



PO BOX 207
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The problem:

1. The Vermont Average Announced Tuition (AAT) is not actually representative of secondary spending in Vermont, yet The Sharon Academy (TSA) is required to set our tuition no higher than the AAT in order to be economically accessible to all students.
2. Because the AAT provides inadequate funding, we must raise \$275,000 through our annual fund and charge each student a \$650 (MS) or \$750 (HS) annual activities fee (which amounts to a tuition surcharge paid by families) in order to meet our operating budget.
3. One of the pathways to be exempt from the AAT rate as an independent school is to meet the Educational Quality Standards (EQS).
4. When the EQS were updated from the previous "School Quality Standards," language was removed that allowed the standards to be applied to independent schools and in fact the current standards direct independent schools to statutory language that has been repealed.
5. Without a way to set our tuition at an amount that covers the actual cost of educating our students, TSA cannot equitably provide an education to all students in our area. We will be forced to increase the tuition surcharge, which will make our programs less accessible to the families in our community. This leaves TSA with no viable or equitable pathway forward to remedy our tuition gap even as we set a goal of being as accessible as possible to all students in our area. Without statutory remedy, TSA may be forced to further increase tuition and therefore become less accessible to area students.

The solution:

1. Statutory language that amends 16 vsa 824 that gives TSA, because we meet the criteria, a clear pathway forward to be an equitable learning opportunity for education for any Vermont student.
2. The suggested language is [here](#).
3. By passing this amended language, TSA would meet many of the goals of the EQS but within a framework built for independent schools. As a result of passage, TSA would be able to set its tuition at a rate that adequately meets its operational costs without a surcharge to families.
4. TSA has no intention of becoming "the most expensive game in town" but merely hopes to equitably recoup the costs of instruction.



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Proposed changes bolded and underlined

§ 824. High school tuition

(a) Tuition for high school students shall be paid by the school district in which the student is a resident.

(b) Except as otherwise provided for technical students, the district shall pay the full tuition charged its students attending a public high school in Vermont or an adjoining state or a public or approved independent school in Vermont functioning as an approved area career technical center, or an independent school meeting education quality standards; **or an approved independent school in Vermont with open enrollment, that provides special education to all eligible students, pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), part B, as amended, and as in effect at any given time, and that receives 2/3 or more of its tuition from school districts in Vermont;** provided:

(1) If a payment made to a public high school or an independent school meeting education quality standards is three percent more or less than the calculated net cost per secondary pupil in the receiving school district or independent school for the year of attendance then the district or school shall be reimbursed, credited, or refunded pursuant to section 836 of this title.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection or of subsection 825(b) of this title, the board of the receiving public school district, public or approved independent school functioning as an area career technical center, or independent school meeting education quality standards may enter into tuition agreements with the boards of sending districts that have terms differing from the provisions of those subsections, provided that the receiving district or school must offer identical terms to all sending districts, and further provided that the statutory provisions apply to any sending district that declines the offered terms.

(c) The district shall pay an amount not to exceed the average announced tuition of Vermont union high schools for the year of attendance for its students enrolled in an approved independent school not functioning as a Vermont area career technical center, or any higher amount approved by the electorate at an annual or special meeting warned for that purpose. (Added 1969, No. 298 (Adj. Sess.), § 55; amended 1971, No. 52, § 5, eff. April 14, 1971; 1975, No. 27, § 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1976; 1983, No. 247 (Adj. Sess.), § 3; 1991, No. 24, § 3; 1991, No. 24, § 3; 1991, No. 204 (Adj. Sess.), § 7; 1995, No. 34, § 2; 1997, No. 60, § 8, eff. June 26, 1997; 1997, No. 71 (Adj. Sess.), § 86, eff. March 11, 1998; 1997, No. 138 (Adj. Sess.), § 21; 2001, No. 8, § 9; 2005, No. 54, § 8; 2007, No. 66, § 6; 2009, No. 44, § 13, eff. May 21, 2009; 2015, No. 23, § 24.)