

**Testimony Outline: School District Hiring Process**  
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80% of Vermont school district costs are personnel related. A well articulated hiring process is an essential management strategy for successfully managing personnel and personnel-related costs. Vermont's complex governance structure creates role confusion making the articulation and implementation of clear administrative hiring procedures difficult in multi-district supervisory unions. I believe this challenging management context is directly related to Vermont's relatively high personnel costs.

Committee Questions

1. *How to keep down overall education system costs* – Manage personnel effectively. Tightly integrate hiring practices with back office and HR operations, not separate them. An effective hiring practice is essential to both organizational improvement and cost management.
2. *The importance (or not) of governance consolidation* – Governance consolidation will be necessary to clarify roles and responsibilities and to simplify the management of organizational systems such as hiring.
3. *Low hanging fruit for savings, if any* – Absent governance consolidation, supervisory unions could become the sole employers of record for all personnel. This would provide for better sharing of staff among schools and better management of personnel costs.
4. *Requirements from Montpelier that, if relieved, would save money and not negatively affect learning* – Fund the development of the AOE longitudinal data system so duplicative data collections related to personnel data could be eliminated, and the quality of such data could be improved.

Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union (BRSU) Context

- The BRSU is a large, multi-district supervisory union. In 2007, the BRSU had separate payroll and business offices in three of its five schools. The function of central office staff as it pertained to hiring was to “clean up” local processes and records in order to meet monitoring, audit and budgeting requirements. Common hiring issues included:
  - Illegal hiring: hiring that occurred without superintendent nomination or board action
  - Inaccurate salary schedule placement
  - Lack of written documentation of a hire; verbal hiring
  - A board voting to hire a teacher before the teacher agreed to accept the position, and without the teacher's full understanding of the salary or other compensation for the position
  - Inaccurate cost center determination including cost centers funded by special education, Medicaid and other federal sources
  - Inaccurate budgeted costs
  - Incorrect implementation of IRS compensation guidelines including allowable mileage reimbursement and overtime
  - Creation of positions and compensation schemes without board oversight or approval
  - Variations in compensation and benefit packages for employees doing comparable work
  - Missing or incomplete employment paperwork including employment applications, tax forms, I-9s, and background check records
- The BRSU now has one business office, one teacher master agreement and a single accounting/HR information system. A single business office alone has saved BRSU districts over \$100,000 a year. A common hiring process has eliminated duplication of effort, saved time, and greatly improved the accuracy of employment records, budgets, and public records

- such a board meeting agendas and minutes.
- Attached to this outline are current copies of : 1) BRSU Hiring and Dismissal Policy, 2) BRSU Hiring Administrative procedure, and 3) a recent hiring recommendation brought before the Manchester School Board.
    - Principals have to follow process.
    - They have the freedom to select their personnel. They are held responsible for these decisions so they need to have the authority to make these decisions.
    - Principals have the flexibility to design local employment search processes based on the context of specific vacancies. This includes whether or not to include board members or staff in a specific search.
    - Principals are responsible for formulating a recommendation to the superintendent even when a team process is used at the local level. The recommendation is, “I recommend” not “We recommend.”
    - Principals learn effective hiring practices on the job.
  
  - Policy Conclusions Based on the BRSU Experience
    - Effective local hiring policies and procedures are essential for managing personnel-related costs.
    - Effective local hiring policies and procedures are essential for improving schools.
    - Effective local hiring policies cannot be legislated due to the inherent role confusion found in Vermont's public school governance structure.
    - Effective local hiring policies are more likely to emerge when a more uniform and less complex governance structure has been achieved.