

TO: House Education Committee

FROM: Stephan Morse  
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RE: State Board of Education Staffing Request

February 2, 2016

Introduction – On January 8, 2016, the State Board of Education sent a memorandum to the Chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees stressing the need for staffing of the State Board of Education and of the Agency of Education (atch). We also copied the education committee chairs and provided testimony to the House Education Committee, at their request on January 26, 2016.

At that time, the committee requested an overview of state board responsibilities and an estimate of needed staff and costs. This memorandum addresses these requests.

In the larger perspective, the precipitating event was the many tasks assigned to the state board in Act 46, the new governance law. Specifically, the State Board reviews and approves all consolidation efforts and ultimately must resolve disputes or unusual situations.

The Legal Requirement - When the Secretary began reporting to the Governor in 2013, the legislature enacted a provision that said, “The Board shall be supported by adequate staff, who shall report to the Board.” To date, no staff has been assigned.

Over the years, the tasks of the State Board have expanded incrementally by actions of the General Assembly to the point that they now consume 16 pages in the Vermont Education law-book (16 VSA 141 – 180).

#### Major State Board Responsibilities –

- Evaluate, establish and advance educational policies for the State
- Establish and support advisory committees in fulfilling this charge
- Enter into contracts
- Serve as the Board of Appeals in many areas
- Review and Comment on the Agency Budget
- Establish regulations for attendance and deportment.
- Implement and review standards – achievement, leadership, staffing, curriculum, etc.
- Determine graduation requirements.
- Serve as the Board for Adult education
- Adopt rules for independent schools
- Establish financial record-keeping systems.
- Assure Technology currency
- Report annually on the condition of the state and of each school.
- Assure equality of opportunity.



- Report annually to the Governor and General Assembly
- Develop and update a strategic plan
- Approve the establishment and discontinuation of higher education programs/institutions
- Oversee the implementation of Act 46 and the rearrangement and consolidation of central offices.

The State Board of education has no staff, despite the legal requirement. While the agency has been very supportive, the scope of the tasks is large.

Current Initiatives also require agency and board attention:

- Implementing the early education law.
- Implementing the dual enrollment law
- Implementing the educational quality standards
- Synchronizing state and federal accountability requirements (the federal law changed in December 2015).
- Providing the General Assembly, Governor and state board with data driven policy research.
- Addressing issues such as school choice and privatization efforts.
- Assuring professional development for schools in need.

State Board of Education – Necessary positions and Estimated Costs

The Board is aware of the financial situation of the state and the *de facto* freeze on hiring. Nevertheless, if the responsibilities enumerated above are to be met a modest start on providing necessary staff must be initiated. The immediate needs are:

- Staff Position – This would be a low paid position (compared to market value) of a general support person with computer skills and some capacity to conduct basic policy analysis. Statistical background desired. It is to be seen if we can obtain the skills needed at this price  

\$55,000 + \$17.6 benefits	\$72,600
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  - Clerical support – For the miscellany of tasks associated with the above responsibilities  

\$30,000 + \$17.6 benefits	\$47,600
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  - Legal Services – Contracted work to handle appeals and legal issues  

\$30,000	\$30,000
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On appeals, using agency legal services could be conflicted
  - Travel supplies, benefits, miscellaneous \$30,000
  - Office space, telephones, furnishings, personnel system support, etc. to be provided by the agency.
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| Total | \$180,200 |
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