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Testimony on S.63: Changes to 16 V.S.A. § 944 Dual Enrollment Program

Given by:

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Summary

S.63 proposes a change to the Dual Enrollment program. This section amends the current law and adds language to allow students attending public schools in contiguous states and in the Province of Quebec to access Dual Enrollment.

Dual Enrollment in Context

Dual Enrollment is one flexible pathway described within the *Flexible Pathways Initiative to Secondary School Completion* that allows eligible Vermont residents to take up to two college courses if approved by their school principal or principal's designee. As stated in §941, the Flexible Pathways Initiative was created to:

1. **“encourage and support the creativity of school districts as they develop and expand high-quality educational experiences...;”**
2. **“to promote opportunities for Vermont students to achieve postsecondary readiness through high-quality educational experiences that acknowledge individual goals...;”**
and
3. **“to increase the rates of secondary school completion and postsecondary continuation in Vermont.”**

To implement this program in accordance with statute, §941(b) further explicates “[T]he Secretary shall develop, publish, and regularly update guidance [...] to assist **school districts**:

1. **“to identify and support secondary students who require additional assistance to succeed in school [...]”**
2. **“to work with every student in grade 7 through grade 12 in an ongoing personalized learning planning process [...]”**
3. **“to create opportunities for secondary students to pursue flexible pathways to graduation [...]”**

Current State

The Flexible Pathways Initiative was created to support and be implemented by Vermont school districts/LEAs to create flexible opportunities for students to increase high school completion rates and post-secondary continuation rates.

Dual Enrollment in Practice

An eligible Vermont resident is someone who:

1. Has completed grade 10;
2. Has not received a high school diploma; and
3. Is:
 - a. enrolled in:
 - i. a Vermont public school, including a Vermont career technical center;
 - ii. a public school in another state or an approved independent school *designated as the public secondary school for the student's district of residence*; or
 - iii. an approved independent school in Vermont to which the student's district of residence pays publicly funded tuition on behalf of the student;
 - b. assigned to a public secondary school through the High School Completion Program; or
 - c. is a home study student.

Current State

We understand there has been confusion as to how to read section ii. The Agency would recommend that the following language would clarify the meaning of section ii:

(ii) a public school in another state designated as the public secondary school for the student's district of residence or an approved independent school designated as the public secondary school for the student's district of residence;

This language was included in deference to 16 V.S.A. §827, which states that a non-operating district may designate an independent or public high school(s), which then is regarded as the public school for tuition purposes. However, the law (16 V.S.A. §827(e)(1)) then says that “notwithstanding” any other provision of the law to the contrary, Paulet, Rupert and Wells may designate a “public high school located in New York as the public high school of the district.” There is no provision allowing Paulet, Rupert or Wells to designate an out-of-state private school or allowing any other Vermont district to designate an out-of-state public school. There would have been no reason to include an exception in the law if any non-operating district could designate an out-of-state high school. Under §827, there is no such thing as an out-of-state independent school that is designated as a Vermont public high school.

Additionally, due to recent mergers under Act 46, part ii in this definition of an eligible student is no longer relevant and redundant.

Process

1. Superintendents, principals, CTE Directors and participating higher education institutions sign agreements with the Agency to ensure compliance with statute and policy
2. Dual Enrollment (or any flexible pathway) is part of a student's PLP
3. The high school and college/university determine if the student is sufficiently prepared to succeed prior to participation
4. The student must request and receive approval to participate via the Vermont Dual Enrollment Voucher system:

- a. vouchers are the mechanism by which the State can track student participation and ensure students do not exceed the two course minimum;
 - b. hold participating secondary and post-secondary schools accountable to statutory and policy requirements;
 - c. reconcile expenditures and make payments on behalf of the state;
 - d. allow for communication between the various stakeholders (students, high schools, AEL providers, colleges/universities, etc.); and
 - e. **are the mechanism by which we can report to the Legislature student performance in service to the goal of the Flexible Pathways Initiative to increase high school graduation rates and post-secondary continuation rates.**
5. High schools approve or deny participation in the Dual Enrollment program and confirm whether students may be eligible for further assistance (e.g., stipends)
 6. Home Study students request permission from the AOE who verifies that the Home Study student has a current plan on file at the AOE
 7. HSCP students request permission from the assigned high school if their HSCP Plan Manager has approved and documented in the student's PLP

Cost

The per-credit cost of dual enrollment courses varies depending on where the students receive instruction and by whom. AOE estimates that each class costs on average \$700.

- Any student who meets the criteria outlined in the statute and policy manual is entitled to a maximum of two courses.
- The AOE is obligated to reimburse the higher education institutions the per credit hour rate.

Change in S.63

The inclusion of students attending out-of-state schools would pose significant challenges to the Agency in reporting accurately to this body the performance of Vermont schools and Vermont students; in reconciling expenditures with student performance; and on reporting on the overall success of the program.

Financing Dual Enrollment

The State is obligated to fund Dual Enrollment. These transactions are tracked through vouchers.

1. The Governor's FY 2020 budget recommendation shifts the entire appropriation for this program to the education fund (historically, the costs of this program was shared equally between the Education Fund and Next Generation Fund).
2. When the program started in 2015, there was no data on projected use of the program, the \$1.2M appropriation was sufficient and was not changed in FY 2016, FY 2017 or FY 2018.
3. In FY 2016 and FY 2017 the AOE saw an increase in the use of vouchers, and carryforward was used to cover the program costs.

4. In FY 2019 the Agency is projecting a program cost of \$1.7M, and appropriations have been adjusted accordingly.
5. In FY 2020 the Agency is requested an appropriation of \$1.7M, depending on program spending in FY 2019 the Agency will determine if additional funds are necessary.

Hypothetical Fiscal Estimate

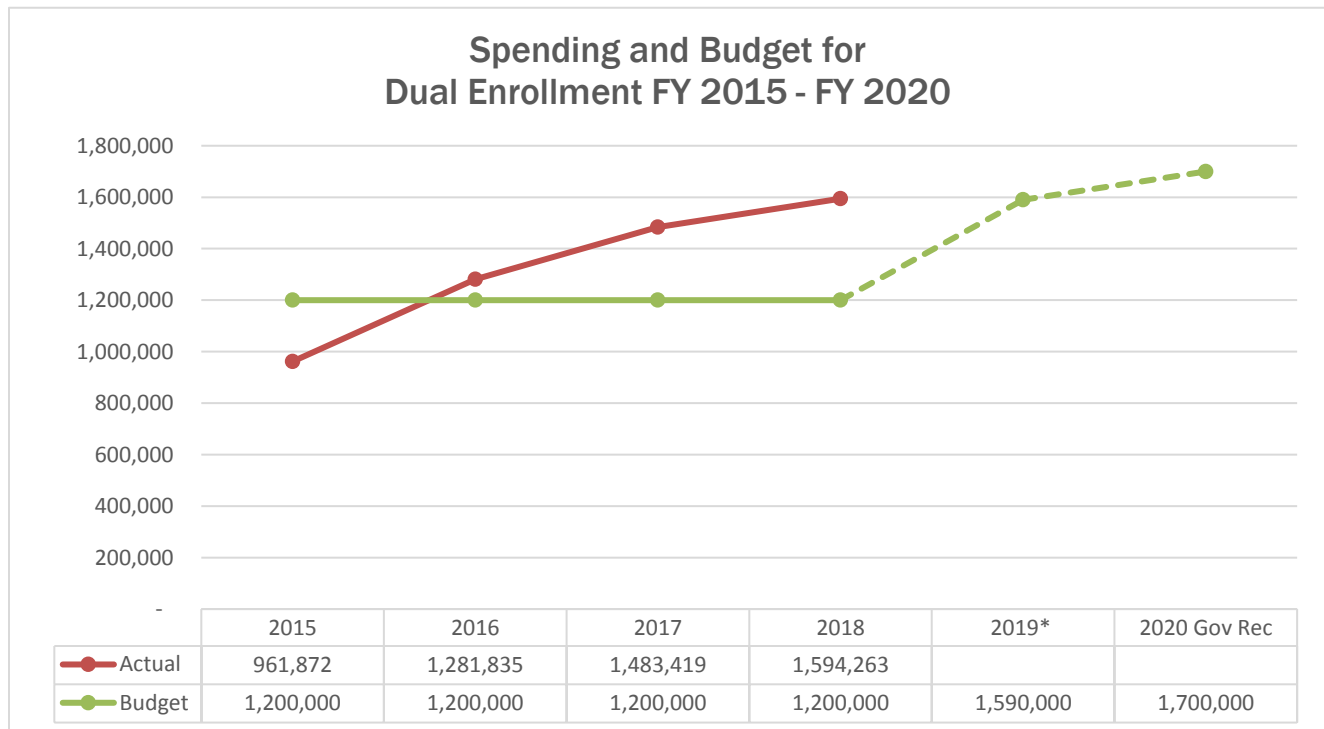
If there are 100 additional students that enrolled, and they each take 2 courses, at \$700 per course – the total cost of the program could be \$140K.

Current Program – Fiscal Summary:

<u>Dual Enrollment Summary</u>							
Fiscal Year	EF	Next Gen (GF)	Actual	Annual Change	% Growth	Budget	EF Carried forward
2015	480,936	480,936	961,872	-	-	1,200,000	-
2016	681,835	600,000	1,281,835	319,963	33%	1,200,000	-
2017	883,419	600,000	1,483,419	201,584	16%	1,200,000	300,000
2018	797,132	797,132	1,594,263	110,844	7%	1,200,000	500,000
2019*	740,000	850,000	1,590,000	(4,263)	0%	1,590,000	110,000
2020 Gov Rec	1,700,000	-	1,700,000	110,000	7%	1,700,000	n/a

* Updated in the Budget Adjustment

**Numbers may not add due to rounding



S.63 Change

The proposed change would require an additional appropriation to support the expansion of the program. However, this expansion does not come with the regulatory control to sufficiently manage and track spending.

Because the AOE does not know how many non-publicly-funded high school juniors and seniors would be approved to participate in dual enrollment by out-of-state school principals/designees, it is difficult to project the fiscal impact of this change.

If the program expands as proposed, AOE will have to pay for these vouchers without the ability to regulate these schools and requiring an additional commitment of time and personnel to determine an alternate process to oversee and report on the program.