

Vermont Superintendents Association

Public Comment to the School District Redistricting Taskforce on Act 73 (2025)

On behalf of the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA), thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the work of the Redistricting Taskforce. Vermont's superintendents recognize that the charge before this Taskforce is among the most consequential policy undertakings in recent decades, and we appreciate the chance to share perspectives rooted in both research and lived experience.

Core Points

1. **Students must come first.** At the core of your decision-making must be the question: *What is best for students?* Before public education in Vermont is structurally dismantled, leaders must guarantee that students across the state will benefit and not be harmed. There must be clear metrics to determine whether efficiency and opportunity are realized. These metrics should be research-based and tied to Education Quality Standards (EQS), student access, educator recruitment and retention, and infrastructure capacity.
2. **Implementing this policy will come with costs.** Political leaders must be clear with the public that redistricting, on its own, will not dramatically curb tax increases in the short term. Any potential cost savings will take years to be realized. Redistricting, especially on this scale, will bring financial implications connected to contract leveling, transition expenses, and infrastructure needs. Real cost savings are only achieved by addressing the true drivers of education spending in Vermont: health care, mental health supports, staffing levels, and facilities, as examples. The process itself must minimize disruption and maintain public trust. Act 73 has already created division and destabilization in Vermont communities. Further changes must be accompanied by compelling evidence that they will improve opportunities for students and/or reduce taxpayer burden.
3. **Efficiencies may be realized through consolidation if it is thoughtfully considered, well-designed, and supported by data.** Vermont's current structure of 119 school districts is not serving the state well, but redistricting must not be arbitrary or politically expedient. Importantly, when discussing efficiencies, central office spending is not the source of runaway costs. Central office administrative spending in Vermont averages about 6% of district budgets (excluding school-based staff budgeted centrally, such as paraprofessionals, custodians, or instructional coaches, who serve schools directly), aligned with national norms (6–7%). Many central office responsibilities are required by federal and state law. Cutting staff does not eliminate these obligations; it simply shifts

them onto principals and teachers, detracting from their instructional leadership. While some economies of scale could be realized through central office consolidation, by reducing administrative redundancies and governance inefficiencies, it will not result in dramatic cost savings. Real benefits come when leadership can focus on student learning and boards can govern cohesive and strong K-12 systems.

4. **The 4,000–8,000 student range required in Act 73 is not supported by research and is not conducive to Vermont’s rurality or values.** We agree there is room for consolidation; however, arbitrary enrollment targets risk inefficiency, do not guarantee improved outcomes, and may erode community trust.
5. **Redistricting efforts must be coupled with support for improved school facilities.** Investment in facilities has a direct connection to improving student outcomes. School construction incentives may provide an opportunity for proactive mergers that benefit students and communities (Biasi, Lafortune, & Schönholzer, 2025).

Qualities of Effective Governance

VSA believes every governance structure, whether supervisory union or supervisory district, must be evaluated against the same set of student-centered goals and targets of efficiency. The question is not only how to draw new lines, but whether the resulting systems will:

- **Share a unified mission and vision.**
- **Coordinate curriculum and instruction** so expectations, standards, and practices are consistent and equitable across schools.
- **Increase student access** to academic programs, co-curricular activities, and support services regardless of where a child lives.
- **Provide staffing flexibility** to deploy educators and specialists equitably across schools in response to student needs.
- **Streamline financial management** with clear and transparent budgeting, auditing, and accounting processes.
- **Strengthen leadership capacity** by reducing governance fragmentation so superintendents and central office staff can focus on instructional leadership.
- **Promote equity and cohesion** across communities by ensuring the fair distribution of resources and opportunities.
- **Support student continuity** so that families moving within a governance structure boundary do not face unnecessary school transitions.
- **Build community trust** through clarity of roles, transparent decision-making, and opportunities for local voice.

Framing Governance Structures

While superintendents are not unanimous, there is an overwhelming majority that, through experience, believe supervisory districts (SDs) are more effective in achieving the above qualities than supervisory unions (SUs). SDs better enable cohesive leadership, coordinated curriculum, transparent financial oversight, and equitable staffing ([VASBO Statement on Redistricting](#), [Statement from SU Business Managers](#)). Some superintendents are more able to share these perspectives than others.

At the same time, VSA acknowledges the perspectives of the superintendents who value SU structures for protecting small schools or maintaining local governance and voice. We stress that local voice can be preserved in unified systems through rotating board meetings, board makeup, clear metrics of successful schools, and deliberate engagement. Similarly, if preserving small schools and operating structures are the policy goals, those goals can also be achieved through policy mechanisms other than the SU model. Vermont must be innovative in its approach, avoiding the trap of “the way we’ve always done things” and resisting the tendency to layer new initiatives on top of outdated systems. Ultimately, **the governance debate should not drive the process; instead, it should align with the vision for a high-quality, equitable, and sustainable future for public education in Vermont.**

Closing

The Vermont Superintendents Association urges the Taskforce to center its work on student equity, coherence, and quality of opportunity. Consolidation may offer efficiencies, but only if it is thoughtful, evidence-based, and aligned with Vermont’s context.

The ultimate measure of success is not the size or label of a district, but whether it provides coordinated curriculum, equitable access, efficient staffing, transparent finance, strong leadership, continuity for families, and public trust.

VSA stands ready to work with legislators to ensure Vermont’s education system advances the opportunities available to every student.

Thank you for your consideration.

Facilities Reference:

Barbara Biasi, Julien Lafortune, David Schönholzer, What Works and for Whom? Effectiveness and Efficiency of School Capital Investments Across the U.S., *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 140, Issue 3, August 2025, Pages 2329–2379, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjaf013>