

Responsible Implementation of Act 73

November 18, 2025

CONTEXT

- The Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA) believes the state must provide equal access to **high-quality learning opportunities** so all students have skills to thrive in a 21st century world.
- School boards have a critical role to play in ensuring that schools have **the resources they need** to provide outstanding academic, enrichment, and support services to all students.
- Across the state, school districts are facing significant **fiscal challenges** as a result of declining enrollment and sharp increases in several major expenses – including health benefits, facilities deterioration, student mental health services, and special education services, among others.
- As residents and taxpayers contend with **economic pressures** of their own, communities cannot rely on tax increases alone to close budget gaps in our school districts.

POSITIONS

- Faced with these realities, the VSBA appreciates the **overarching goals** of Act 73 – to improve student outcomes, create a more cost-effective system of schools and districts, and ensure the most efficient use of public finances. We join with State officials in seeking viable, sustainable solutions to some of the most pressing issues in public education.
- However, our members have raised grave concerns about the process through which the state has begun to pursue these goals, including the potential for mandatory **consolidation and redistricting** as a primary strategy, in the absence of data.
- The approach and timeline prescribed in Act 73 would lead to a **major overhaul** during a short time period without adequate consideration for the impact of such upheaval on communities, districts, schools, educators, families, and most importantly, the students we serve.
- At the same time, we recognize that relying solely on voluntary consolidations may perpetuate or even worsen **disparities in resources and opportunities** between districts.
- The VSBA appreciates the work of the **School District Redistricting Task Force** to develop options for the state legislature to consider, guided by a template for assessing whether their proposals support the stated goals. The Task Force has taken important steps to collect input from a broad range of constituents.
- The VSBA has developed our own **set of criteria** (see next page) for evaluating the proposals and plans that emerge through this process, reflecting the needs and priorities identified by school board members from across the state.

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MOVING FORWARD

As we continue to explore options for shaping the future of public education in Vermont, **we strongly urge state officials to:**



Ensure that school board members have **strong, meaningful participation** in the deliberation and decision-making throughout the remaining phases of the project, and ensure that the affected communities have a voice in any proposals related to school mergers and closures;



Provide detailed **analysis, data, and evidence** to support the premise that widespread consolidation and redistricting will yield lower costs, better schools, and ultimately, improved student outcomes; and



Develop a **comprehensive action plan** and timeline that address the vast range of considerations and variables that must be taken into account to ensure successful implementation of any redistricting proposal.

VSBA CRITERIA FOR A SUCCESSFUL STATEWIDE PLAN

Our members from across the state have shared their perspectives on the essential components of any plan to transform public education in Vermont. **VSBA believes the successful proposal for reorganizing Vermont's public school districts will:**

- ▶ Be based on a **unified vision and mission** for Vermont's education system, PreK through Grade 12;
- ▶ Improve **student outcomes**, as supported by evidence and data that show the correlation between redistricting and enhanced educational experiences and results for all students;
- ▶ Ensure **equitable access** for all students to public educational opportunities, including academic programs, co-curricular activities, and support services, particularly by identifying and addressing inequities that currently exist in both access and outcomes;
- ▶ Promote a shared sense of responsibility to educate students with a **full range of needs and strengths**, recognizing that some populations may require additional resources;
- ▶ Prioritize equitable access to both **high-quality career and technical education and flexible pathways** for all students, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed for successful careers of their choosing;
- ▶ Increase resources to support the maintenance, repair, renovation and construction of modern **school facilities**, recognizing that safe, healthy and well-designed learning environments are essential to better student outcomes;
- ▶ Create a more **efficient and cost-effective system of school districts** that addresses some of the critical expenses that are rising at exponential rates, including employee health benefits, mental health supports, facilities needs, and special education services;
- ▶ Recommend parameters for **district size** by enrollment that are large enough to allow efficiency at scale but small enough to maintain a strong sense of community and personalized attention to every student, supported by research;
- ▶ Recognize and address significant **variation across different regions** of the state, including student demographics, community resources, and other geographic considerations;
- ▶ Emerge from a **collaborative, inclusive, transparent decision-making process** that incorporates meaningful engagement and input from residents, families, educators, district leaders, and school boards, who will be most affected by any changes;
- ▶ Be supported by **detailed cost analyses** of current district finances and projected savings through redistricting, including the impact on staffing levels and class sizes; and
- ▶ Minimize disruption and ensure **effective implementation** through the development of a comprehensive transition plan and timeline, with adequate funding to support all expenses associated with redistricting.

