

H.361 – Sec. 1. Findings

- VT K – 12 population: 103,000 in FY97 versus 78,300 in FY15
- School-related personnel numbers have not decreased proportionally to student decline
- VT’s public schools now fulfill an array of human services functions
 - VT students with severe emotional needs: 1.5 % in FY97 versus 2.3 % FY15
 - Percentage of students from families in crisis due to loss of employment, opiate addiction, and other factors, has also increased
- VT 6 – 17 year old children living in families receiving nutrition benefits:
 - 13,000 in FY97 versus 19,200 in FY14
- 13 different types of school district governance structures in VT
 - VT lacks cohesive governance and delivery systems
 - Many school districts:
 - Are not well-suited to achieve economies of scale
 - Lack the flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources and provide a variety of high quality educational opportunities
- 16 V.S.A. § 4010(f) (enacted in 1999): Purpose was to protect school districts, especially small districts, from large, sudden tax increases due to declining student populations
 - Some communities have artificially low tax rates because:
 - Steady, continued decline in some districts
 - Compounding effect of the legislation as written inflates the equalized pupil count in some districts by as much as 77 %
- Optimal school size for learning:
 - National literature suggests elementary schools of 300 – 500 students
 - VT’s smallest elementary school has 15 students (K–6)
 - National literature suggests high schools of 600 – 900 students
 - VT’s smallest high school has 55 students (9–12)
 - Of the 300 public schools in Vermont:
 - 205 have 300 or fewer students
 - 64 have 100 or fewer students; of these, 16 schools have 50 or fewer students
- Optimal school district size for financial efficiencies:
 - National literature suggests school districts of 2,000 – 4,000 students
 - The smallest Vermont school district has 6 students
 - 79 Vermont school districts have 100 or fewer students
 - 4 Vermont school districts have more than 2,000 students
- Recognize the importance of a small school socially & educationally to its community
 - *“It is not the State’s intent to close its small schools, but rather to ensure that those schools have the opportunity to enjoy the expanded educational opportunities and economies of scale that are available to schools within larger, more flexible governance models.”*
- Multiple public schools within a single district support:
 - Flexibility in the management and sharing of resources
 - Innovation (e.g., each school develops specialized focus, increasing opportunities for students to choose the school best suited to their needs and interests)