

Discussion Points:

1. The Report is an expert analysis of Vermont's existing weighting system and related recommendations.
2. The Report is not a law or a court decision.
3. The Report provides strong evidence that changes to Vermont's weighting system (within the education funding system) are necessary to achieve a more equitable funding system. It is, in effect, a call to action.
4. In addition to the weighting issues, there are an abundance of policy issues that also should be considered in a review or evaluation of the funding system. They include (but are not limited to) implications from the moratorium on school construction aid and growing needs for investment; the "evolution" of newly unified systems (as they work to deliver more equity and efficiency overtime); continuing declines in enrollment in many districts; the transition to Act 173 itself; implications of merging districts tax rate transitions; policy, practice, management levers recommended or applied by the Agency of Education (uniform chart of accounts; statewide accounting system; data systems, etc). The need to evaluate these factors should not impede action.
5. As modeled in various simulations, there will be some dramatic changes in equalized pupils, education spending per pupil, and associated tax rates. That is to be expected, but the implications of those changes should be considered and understood to the extent possible before the changes are made. This consideration is not intended to discourage or prevent the recommended changes. Districts will need support in communicating with their communities about inevitable changes.
6. When taken together, 3, 4 and 5 above present a compelling case for deliberate, well-informed and timely action by the General Assembly.

An Approach for Your Consideration:

1. Develop a statement of legislative intent indicating the need and expectation for action on the weighting study recommendations.
2. Create a commission on implementing the recommended weighting changes and related matters (or similar).
3. Charge the commission with:
 - a. Providing briefings on the rationale for, and anticipated effects of the weighting changes, for every member of the General Assembly.
 - b. Engaging expert analysis in understanding potential interplay between weights, the education funding system, Act 173, school construction aid, factors of rurality; poverty; English Language Learners, mental health and related obligations for

schools, etc in a manner that will inform legislators and school district personnel alike.

- c. Support the education associations in providing consistent information on the opportunities and budget implications of the weighting changes.
- d. Convene the commission in as many sessions as necessary between enactment and October 15, 2020 in order to produce a hard recommendation on enactment of (immediate application), or transition to, (phase-in) to inform both the process of school district budget development for FY2022.

Note: If the General Assembly determines that it must act in advance of the 2021 Legislative Session to modify weights, it could make partial weighting adjustments for the FY2022 year during the current legislative session.

Other Considerations:

1. There is a potential need to consider Act 173 funding timeline regardless of what changes are considered for this year. There are no considerations for 'supplemental adjustments' in Act 173 as the intent was for the weighting study to inform recommendations from the Census-Based Advisory Group.
2. How to contend with the potential that increased spending capacity won't translate to increase investment in the areas associated with the respective weights; and how to measure that over time?
3. How to best inform the policy making process in a manner that has decision makers (state and local) understanding the purpose of changes to the weighting system with an emphasis on using the understanding to better apply those changes?
4. How to support (or not) the implications of the increase or decrease in access to resources associated with the weighting change?
5. Need to give due consideration to geographic sparsity
6. Is a contingency necessary in case a lawsuit is brought?

Thank you.

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