



VCSEA 2016 Legislative Priorities

Vermont's Educational Delivery System: Consistent with our mission in meeting the needs of all learners, including those with identified disabilities, VCSEA supports the direction of Act 46 toward an efficient, effective and equitable educational delivery system.

1. **Funding Structures** to support the Multi -Tiered System of Supports:

The State of Vermont's current special education funding system reflects dated structures within the overall education system, and therefore continues to reflect counterproductive silos in service delivery models for students with disabilities. The funding system deserves careful review and consideration for the future of inclusive services delivery models, effectiveness and efficiency allowing for a flexible and cost sustainable model.

2. **Models of Service Delivery:**

Critical focus points of an improved educational delivery system include:

- a. As outlined in Act 46, we support an interdependent, high functioning leadership team within a school district that holds a shared vision and commitment to fidelity of practice for all areas of student instruction and support;
- b. High quality first instruction and high expectations for all students that are at the foundation of an effective, responsive and sustainable MTSS system. Inclusive systems must be designed to promote student independence while building academic, social and emotional competence and strong communities;
- c. A commitment to high quality instruction for all students requires instructional competence grounded in strong content knowledge. Educational professionals' knowledge and instructional skill along with the role of paraprofessionals in providing support must each be re-examined in this light.
- d. Children who are at high risk, poor, disabled and/or English language learners must have access to the highest quality early childhood learning experiences that are available to other children. Act 166 implementation structures within AOE and AHS must result in equity of access and service.

Mental Health Service for Children and Families: VCSEA supports the essential collaboration and interwoven service delivery system between Mental Health, Department for Children and Families (DCF), Education and other key partners required in an integrated service delivery model. The strong foundation of the System of Care built more than twenty-five years ago has been challenged by current children and family needs.

1. The emotional needs of many students are not being addressed under the current system of delivery. Wait lists, lack of service options and disparate availability of mental health resources across this state dramatically impact students' readiness to learn. This is also evidenced by our high number of children identified as emotionally disturbed under special education and 504. Increased cost and increased acuity is present across the state.
2. The Interagency System of Care (SOC) as outlined in Act 264 (1990) and the Interagency Agreement of 2005 is critical. Given the current context the Interagency Agreement needs to be rewritten in order to be relevant and responsive to our pressing community needs.
3. Strong collaborative leadership at the state level within all relevant agencies is a necessary condition for improving social and emotional outcomes for all of Vermont's children. Redesign of the structures and funding of the collaborative system for children's mental health and developmental services, DCF and education needs to be considered to maximize the whole system's capacity to serve the well-being of Vermont's children and families.