

Principles of Redistricting

Vermont Agency of Education

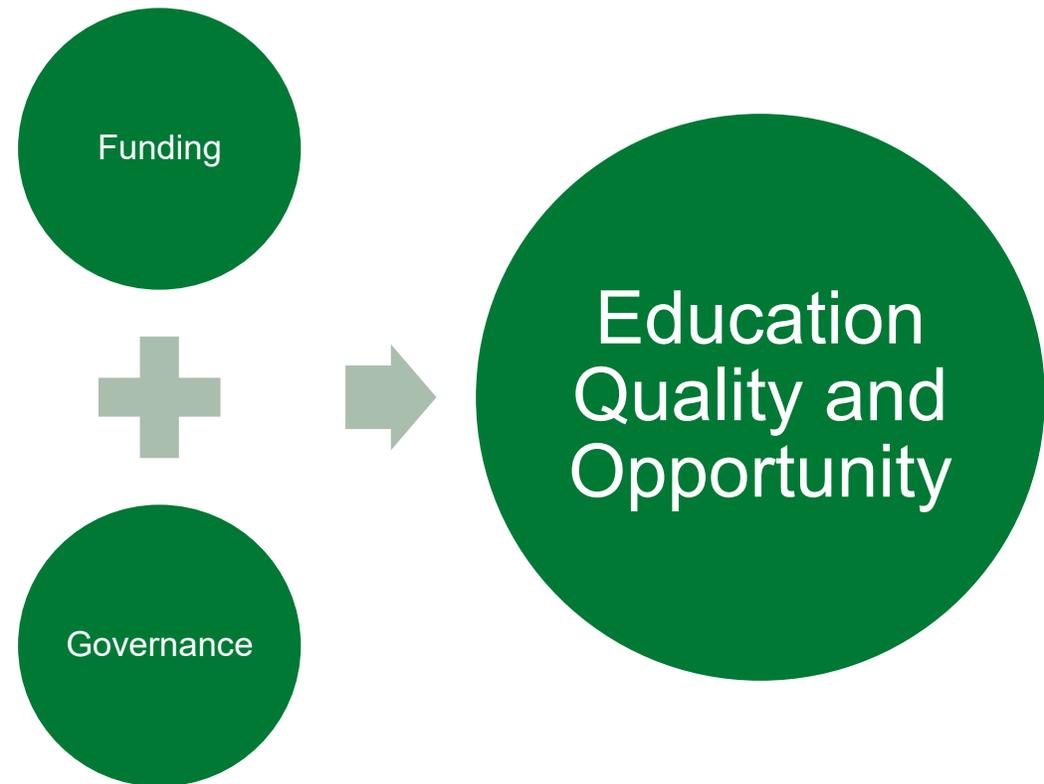
February 12, 2026

Ed Transformation: Quality, Governance and Funding

- When funding levels are set statewide through a formula, districts must be large enough to deliver services effectively within that allocation.

Coherent strategy:

- 1) The foundation formula ensures that dollars are distributed fairly based on student need to deliver a high-quality education.
- 2) Larger, more efficient districts ensure that those dollars stretch further and reach classrooms rather than duplicate efforts and cost.
- 3) The result is more resources aligned to student supports, opportunities and highly qualified, well-paid teachers and staff



Emphasis on Quality

Clear requirements that statewide **accountability** systems must expect more progress for the groups of students who have been behind, base school ratings on the progress of all groups of students, and expect action when any group of students is consistently underperforming.



The Education Trust | www.edtrust.org

The Every Student Succeeds Act

Authorizing Federal Legislation, Updated 2015



Vermont State Plan

Vermont recently revised the state accountability plan to ensure compliance with federal statute and alignment with the new assessment system. Please see below for [background](#), [purpose](#), a [summary of changes](#), [information on public comment](#), and to view the [full state plan](#).



Vermont Accountability Framework

Beyond ESSA

Accountability in Vermont is shaped and informed by a variety of other federal and state laws, including IDEA, Perkins, WIOA, Education Quality Standards, District Quality Standards, Annual Assurances, and unique requirements for state education laws (i.e., Act 139, Act 77, Act 73, etc.)

Working with the Field on Framework for:

- Setting clear expectations for school quality,
- Evaluating the set of conditions necessary for academic success,
- Measuring progress toward goals,
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities across every level of the education system, and
- Implementing high-yield strategies and organizing support to proactively plan and sustain improvement for SU/SDs, schools, and the state of Vermont as a whole.



Why Does this Matter?

- The state of Vermont has clear education, school, and district quality measures
- Our outcomes in almost all measures are not where we want them to be
- We have to ensure that schools and districts have the conditions in place to meet the state's quality standards and expectations
- Scale, complexity, and inequitable funding are barriers

Overcoming Barriers of Scale & Inequitable Funding to Support Quality

Act 73 Criteria

In Act 73 of 2025, the General Assembly established criteria for new districts, all informed by research and principles dating back to the Governor's original education transformation proposal:

- ADM of 4,000 to 8,000 students
- Grand list and pupil-count balanced
- Demographically equitable
- Logistically feasible
- Least amount of disruption to students as possible

Education Transformation Goals

- Expanding early childhood education,
- Increasing afterschool and summer programs in underserved communities,
- Ensuring every student benefits from essential arts (“specials” like art, music, and world language),
- Providing additional access to mental health services for students,
- Extending and enriching college and career pathways, starting in middle school and culminating in graduates being prepared to take on critical jobs in high demand industries; and
- Raising teacher salaries to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality teacher and that teachers are valued as professionals.

Enrollment Targets

Enrollment targets in Act 73 are based on research and data commissioned by the General Assembly and reinforced in subsequent studies:

- The 2024 Picus, Odden & Associates study commissioned by the legislature found that Vermont could “substantially improve student achievement” and save at least \$400 million annually with a foundation formula — assuming prototypical districts with at least 3,900 students
- 3,900 represented a point of efficiency for achieving educational quality goals under the foundation formula (known as the “Evidence Based Model”) recommended by the study
- **A smaller school district would require either (1) a more expensive foundation formula or (2) reductions in education opportunities**
- There are tradeoffs when adjusting any leg of the three-legged stool in Act 73: governance, funding and quality

Benefits of Scale

In tandem with the foundation formula in Act 73, the enrollment targets of 4,000 to 8,000 students were designed to enable:

- Increased cost efficiency and specialization of staff
- Greater opportunities for students
- Greater equity between districts in terms of student need and wealth
- Greater diversity within schools and districts
- Greater alignment of the system
- Future-proofing in the context of declining enrollment

Cost Efficiency and Specialization

With larger budgets, larger districts have greater purchasing power and flexibility to hire specialized staff:

- Larger districts (over 4,000 students) allow for staff to specialize and have expertise in specific areas
- Larger districts would lessen the need for BOCES to provide cost efficiencies or specializations
- Compared to existing districts (half of which enroll fewer than 500 students), moving to districts with 2,000 to 4,000 students would achieve some benefits of scale
- Because the foundation formula and educational quality goals in Act 73 were designed in tandem with enrollment targets of 4,000 to 8,000 students, lowering these targets would require additional education spending and/or less ambitious quality goals

Increased Education Opportunities for Students

Larger districts allow for greater opportunities for students and can better support educators to improve instruction:

- More options for deeper learning based on student interest as well as specialized programs (i.e., in-house special education services, language immersion)
- Establishing state-of-the-art regional comprehensive high schools in every district becomes more feasible with (1) higher enrollment and (2) fewer districts
- Stronger professional communities and collaboration, greater professional development opportunities, and funding for districts to coordinate curriculum and implement high-quality instructional materials

District Budget Modeling

The AOE has modeling for district budgets with enrollment ranging from roughly 1,000 to 8,000 students (based on different district configuration proposals):

- It is possible to maintain services and supports in the smaller districts—but only with tradeoffs. Smaller districts require new ways of operating.
- Districts with 2,000 students can have the same services and supports as larger districts (and provide similar salary increases), but only if they utilize staff who are part-time, shared between schools, or wear multiple hats and take on more than one role
- Effect is even greater in districts with 1,000 students: part-time staff and shared staff, plus no opportunity for salary increases for teachers or administrators

Larger Districts = Greater Diversity

Larger districts will encompass more communities across Vermont, reducing property wealth disparities between districts and enabling more integrated student populations

- Research demonstrates that students benefit from economically and racially diverse settings
- Reducing disparities in property wealth between districts also facilitates taxpayer equity
- When school districts become more integrated, all Vermonters benefit
- Within larger districts, communities make decisions that benefit a larger group of students rather than their individual town

Benefits of Inclusive Districts & Schools

Students benefit from socio- economic and racially diverse settings:

- Students in integrated schools have higher average test scores, are less likely to drop out, and are more likely to enroll in college
- More diverse and inclusive schools reduce bias and achievement gaps
- Exposure to diverse students and families supports students' awareness and understanding of differences, increases their individual identity development, and better prepares them for diverse settings later in life

Increased Equity Between Districts

Larger districts will naturally require grouping more communities together, reducing differences in overall need and property wealth between districts

Modeling different redistricting scenarios demonstrates that additional districts lead to greater disparities between those districts:

- Example of map scenario roughly meeting the criteria of 4,000 to 8,000 students: VSBA Regions
- Example of map scenario roughly meeting the criteria of 2,000 to 4,000: House Ed scenario

Economic Disadvantage (federal poverty level) Percentage

	Current SU/SDs	Example: VSBA Regions	Example: House Ed Draft Map
Average	44%	42%	40%
Minimum	8%	21%	17%
Maximum	76%	56%	59%
Ratio between Lowest/Highest Districts in terms of FPL	9.1	2.7	3.4

Grand List Per Student

	Current SU/SDs	Example: VSBA Regions	Example: House Ed Draft Map
Average	\$1,374,935	\$1,283,029	\$1,422,826
Minimum	\$446,034	\$866,612	\$675,647
Maximum	\$4,499,584	\$1,807,771	\$4,499,584
Ratio between Lowest/Highest Districts in terms of Property Wealth	10.1	2.1	6.7

Increased Equity Between Districts

Greater equity between districts means:

- More equal funding between districts given Act 73 weights that direct more dollars based on student need
- More equal ability for districts to raise additional local funding if desired
- With equalization approach, the more disparity between districts and the average tax capacity, the more the state will need to supplement

Benefits of Scale: Future Proofing

- Ongoing pattern of enrollment declines across Vermont means that disadvantages for smaller districts will be magnified in coming years
- Statewide K-12 enrollment has declined by 25% in the last 20 years
- 10-year enrollment trends across 29 districts in House Ed scenario range from –16.4% to +6.2%
- Fewer districts results in less variability in enrollment trends: Across 13 districts in Hybrid proposal, 10-year enrollment trends range from -0.2% to -9.4%

Questions?