

Vermont Education Governance

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Overview

Current Governance Units:

- Supervisory Unions
- School Districts

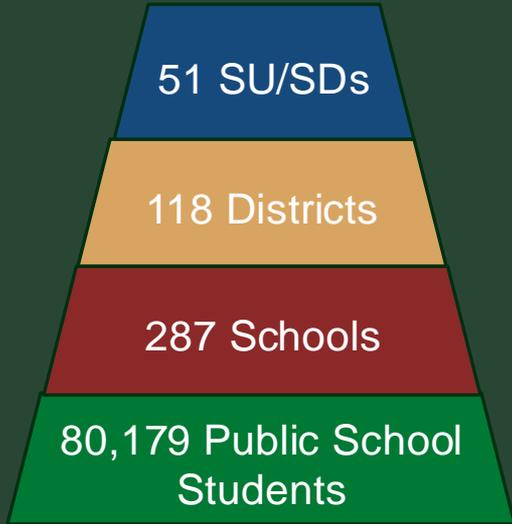
Overview of Governance Changes

Roles and Responsibilities

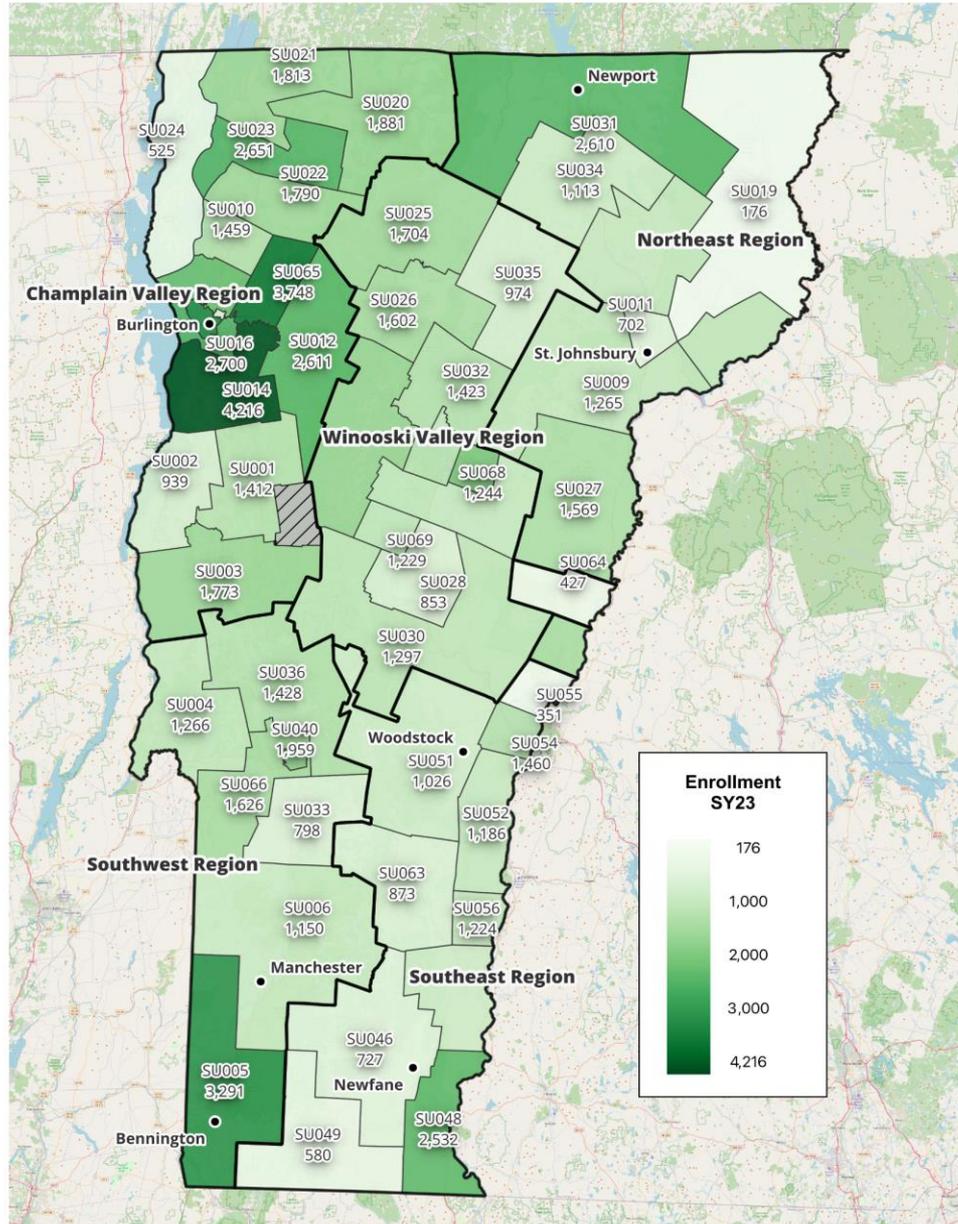
- School boards
- Superintendents
- State of Vermont

Agency of Education: Past & Future

2022-23 SY Public Schools Landscape



SU/SD Public School Enrollment 2022-23



SUNION	SU_name
SU001	MtAbraham
SU002	Addison NW
SU003	Addison Central
SU004	Slate Valley
SU005	SW Vermont
SU006	Bennington-Rutland
SU007	Colchester
SU009	Caledonia Central
SU010	Milton Town
SU011	St.Johnsbury
SU012	Mt.Mansfield
SU014	Champlain Valley
SU015	Burlington
SU016	S Burlington
SU017	Winooski
SU019	Essex N
SU020	Franklin NE
SU021	Missisquoi Valley
SU022	Franklin W
SU023	Maple Run
SU024	Grand Isle
SU025	Lamoille N
SU026	Lamoille S
SU027	Orange E
SU028	Orange SW
SU030	White River Valley
SU031	North Country
SU032	Washington Central
SU033	Mill River
SU034	Orleans Central
SU035	Orleans SW
SU036	Rutland NE
SU040	Rutland City
SU042	Harwood
SU046	Windham Central
SU047	Windham NE
SU048	Windham SE
SU049	Windham SW
SU051	Mountain Views
SU052	Windsor SE
SU054	Hartford
SU055	SAU #70
SU056	Springfield SD
SU061	Barre
SU063	Two Rivers
SU064	Rivendell Interstate
SU065	Essex Westford
SU066	Greater Rutland County
SU067	Kingdom East
SU068	Central Vermont
SU069	Montpelier Roxbury
SU070	Lincoln

Overview of Governance Changes 2010-2020

- **Act 153 (2010):** Encouraged and incentivized voluntary merger by school districts and required SU's to perform certain common duties, including provision of certain special education services on behalf of member districts.
- **Act 156 (2012):** Provided reimbursement of fees for consulting services related to exploration of merger.
- **Act 46 (2015):** Implemented to improve education outcomes and equity by creating larger and more efficient school governance structures.

Act 46 (2015)

- An Act implemented to improve education outcomes and equity by creating larger and more efficient school governance structures. The Final State Board Order:
 - Merged 45 districts in 39 towns to form 11 new union school districts.
 - Enlarged 3 existing union school districts.
 - Created a net reduction of 34 districts.
 - Conditionally required an additional 4 districts to merge with 4 existing union districts.

Impacts of Act 46

When the impacts of Act 46 are combined with those of predecessor legislation (Act 153 of 2010 and Act 156 of 2012), the results were:

- 206 districts in 185 towns have formed 50 new union school districts (a reduction of 156) districts.
- 63% percent of Vermont K-12 students live in a union school district created by Acts 46, 153 and 156 (as of July 1, 2019).
- 84.4% of students reside in a union school district either formed through governance reform, or a pre-existing supervisory district such as Burlington or Springfield SDs.

The Role of School Boards

School board duties are the same regardless of the size or type of school district.

Duties are distinct from duties as an SU board.

Duties include (16 VSA § 153):

- Engaging with the community to establish the mission and vision for the district
- Using the mission to guide decision-making
- Setting performance goals for the district
- Establishing local policies aligned across the supervisory union/supervisory district consistent with the minimum standards established by the State Board of Education
- Employing and supervising the superintendent (sole direct-employee of the Board)
- Holding the superintendent accountable for developing a strategy and education work plan to achieve district or SU goals
- Negotiating contracts with employees

Superintendent Responsibilities

- Acts as “CEO” of the system
- Responsible for:
 - Operational oversight of the school district, including managing services, programs, and resources.
 - Developing an education work plan aligned with school boards’ mission.
 - Ensuring quality of education and equity of opportunities within the system.
 - Ensuring school and district compliance with school board policies and state regulations.
 - Employing all non-licensed staff, and providing recommendations for licensed candidates.
 - Creating a robust comprehensive local assessment system.
 - Preparing reports, such as the district strategic plan, district budget, and district fiscal and student learning performance reports for the boards.

Accountability



School boards are accountable to voters, and subject to the laws, rules, and regulations of the State.



The **Superintendent** is accountable to the school board and to the State for operating within statute and regulations.

State Board of Education ("SBE")

- 10 appointed members, including 2 students, appointed by the Governor
- Historically responsible for regulation and governance of:
 - Student attendance records
 - Student performance
 - Adult basic education
 - Approval of independent schools
 - Postsecondary approvals
 - Disbursement of funds, and;
 - Ensuring equitable access to quality education
- [State Board Rules | Agency of Education \(vermont.gov\)](#)

The Role of AOE

- The Agency of Education has a large number of specifically enumerated duties. The most high-leverage of those include:
 - Serving as the sole state agency to administer federal funds for education
 - Identifying the educational goals for the education system
 - Evaluating the performance of the education system
 - Overseeing compliance with all education laws and regulations
 - Administering statewide educational data and reporting
 - Licensing professional educators

System Issues

- Highly complex school board governance structure to serve a relatively small number of students
- Top heavy organizational structure creates redundancy and limits resource sharing capabilities
- Staff expertise often not placed at the right level of the state's education system to promote student outcomes
- Hyper-local budgeting within a statewide education funding system distances the voter from local education decisions
- Variability of education standards creates inconsistent expectations and performance outcomes
- Decreased enrollment, rising costs, and statewide affordability issues place significant pressures on schools
- Lack of scale creates competition for funding and tension between districts, career & technical centers and independent schools
- Preference for small schools and small classes often constrains program offerings and ability to hire specialized instructors

Impact of System Issues

- Fragile system where many districts struggle to ensure operational continuity
- High cost of operating school portfolio diverts dollars away from students and limits funding to address deferred building maintenance and capital needs
- Lack of scale limits opportunities, creates competition for dollars, and makes Vermont more vulnerable to shifts in federal funding and state economic changes
- Inequity in terms of students' access to a robust course list, electives, sports and enrichment opportunities
- Lack of incentives and support to address challenges locally

AOE: Past & Future

Historical Context

- Role confusion and identity questions within a local control state
- Downsizing over 15 years ago shifted level of focus and support
- Capacity issues to support landmark education legislation
- Antiquated systems and inefficient processes within the AOE and between the AOE and field
- Disconnect between theory and action – well intentioned initiatives have not been implemented with fidelity
- Lack of a strategic plan and direction for many years
- Long-standing compliance issues with the federal government

AOE: Past & Future

Future State

The AOE is in the process of developing a strategic plan to promote:

- Clarity on priorities and realignment of AOE support and resources to support state goals
- Strong leadership, support, and oversight to elevate statewide outcomes
- Enhanced data infrastructure and reporting to support continuous improvement
- Greater capacity to support academic and curricular needs of the field
- Expanded focus on facilitating learning and sharing best practices to promote innovation and build upon our strengths
- Improved accountability and more support to ensure fidelity of implementation of statewide initiatives

Key Takeaways

Key Considerations

- How can Vermont reduce the inequities in per pupil spending to ensure students with similar needs receive similar resources?
- How can we align funding and resources with student need to drive student outcomes and success?
- How can we create more meaningful opportunities for students and support a Whole Child approach to reduce absenteeism, and improve student engagement?
- How can we support effective and cost effective delivery of special education services in all districts and schools?
- How do we ensure that every student has a highly-qualified teacher in a safe, healthy and welcoming school environment?

Education Transformation: How Do We Get There?



Transform education funding



Modernize Governance and Scale



Improve Support and Guardrails for School Boards and Districts



Improve Education Quality and Equity



Tax Relief to Stabilize the System

Questions?

