

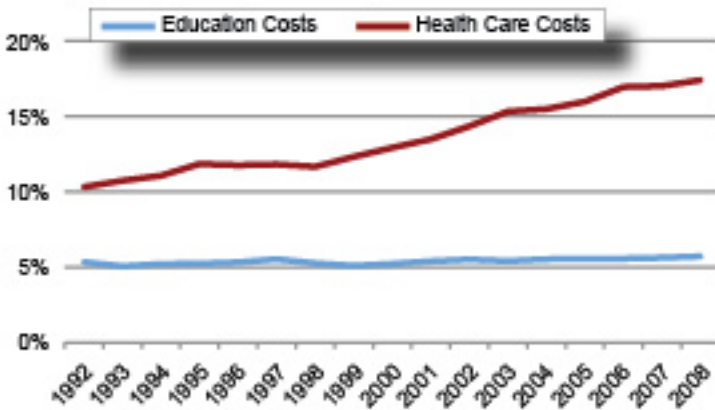
Testimony before the House Education Committee
 29 March 2018
 Scott Thompson (Calais, U-32, "Three Myths of School Spending")

Three Non-Myths

- I. **Is there a crisis in education spending?** If so, its objective urgency is essentially the same now as it was in 1992. And as it was in 1997, when the Legislature passed Act 60 and instituted small schools grants. And as in 1999, when the Legislature quadrupled the amount of small schools grants disbursed. And as in 2015, when Act 46 began tightening conditions on the awarding of small schools grants. The structural ratio of education costs to Vermont's economy has held steady to a remarkable degree. Yet the perception of a crisis of overspending has grown into a sense of public emergency. (Why?)

K-12 Education vs. Health Care Costs

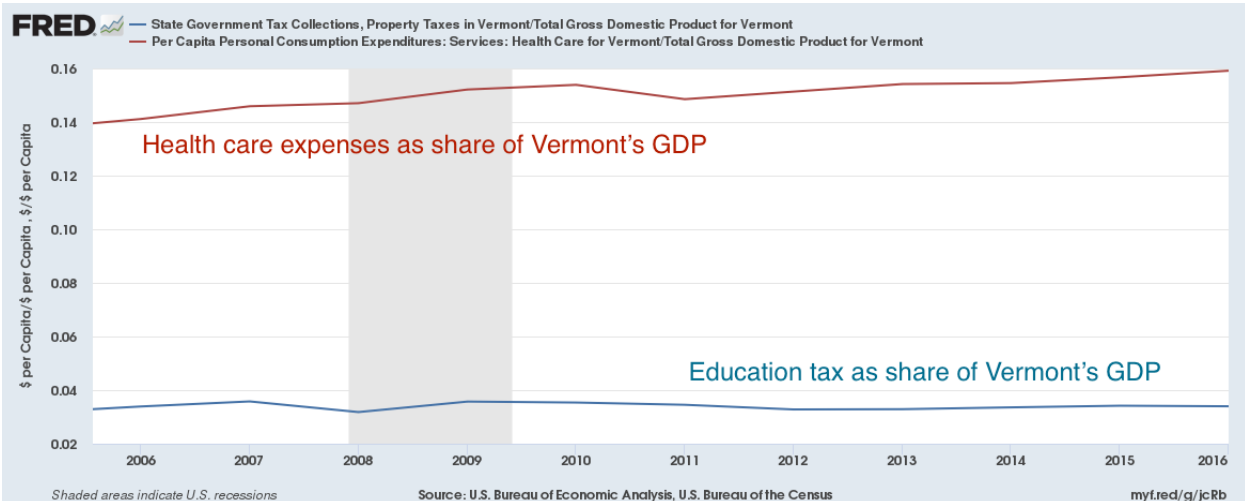
As a percentage of gross state product



Source: Public Assets Institute

Data sources: Vermont Department of Education and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

The story continued — as far as U.S. Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis data go (with education tax standing in as a slightly smaller proxy for total K-12 education costs):



Shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Bureau of the Census

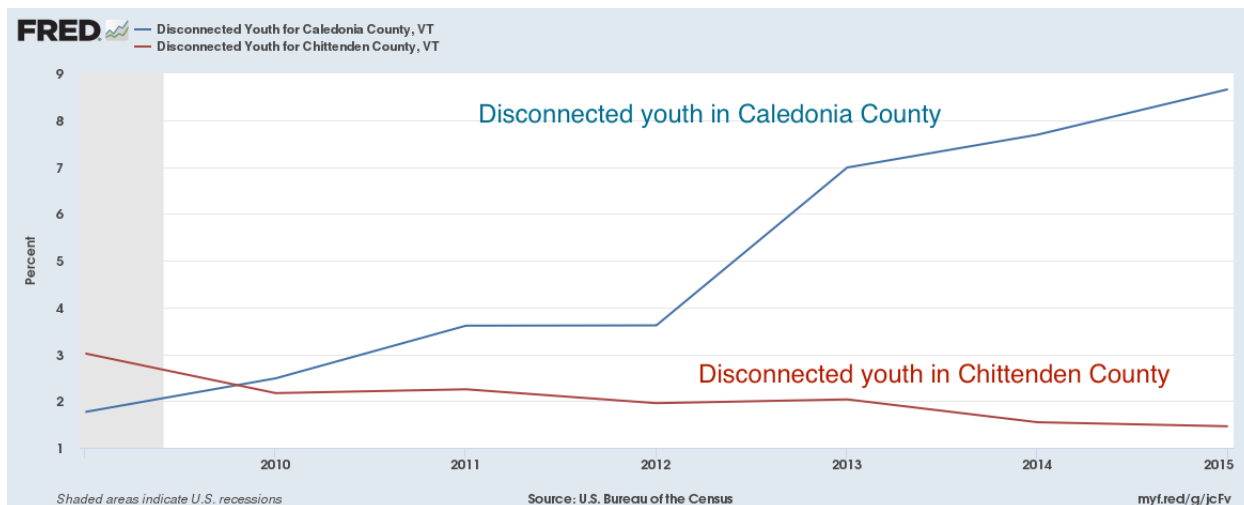
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II. Cost containment is cost shifting

From “We’re in this together” to “Fend for yourself”: Those with the means fend for themselves just fine — at first anyway. Those without the means absorb the shifted cost in whichever financial, emotional, bodily, or other form it takes. Meanwhile they in turn try to lighten their burden in whatever way they can (“coping, hoping, doping, ...”). Social cohesion frays.

The danger: public education increasingly concentrates on the less advantaged, both as it strives to fulfill its mission to provide equity and as wealthier families desert the public system for private alternatives. In a self-reinforcing cycle, public education for the poorer segment of our population tends to become poorer public education. (Example: West Virginia.)

III. Two Vermonts



“Disconnected Youth represents the percentage of youth in a county who are between the ages of 16 and 19 who are not enrolled in school and who are unemployed or not in the labor force.” (St. Louis Fed)