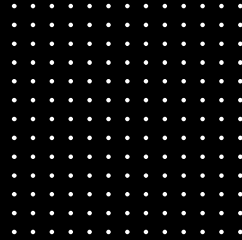




Vermont
Independent
Schools
Association

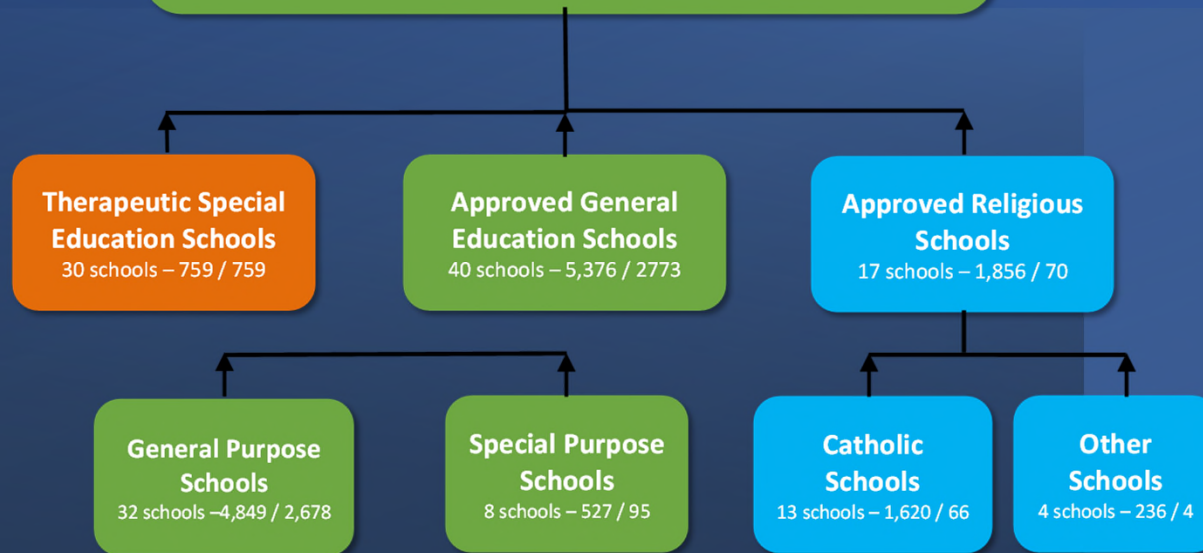


**Educational equity means
that each child receives
what they need to
develop to their full
academic and social
potential.**

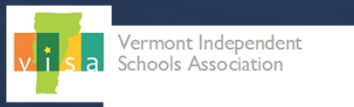
nationalequityproject.org

Vermont Approved Independent Schools

87 schools – 7,991 students / 3,602 tuitioned



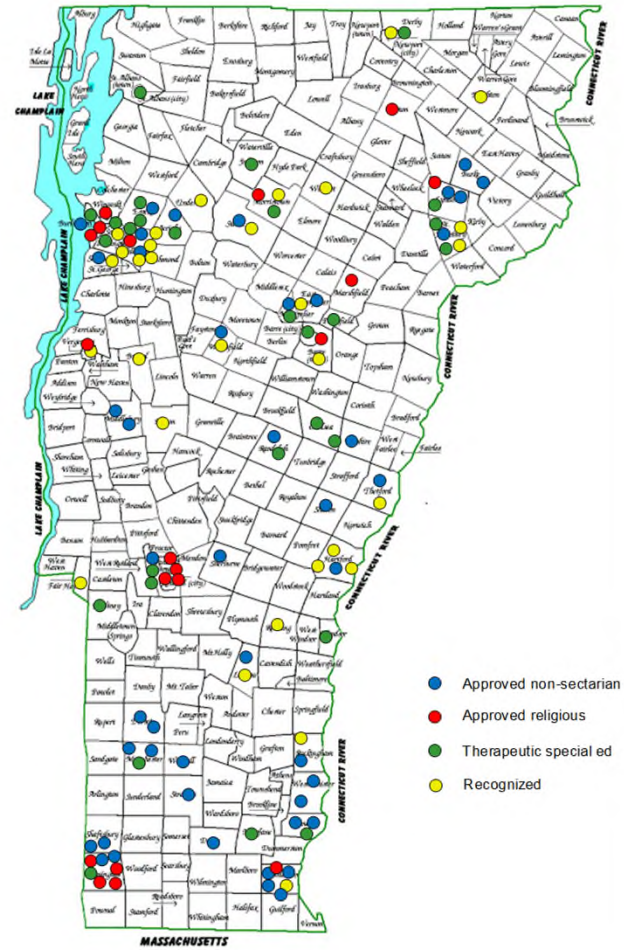
Total Enrollment / Tuitioned Enrollment



Vermont Independent Schools Association

Data source: Vt. Education Agency, Oct. 2021 Enrollments.

Vermont has 87 approved independent schools, located all over the state.



Nondiscrimination and independent schools in Vermont

VISA stands against discrimination against students, faculty and staff in all schools.

VISA supports the nondiscrimination policy in bill S.219 passed by the Vermont Senate in the 2022 legislative session and will continue to support that bill's goals.

VISA supports Vermont's current educational system and the mosaic of educational opportunities independent schools offer to Vermont students.

Independent schools have a long-standing and important role in Vermont's educational landscape. That role includes providing education to students from districts without full preK-12 public school grade coverage, therapeutic special education schools and schools that provide unique educational opportunities to Vermont students.

The federal and state anti-discrimination laws and public accommodation laws that apply to public schools also apply to independent schools.

**VISA Statement
Responding to the
U.S. Supreme
Court's Ruling
in *Carson v. Makin***

Vermont and Maine are directly impacted by the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that public tuition funds cannot be denied to school choice students attending religious schools.

Anticipating that ruling, the Maine legislature revised Maine's nondiscrimination statutes to include all educational institutions. The effect is to require uniform adherence to nondiscriminatory practices at all schools, public or independent, religious or secular.

**VISA Statement
Responding to the
U.S. Supreme
Court's Ruling
in *Carson v. Makin*
*cont.***

The Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA) endorses Maine's action as an effective response Vermont can make.

The Maine law identified as "a civil right" the opportunity for full participation in any educational institution's offerings without discrimination "because of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, a physical or mental disability, ancestry, national origin, race, color or religion."

VISA is committed to working with the Vermont General Assembly to support passage of a law requiring all schools receiving public funds to comply with nondiscrimination laws.

How does Vermont school choice work?

Eligibility for school choice applies in 88 Vermont towns, though the grades covered vary among the towns. These are towns with populations too small to support a full K-12 school in the town.

The Vermont Constitution entitles every resident student to a publicly-supported education. In regions where funding a local school was impractical, the state allows families to choose where their children will go to school. The range of choices includes any public or independent school meeting approval standards set by the Vermont State Board of Education.

In practice, approximately half of all eligible families choose independent schools and the other half choose public schools. In FY 2022 there were 5,451 tuitioned students with 2,880 attending independent schools and 2,571 going to public schools.

Independent Schools and Special Education

- As of January 1, 2023, three-fourths of all students attending Vermont general education independent schools were in a school that provides special education services.
- Beginning July 1 of 2023, every approved independent school accepting public funds must provide special education services.
- Students whose special needs are so severe that they cannot be accommodated in their home schools often are placed by their home school district in any of the 30 therapeutic independent schools throughout Vermont.
- Currently, seven schools are providing all levels of special education services. These are mostly the large schools. They enroll about three of every four tuitioned students in the state.

Oversight of Independent Schools

- The State Board of Education and the Agency of Education have oversight of independent schools.
 - The State Board writes the rules for independent school approval and oversight. Those rules were substantially revised earlier this year to meet new requirements in Act 173.
 - The Board grants independent school approvals to schools meeting the requirements in statute and rules. The Board also receives and investigates complaints, and may take action in accordance with its Rules 2223.8 and 2223.9.
 - The Agency of Education supports the State Board's approval and complaint processing responsibilities by conducting pre-approval reviews and by investigating complaints.
 - Independent school approval authority and responsibilities are given in 16 VSA 166 (b). State Board rules 2223 and 2226 through 2229 provide detailed standards and procedures.
 - Approved independent schools in Vermont customarily gain their state approval by gaining accreditation from the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) or the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE), two accrediting organizations in the U.S. Accreditation is a rigorous peer-review process aimed at lifting school standards and performance to the highest levels.

Therapeutic Schools

- Therapeutic schools provide services for students placed by their local LEA. The public system relies heavily on therapeutics for this service.

Questions?