

\* \* \* Staff to Student Ratios Task Force\* \* \*

Sec x. STAFF TO STUDENT RATIOS TASK FORCE

(a) Creation. There is created the Staff to Student Ratios Task Force, a collaborative effort among government, non-profit organizations, research experts, and other education stakeholders, that will strive to best ensure education quality while simultaneously ensuring fiscal efficiency in the context of the state's declining student population.

Specifically, the Task Force is charged with:

- (1) reviewing current staff to student count ratios for specific categories of schools and school district configurations, and establishing optimal target ratios for different school district configurations;
- (2) identifying barriers that hamper staffing flexibility at the local level, including whether aspects of the regulatory environment, including but not limited to mandatory staffing requirements and collective bargaining or other contractual obligations, contribute to lower staff to student ratios;
- (3) aligning to the greatest extent possible the work of the task force with existing research findings and reports, based on studies conducted either nationally or in New England, concerning optimal classroom practices and resources, and class and school sizes for successful learning outcomes, and the impact of population decline on rural schools;
- (4) attending to compliance with federal rules and regulations, so as to avoid jeopardizing the state's federal funding;
- (5) determining a mechanism or mechanisms that account for the effects of familial and community level poverty and human services need, including but not limited

to student experiences of trauma and familial or community level addiction, on staffing ratios; and

(6) developing recommended strategies for districts to help them meet targets.

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following six members:

(1) the Secretary of Education or designee;

(2) the Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents Association or designee;

(3) the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association or designee;

(4) the Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association or designee;

(5) the Executive Director of the Vermont-National Education Association or designee;

(6) one member selected by the Vermont Association of School Business Officials;

(7) two to four members from Vermont postsecondary institutions, selected by the

Task Force, who have expertise in areas among the following: multi-age classrooms and

teaching strategies, interdisciplinary instruction, school realignment and reconfiguration, and

the impact of community poverty, trauma or addiction on education staffing; and

(8) a national expert in rural education, selected by the Task Force.

(c) The Committee shall have technical assistance from the Agency of Education.

(d) Report. On or before December 15, 2018, the Committee shall present to the House and Senate Committees on Education its findings concerning optimum staff to student ratios, including optimum ratios for a variety of school and school district sizes and configurations. The Committee shall include in its report a recommendation as to whether staff to student target ratios should be included in statute for fiscal year 2021.

(e) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before July 1, 2018.

(2) The Task Force shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting.

(3) The Task Force shall cease to exist on December 31, 2018.

(f) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Task Force who are not employees of the State of Vermont and who are not otherwise compensated or reimbursed for their attendance shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than ten meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Agency of Education.

(g) Appropriation. The sum of \$2,440.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Education to provide funding for the purposes set forth in this section.

**Comment [BH1]:** Need best estimate for this.