

12. Secretary of State office involved issues around representation on the board? The SOS will likely have a representative on the Legal/Fiscal Research Group, which is charged with looking at representation/voter issues.