

Meeting Summary

**DRAFT**

Prekindergarten–16 Council  
April 6, 2015  
Room 11, Vermont State House, Montpelier

Council Members Present:

Kevin “Coach” Christie; Tricia Coates; Clarence Davis; Jeff Francis; Scott Giles; Michele Kupersmith; Jeff Maher; Holly Morehouse; Aly Richards (for Rebecca Holcombe); Susan Stitely; Joe Teegarden; Lisa Ventriss (telephone)

Also in Attendance:

Ginny Burley, Chair, Vermont Afterschool, Inc.  
Cynthia Greene, Building Bright Futures  
Tom Little, VSAC  
Peter Peltz, Member, State Board of Education  
Rep. David Sharpe, Chair, House Committee on Education  
Marjorie Zunder and Donna Russo-Savage, Vermont Legislative Council

1. H.361 – As Passed by the House

David Sharpe described the current members of the House Committee on Education as representing geographically diverse areas of the State and communities with large and small schools. There are both Democrats and Republican members. The Committee introduced the bill on a vote of 11-0-0. The House approved the bill, in an amended form, with strong bipartisan support.

He provided a broad overview of three basic elements of the bill:

a. Taxation; Transparency

Most State tax rates are relatively constant and the State builds its budgets based on the revenue that the rate will raise. The current education funding model is more like the municipal system – local entities adopt budgets and then the tax rate is set in order to meet the fiscal demands. H.361 would change to a “yield” or “dollar equivalent” model where the residential rate is set at \$1.00 and the State will announce how much revenue can be raised at that rate. This shift will not alter the way school budgets are set or how much is raised, but it increases transparency for voters.

In addition, H.361 would require the warning for school budget votes to include both the per equalized pupil amount and the percentage increase or decrease of that amount compared to the prior year.

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b. Provisional 2% Cap on Education Spending

If total statewide education spending in FY17 exceeds the FY16 amount by more than 2.95%, then a variable 2% cap is imposed on education spending in FY2018 and FY2019. It is intended as a bridge to the governance changes in FY20. The cap is variable in two ways:

- i. a district can choose to apply the percentage of allowable growth to per pupil spending (if gaining students) or to its total budget (if losing students)
- ii. the percentage growth is indexed to current per pupil spending so the allowable percentage growth is greater for districts that have spent below the State average than for those that have spent above the average

c. PreK–Grade 12 Districts

The bill moves towards the creation of prekindergarten–grade 12 districts with an ADM of 1100 or greater in order to provide educational opportunities and to realize some fiscal savings. Business managers testified that they expected savings of \$12–32 million statewide, mostly from consolidated business practices. JFO estimated savings of \$25–50 million statewide through both business practices and educational savings.

Jeff Francis commented that the bill does good work in four main areas:

- it goes a long way toward enhancing opportunities for all students in the State
- it will contribute over time to fiscal efficiencies in the education system
- it enhances transparency
- it addresses affordability of our education system

He noted that according to many measures, Vermont spends more on K–12 education than other states, but our education system doesn't reflect that (e.g., we don't pay our teachers as well; our physical infrastructure is failing). He stated that he doesn't agree with everything in H.361 but sees it as an important step forward. He hopes the Senate will take up H.361 and work from it – the work needs to be done this year.

Holly Morehouse asked about the Senate's activity and likely response to H.361. David Sharpe responded that he has spoken with individual members of the Senate Committee on Education who have indicated the belief that H.361 is heading in right direction. He is not sure what the points of contention between the House and Senate will be.

Lisa Ventriss congratulated House Education and the House for voting out H.361. She believes that it signals important shift and hopes that the Senate will continue the conversation.

Scott Giles requested that the Chair return in the autumn to discuss the Education Committees priorities for the rest of the biennium.

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2. January 26, 2015 Meeting Notes

Clarence Davis moved that the meeting notes be approved; Coach Christie seconded; no discussion; all members approved.

3. Focus of Subcommittee Activities for 2015:

At its January meeting, the Council decided to continue to conduct its more detailed work through subcommittees of members and nonmembers and selected three primary areas of concentration for 2015.

a. ELOs:

i. Federal Funding: It is possible that federal funding received through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program will be combined into a block grant with other programs. The Agency, VSAC, and others are monitoring developments and working with the Vermont delegation to protect the funding stream. 120 sites in high poverty areas in Vermont received a total of \$5.7 million.

ii . H.391 (Rep Mrowicki and others): H.361 incorporates many of the policy recommendations of the PreK–16 Council’s ELO report, especially the need to scale up access to quality opportunities across the State. The bill would create a council to examine the issue and to disburse any available funding. It would be helpful to have the structure in place to do this. The bill is currently in House Education.

iii. Focus for 2015: The Subcommittee will focus on competency/proficiency - based learning, including how it is supported by PLPs and ELOs. Other states are doing some good work. Among other things, the subcommittee will look at:

- ensuring that alternative learning opportunities are recognized by higher education; including by examining existing models / pilot programs
- digital badging
- ensuring that opportunities envisioned in PLPs are available equitably, and not accessed only by the more well-resourced students

Jeff Maher is concerned with the lingering connotations of “competency.” Holly Morehouse replied that it means “proficiency” but that she used the word “competency” because a potential grant to fund the subcommittee’s work is based on that word. Michele Kupersmith commented that “competency” has a different – and positive – connotation in the business and industry world. The members discussed that the focus now is on middle and high school students and will eventually move upward in age.

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There is broad representation of multiple sectors on the subcommittee, except:

- business / workforce (Lisa Ventriss will provide suggestions; Michele Kupersmith suggested someone from a WIB)
- legislative
- UVM (Clarence Davis will provide suggestions)

b. CTE Centers:

This Subcommittee will try to find ways to use the centers more fully. This effort will include increased use by adult learners in collaboration with the Department of Labor and the VSCs. Joe Teegarden, Tricia Coates, and Michele Kupersmith have worked together to define the Subcommittee's charge:

i. Foster collaboration among the Vermont State Colleges, Vermont Department of Labor, and Career and Technical Education Centers.

ii. Frame the possibilities for collaborative action that advances a statewide, coordinated system of adult vocational training in Vermont.

iii. Identify and resolve resource and regulatory obstacles to such collaboration.

iv. Design a system that encourages coordination among all parties, takes advantage of our collective resources, is responsive to the needs of Vermont businesses, and maximizes access for participants.

The subcommittee will identify the aspects that need to be formalized in order to ensure implementation – e.g., through legislation or a college charter change. This is important if the State is going to move beyond a fragmented approach to CTE.

Tricia Coates commented that the entities within the VSC system have very different missions (Vermont Technical College; CCV; and other three colleges) and that the various CTEs have different programs and a varied focus. It is important for the subcommittee to educate itself.

Michele Kupersmith concurs. She believes that the Agency of Education is already beginning to focus on this. From the Department of Labor's perspective, some high school graduates who are pursuing postsecondary education or training are either not succeeding or are succeeding only because the postsecondary entity provides remedial programs. It would be useful to have data concerning, e.g., the actual number of bodies in CTE (rather than FTEs) and what happens to them when they graduate from high school. Scott Giles replied that VSAC has some data and can work with AOE to produce what is needed.

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Sectors missing on the subcommittee include:

- business and industry
- legislative (Coach Christie volunteered)

Jeff Maher commented that the reason he has remained in the Council is for the opportunities to work across sectors. He observed two primary linkages in today's discussions, both in relation to proficiency-based learning / graduation requirements:

- i. determining whether a high school graduate is ready for the next step
- ii. ensuring that higher education community understands what it means in terms of transcripts, etc.

Scott Giles commented that VSAC has begun the conversation with college counselors and the admissions community, but needs to reach out to leadership as well.

Holly suggested that the conversations should also occur during Council meetings so that all Council members – and the first two subcommittees – had a clear understanding going forward. Perhaps at a June or July meeting.

c. Dual enrollment: This Subcommittee will explore how to improve access for target population and how to ensure quality. Scott Giles reported that the subcommittee hasn't officially formed. Based on discussions that he has had with Council members, the issues it will address are:

i. Equity: Who is participating? What are the levels of participation among first generation and lower income students? What can be done to increase their access?

ii. Quality: What do we know about the quality of programs? What systems are in place to make sure that dual enrollment courses meet academic standards as well as achieve social and aspirational goals

iii. Data: What data is available now to answer these questions? What data needs to be collected for review in 3 to 5 years?

The subcommittee needs a broad diversity of sectors, including representatives of:

- higher education
- programs that work with first generation and lower income students

Tricia Coates commented that it is important to clarify whether this subcommittee is focusing on dual enrollment or on a broader spectrum of flexible pathways. John Fischer's paper is good start for understanding dual enrollment issues. VSC will be issuing an early college report on Tuesday, April 7.

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A small group will begin the planning process for this subcommittee (including Aly Richards, Rebecca Holcombe, and higher education representative(s)) by clarifying the questions on which the subcommittee will focus. This group will share the initial questions with the entire Council. After receiving feedback, the subcommittee will create its “charter” for its work this summer.

### 4. Meetings in 2015

June/July – proficiency-based learning / graduation requirements

Late September –

- initial reports of the subcommittees and opportunity for Council to provide feedback and ask questions
- Chairs of two Education Committees – issues they believe the Committees would like the Council to consider in the coming year

November – formal reports from subcommittees; possible approval by the full Council

Holly Morehouse expressed some concern that it might be difficult to complete reports by November. If so, then perhaps subcommittees will provide the policy recommendations and not full report – and seek Council approval of the policy recommendations at that time.

December – agenda planning and also talk about strategy for delivering policy recommendations to the Legislature

The Council will decide the dates of all four meetings soon.

### 5. Discussion

a. Peter Peltz (former Council Chair; Former House Representative; current State Board of Education member) is concerned that the Agency and State Board are understaffed and will not be able to perform what is required of them in H.361. He is also not sure how tuitioning towns are addressed. He agrees that CTE center underutilization is an issue. He also stated that when enacting the dual enrollment / early college legislation, the General Assembly did not consider that students living in lower income families might be precluded from participation due to costs related to transportation, books, fees, etc.

Rep Christie would like to look into facilitating 9th and 10th graders' access to CTE centers; perhaps legislatively. CTE Centers are developing programs for them, but some high schools are not supporting / allowing students to attend. Enrollment in the programs may help with continuation rates.

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Jeff Francis commented that everything the Council and its subcommittees are discussing need a sensible delivery system. He wondered whether the Council would consider making a statement of support for legislation leading to a changes to the education delivery system that makes it better able to respond to students, communities, taxpayers

Scott Giles is concerned that the timing is too tight and there is no longer a quorum.

Jeff Francis withdrew his suggestion but urged each members to stay aware of what is happening at the State House. He believes that that things are going to get bas soon if no change is made this year.

David Sharpe is upset about the quantity of misinformation about H.361 that exists in the press and elsewhere. He asks that everyone read H.361. A section by section summary is also available.

Adjourned at 11:45 a.m.