



# Kingdom East School District

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Vermont House Education Committee  
February 18, 2026

*Testimony Presented by*  
*Sean McMannon*  
*Superintendent of Schools*  
*Kingdom East School District*

Good afternoon Representatives. I am Sean McMannon, superintendent of Kingdom East SD serving the wonderful towns and nearly 1700 students of Burke, Concord, Lunenburg, Lyndon, Newark, Sheffield, Sutton and Wheelock. We maintain seven school buildings all of which require varying levels of repair, renovation and/or new construction. Also, I serve on the State Aid for School Construction Advisory Board.

I think that I bring a unique perspective since I spent the first 22 years of my educational career in VT in Chittenden County serving Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shelburne, St. George and Shelburne as the CVU principal for eight years where we completed a \$19 million dollar school construction and renovation project supported by 30% state aid. As the Winooski superintendent for ten years we completed a sorely needed \$55 million dollar comprehensive school construction and renovation project without any state aid in 2023.

Currently, Kingdom East SD is shovel-ready with over \$80 million dollars in school project costs across our seven buildings. However, we could not close a school and move students to the nearest school right now due to lack of space. Our communities cannot afford to support a bond, in fact a ballot item for repairs to three of our schools in June 2019 for \$24 million dollars was soundly defeated 789 “No” to 313 “Yes” votes. These repairs would cost of \$50 million dollars now due to rapidly rising annual escalation costs. We continue to spend \$500K-\$1million each year to keep our buildings running. While we have managed not to close any schools this year due to building issues, four of our schools have had emergency heating problems this winter.

No doubt you are all aware of the billions of dollars of deferred maintenance as taxes rose, budgets tightened and school boards invested in staffing and program instead of maintaining a more formative approach to facilities and operations. The good news is that we have the Facilities Condition Assessments (FCAs) which provide a starting point for our school building needs across the state and the State Aid for School Construction Advisory Board is working on its next report.

The challenging news is: Where is the money going to come from? And how do school construction, renovation and aid dovetail with Act 73?

We are in a period of declining student enrollment, high student needs (academic and social, emotional and behavioral), significant school building needs and the least prepared teaching staff we have seen in decades. Our response has gone from paralysis to reactive and we are now (hopefully) moving toward calibrating to find thoughtful and sustainable plans for the future of education in VT. This will require investment, it will not magically save money in the short-term. In my opinion, there are a few key points needed to move forward:

1. Reliable and usable data systems that shows all the metrics when considering education transformation including school construction needs.
2. Research on what is best for students, staff and families to support any policy shift within education transformation including school construction needs.
3. Defined funding source(s) for school construction aid. It is better to do something than nothing, we cannot solve all of the school construction needs in a few years but \$50-100 million per year from a \$9.4 billion budget can go a long way. Tie the eligibility to school construction aid to Act 73 components such as class, school and district size, the highest needs as described by the Facilities Condition Assessments (FCAs) and the wealth and poverty landscapes across our state.
4. Focus on developing methods to improve the teacher recruitment and preparation pipeline because none of this matters without effective teachers.

Marge Piercy said in her poem "*To be of use*":

“I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,  
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,  
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,  
who do what has to be done, again and again.”

Thanks for your time, your leadership and your effort...again and again! We are happy to answer any questions.