

\* \* \* Consulting Services on the Delivery of Special Education Services \* \* \*

Sec. X. CONSULTING SERVICES ON THE

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DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

(a) Consulting services contact: The Agency of Education shall contract with a consulting firm meeting the criteria set forth in subsection (c) of this section for the provision of special education consulting services to up to 10 supervisory unions, supervisory districts, or unified union school districts. The Agency, in consultation with the consulting firm and interested districts and supervisory unions, shall select, as member districts and supervisory unions for the study, at least three existing supervisory unions or supervisory districts with an average daily membership of 1,500 students or more and at least three unified union school districts formed pursuant to 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46. Selected districts and supervisory unions shall provide an equivalent match equal to 50 percent of the cost of the consulting firm's services, with the other 50 percent being funded by the appropriation provided in this section; provided, however, that to the extent the Agency is able to allocate additional funding, it can decrease the funded percentage for districts or supervisory unions that the Secretary deems in need of additional funding. The financial contribution by districts or supervisory unions may be from transition grants or other appropriate grant funding and may, at the discretion of the district's or supervisory union's board of directors, be allocated across the district's or supervisory union's 2017 and 2018 fiscal years.

(b) Nature of consulting services and reporting:

(1) For each of the selected districts and supervisory unions, the consulting firm shall review current practices for the delivery of special education services against

research-informed practices, and shall make recommendations to inform improved delivery of special education services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

(2) The consulting firm shall present a final report with recommendations on the delivery of special education services to the selected school districts, the General Assembly and the Agency of Education on or before October 1, 2017. The Agency shall share this final report with all districts and supervisory unions. This report shall, on a State-wide basis based on the consultant's experience with the selected districts and supervisory unions, identify current practices for the delivery of special education services against research-informed practices, and shall make recommendations to inform improved delivery of special education services in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The report shall identify patterns and differences in special education delivery practices across the State. The consulting firm shall provide to the Agency of Education any and all research and data compiled during the course of its work pursuant to this section.

(c) Selection of consulting firm. The Agency of Education shall contract with a consulting firm which:

(1) has experience working directly with Vermont school districts and with school districts across the country to raise achievement and manage cost in special education;

(2) uses national special education staffing benchmarking from at least 1,000 school districts covering at least 10 million students, and web-based schedule sharing technology that captures how individual staff members use their time, including duration, location, and group size;

(3) has conducted and published primary research on cost-effective strategies for raising achievement of struggling students, both with and without special needs; and

(4) is recognized as a national expert and published author on raising special education achievement in a cost-effective manner.

(d) Appropriation. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in 16 V.S.A. § 4025, the sum of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the Education Fund for fiscal year 2017 to the Agency of Education, which the Agency shall administer in accordance with this section and any unused funds shall revert to the Education Fund. In addition, to the extent that there is a reversion from fiscal year 2016 to fiscal year 2017 of unused special education funds in the Agency's budget, the Agency may use up to \$100,000 of these funds, if available, to administer in accordance with this section.