

Act 73 and Redistricting

Vermont Agency of Education

January 9, 2026

Evolution of Act 73

- **September 2024 - [Picus Odden report](#)**: With governance and funding reforms (“EB Model”), Vermont could substantially improve student achievement at a reduced cost
- **January 2025 - [Governor Scott’s Education Transformation Proposal](#)**: Proposed a new district map and adapted EB Model to Vermont context by increasing base and weights of foundation formula to fund additional teaching positions, increase teacher salaries, and expand access to CTE
- **May 2025 - [Enhanced EB Model](#)**: In response to feedback from the field and GA, an increased base of the foundation formula to decrease class sizes, provide additional interventionists, and boost pre-K funding
- **June 2025 - [Act 73 of 2025](#)**: Bipartisan compromise to further increase base and weights, map new districts with a task force, and require studies to address key policy questions

School District Redistricting Task Force

- **Intent:** Section 3 of Act 73 of 2025 established the School District Redistricting Task Force to “recommend new school district boundaries and configurations to the General Assembly.”
- **Section 3(c):** *“The Task Force shall study and consider different configurations for school district consolidation and propose not more than three options for new school district boundaries.”*
- **Requirements:** New districts shall have (“to the extent practical”) ADM of 4,000-8,000 and shall have grant lists and enrollments that are “balanced, demographically equitable, logistically feasible, and create the least amount of disruption to students as possible.”
- **Considerations:** Task Force also required to consider criteria such as existing boundaries, transportation patterns, and geographic barriers.

Role of the Agency of Education

AOE did not have a seat on the Task Force, but provided significant assistance:

- **Data:** Beginning in August, AOE responded to over 150 individual data requests from the Task Force and coordinated with the ADS to set up an [interactive, publicly-available webpage](#) with this data
- **Technical expertise:** At the request of Task Force members, AOE staff provided ongoing feedback and helped develop various map concepts (e.g., regional high schools, CTE regions, etc.)
- **Legal analysis:** AOE General Counsel presented on [types of school choice in Vermont](#) in order to facilitate discussions on tuitioning
- **Feedback on maps:** Secretary Saunders presented the AOE's reflections on final map proposals

Points of Consensus

- **Importance of scale:** *“Scale matters. Small changes in scale affect per pupil cost... when more students are brought into districts that operate public schools, they gain scale efficiencies that can be used to lower per pupil costs.”* ([November 10 draft of CESA proposal](#))
- **Need for mergers:** *“In many parts of the state, we have too many buildings for the kids we have, particularly at the high school level. At the high school level in particular, we need to get more kids under fewer roofs.”* ([November 10 draft of CESA proposal](#))
- **The need to manage school choice:** *“...we cannot discuss possible mergers without discussing tuitioning.”* ([November 10 draft of CESA proposal](#))

Reflections and Feedback

- The Voluntary Merger/Cooperative Education Services Agency (CESA) proposal maintains 119 school districts and 52 SU/SDs and does not align with the intent of Act 73
- CESAs add bureaucracy, cost, and complexity to an already top-heavy governance structure
- The proposal does not address how districts will be funded during the decade-long voluntary merger period
- Vermont needs a strategically designed system of monitoring, oversight, and training that reflects the state's small size and builds capacity at the right levels

Voluntary Merger/CESA proposal does not align with the intent of Act 73

- Section 3(c) of Act 73: *“The Task Force shall study and consider different configurations for school district consolidation and propose not more than three options for new school district boundaries.”*
- Current proposal does not propose “new school district boundaries”; instead, introduces an entirely new policy path not contemplated by the bipartisan coalition that passed Act 73
- By any plain reading of Section 3 of Act 73, the proposal is clearly inconsistent with the goals and guardrails established by the General Assembly
- Proposal mirrors Act 46 of 2015 in its narrow focus on governance reform

CESAs add bureaucracy, cost, and complexity to an already top-heavy governance structure

- Proposal inverts the Governor's original plan: maintain 52 SU/SDs and 119 districts while adding five CESAs on top
- Result is more governance, more overhead, and preservation of legacy inefficiencies
- Unlike other states, Vermont has significantly smaller student enrollment and already has a service-sharing construct (the Supervisory Union)
- CESAs will complicate rather than simplify AOE oversight: AOE expected to implement statewide education priorities through CESA boards in addition to monitoring 52 SU/SDs that remain underneath

Proposal does not address how districts will be funded during the decade-long voluntary merger period

- Decade-long transition period exacerbates inequities embedded in the current system and risks violating the principles of the *Brigham* decision
- Implementing foundation formula with 119 districts and 52 SU/SDs would create pronounced winners and losers
- Withstanding federal funding reductions can only be achieved through systemwide efficiencies that generate savings which can then be reinvested
- Boards and district leaders need clarity to support long-term strategic budgeting

Vermont needs a strategically designed system of monitoring, oversight, and training that reflects the state's small size

- Since 2024, the AOE has taken significant steps to strengthen accountability, implement quality standards, and address the shortcomings of previous reform efforts
- Governor's original proposal explicitly recognized the need for increased AOE capacity, coupled with streamlined governance, to fulfill statewide responsibilities
- CESA proposal's suggestion that additional governance layer will "streamline" AOE oversight is not realistic
- The State (not a regional intermediary) is accountable for ensuring federal and state education laws are implemented with fidelity

Moving Forward

AOE is committed to continuing to be a partner in implementation of Act 73:

- Last summer, the AOE reorganized around our five strategic pillars to meet the evolving needs of the field
- In November, the AOE convened over 300 educators, students, school/district leaders, and legislators to collaborate on key policy questions and develop a shared vision
- As required by Act 73, the AOE has produced numerous reports that address key policy questions raised by the General Assembly (statewide graduation requirements, special education delivery, facilitating mergers, etc.)
- The AOE is also prepared to provide support in developing district maps

Act 73 Legislative Reports

- [Statewide Graduation Requirements Recommendations](#): Recommendations to ensure that all Vermont graduates are set up for success in college, career, and civic life in alignment with requirements under Act 73
- [Current State of Special Education Delivery](#): Identifies strengths, challenges, and opportunities in the delivery of services to students with disabilities
- [Special Education Strategic Plan](#): Presents the prominent and cross-cutting focus on special education within the Agency's multi-year strategic plan.
- [Cooperative Services and Therapeutic School Oversight](#): Recommendations on the type and structure of cooperative education services within the context of larger school districts and the oversight of therapeutic schools at the state and local level
- [Statewide Systems and School Construction](#): Proposed implementation plan for statewide financial data and student information systems as well as considerations for a school construction division within the Agency of Education
- [Transportation Reimbursement Guidelines](#): Considerations and preliminary recommendations for establishing an equitable and modernized education transportation system
- [Merger Support Progress](#): Progress update on developing guidance to school officials and school board members regarding the business processes and transactions involved in facilitating school district mergers under Act 73