



VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION

MEMO

From the Desk of Jay Nichols

The Vermont Principals' Association supports school leaders to improve the equity and quality of educational opportunities for all students.

Act 173 Implementation Delay Testimony: 4/17/20

Jay Nichols for the record. Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the consideration of delaying all aspects of Act 173 implementation by an additional year. Although, I am a member of the Census-Based Advisory Group, I want to make clear that my brief testimony today does not represent the Advisory Group as we have not been able to meet to officially discuss this issue although I suspect we will all support this delay.

- I've advocated for 173, as I believe with proper implementation, especially in terms of changing instructional practices, this can be a game changer that makes a huge difference in the learning of our most vulnerable children: not only those receiving special education services but any students who struggle academically. If we can make sure to implement the law with the flexibility school leaders and teachers need, the opportunities will be there to really make a positive difference for these students
- I also believe that this law has the potential to bend the curve on special education spending. It won't lower spending over time but I do believe it may work to lower the increases of special education costs by allowing districts more options to effectively meet the needs of all students
- Unless instructional practices change, the goals of the law are not going to be realized. For instructional practices to improve professional learning and training is required. I do not feel that

districts are ready to effectively implement these changes in practice at this time.

- The COVID-19 crisis is front and center in everything everyone is doing. At the very least, the last part of this school year has really very little if any opportunity for best practices related to the implementation of 173. The AOE is 100% correct in advocating for an additional year before implementation. And quite frankly, we may have to delay even further down the road if we don't have thorough training provided to every school district in the state. This has to be a priority - and right now it cannot be. So for those reasons, I fully support a one year delay of all aspects of Act 173 the Census Based Funding Special Education law.