

Education Governance Priorities & Objectives

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Essential Questions

Why do we have to consider district size when changing to a foundation funding formula?

- How does district size influence education quality?
- How does district size influence the efficiency and effectiveness of an education system?

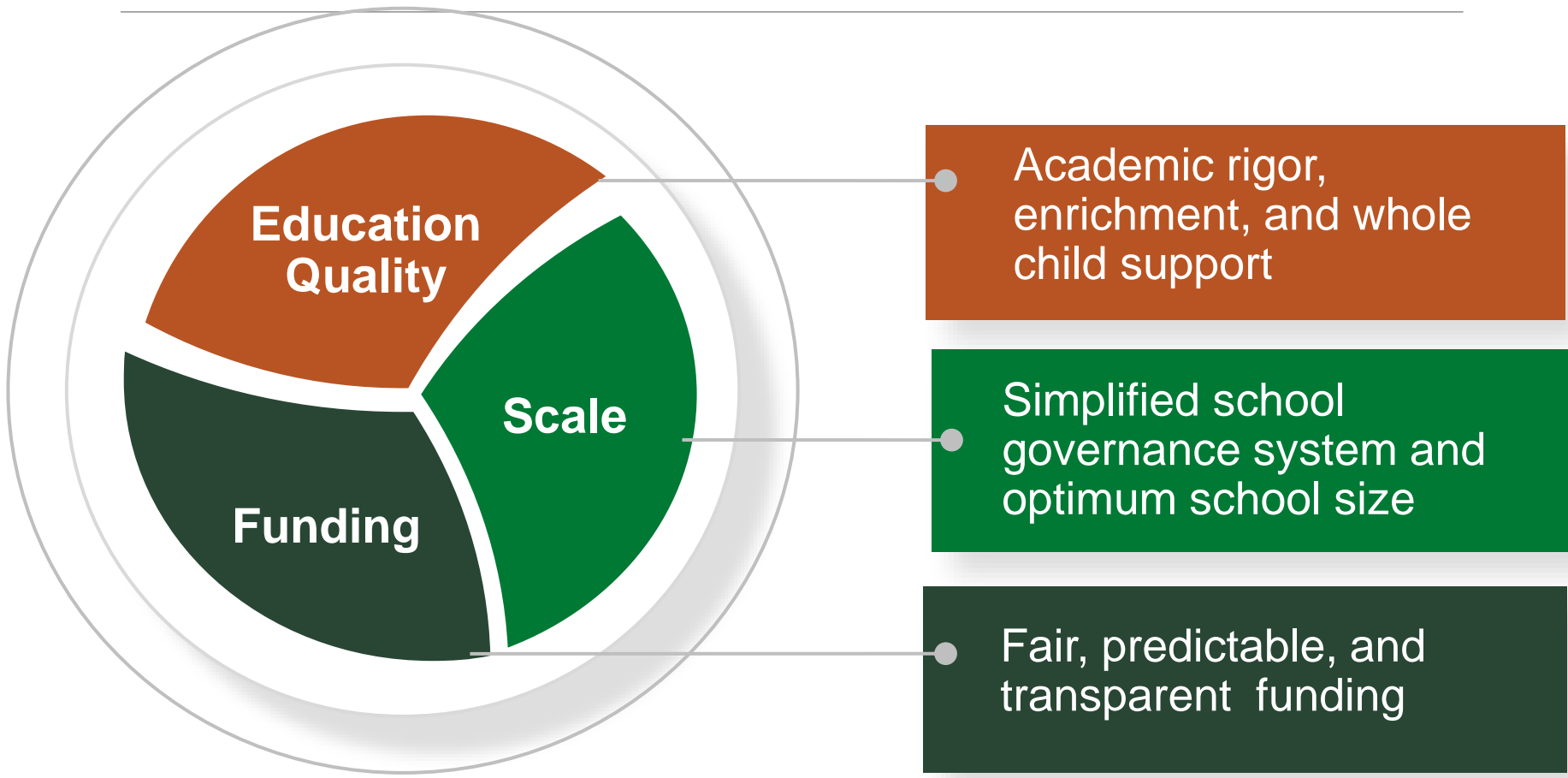
How do we build consensus on the appropriate district size for Vermont to deliver on our education transformation objectives?

- After reviewing the proposed rubric, does the Senate Education Committee have additional or different objectives?

Key Considerations for the Education Transformation

- 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?

Policy Levers



Resourcing a state education system to promote educational quality and equity requires a review of scale

What Do We Mean by Scale?

- “At scale” refers to the ability of an education system to handle increased demands and manage the growing complexities that schools face, without sacrificing quality or experiencing runaway costs.
- Systems at scale are more stable than smaller, more fractured systems (ex. Our districts currently experience a lot of turnover in central offices, loss of organizational knowledge and disruption of long term, strategic efforts to improve student outcomes)
- A system operating at scale can more effectively create and implement strategies that can promote quality, integration across the system and are able perform even under stress.

District Consolidation vs. School Consolidation

Defining Terms

- District Consolidation: Merging of two or more school districts to operate as one school district
- School Consolidation: Merging of two or more schools to operate as one school

Research

- Research often conflates school district consolidation and school consolidation
- School consolidation could occur when school districts merge, but is not a foregone conclusion
- In New England, numerous objectively small districts, which if consolidated would not necessarily lead to school consolidation or closure (Connecticut School Finance Project, 2019)

District Consolidation vs. School Consolidation

Vermont Context: Considerations & Objectives

- ***District Consolidation***

- Resource the system to deliver educational priorities identified by the state in a way that is equitable and achievable for every school in the district
- Increase access to specialized resources to support school administrators, teachers, and students
- “Future proof” Vermont’s education system

- ***School Consolidations***

- Only necessary when the school cannot meet financial viability and educational quality expectations within the funding formula and class size requirements
- Class size requirements may be met by changing how schools deliver education

District Size Research

Governance as a means to deliver education quality

There is not a consensus and much of what is being relied on is both older and not always focused student outcomes. For example, a [2018 paper from Illinois State University](#) says:

- “Even when reviewing recent work of researchers making claims of realizing the ideal district size, it is difficult to derive a consensus.”
- “In addition to all of this conflicting research, as well as having little understanding of how district size affects student achievement or district expenditure”

District Size Research

- Education Commission of the States in their report “[In Education Funding, Size Does Matter](#)” focuses on costs related to size
- Data from the [U.S. Census](#) shows that - for the most part - as districts shrink in size their per pupil expenditures grow.
 - The exception to this is school districts with 50,000 students or more. When districts shrink below 25,000 students their expenditures per pupil increase.
 - Districts with between 49,999 and 25,000 students spend \$1,514 (13.2 percent) below the national average while districts under 3,000 students spend \$1,901 (16.6 percent) above the national average.

District Size Research (con.)

- Data from a [2018 article in the Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy](#) identifies that the increases in performance and decreases in costs seen in districts above 2,000 students do not decline as districts get larger.
 - Mentions Duncombe and Yinger's effects of larger districts
 1. The quality of some education services does not diminish over a wide range of enrollment. For example, central administration - a superintendent and school board and associated staff - may be able to serve a large number of students.
 2. Larger school districts may be able to provide specialized services - science labs, computer labs, athletic facilities - at a lower average cost because they provide those services for more students.
 3. Larger school districts may be able to employ specialized labor, such as science, math, and technology instructors, and offer more specialized classes.
 4. Larger school districts may be able to negotiate price reductions for supplies and equipment by buying in bulk.
 5. Larger school districts may be able to implement innovations in curriculum or management at a lower cost.

Evidence Based Model

- The evidence-based model is a specific research methodology to developing a foundation funding formula and involves a theory of action on how to fund schools to deliver high quality student outcomes
- The proposed funding formula realigns resources in a way that is most impactful for students, creates efficiencies, and expands educational opportunities.
- However, this plan would not be possible within Vermont's existing structure, because it would *either*
 - Cost too much to deliver the educational objectives or
 - Underfund certain districts, preventing them from delivering on the educational objectives

Evidence Based Model in Vermont

Other considerations

- Equity based policy implementation and budgeting
- Regional service delivery
- Strengthening resiliency to external change
- Future proofing system in consideration of national and state enrollment decline
- Rightsizing to available workforce
- Focus funding on investments that are high quality and high impact, including increased teacher salaries, expanded career and technical education opportunities, and additional academic intervention
- Community engagement: achieving the balance between unity and freedom

Operational Objectives

Districts are operational K-12	Evidence based model is built on assumption of a full k-12 district and eliminates the need to have grade band weights. The model assumes higher costs in elementary school to allow for lower class sizes.
Reduced tuitioning between public school districts	Reduce the complexity and achieve parity in cost structure.

Efficiency Objectives

Reduced administrative costs	Reduction of administrative staff at the school and central office levels.
Reduced burden of compliance requirements	Reduction in duplication of reporting and compliance requirements to implement state and federal laws.

Quality Objectives

Increased specialized expertise at district level	Increase specialized staffing resources at the central office and build a bench for critical functions. Examples of positions include a director of curriculum, full time CFO, data manager, pupil services coordinator, early education coordinator, CTE coordinator, etc.
Ensuring equitable access to programmatic opportunities	Create scale to provide for a broader set of opportunities with the the funding provided.
Increased regional delivery of educational services in middle and high school	Expanding the attendance zones to serve more students in middle and high school to offer expanded programs. (achieve balance between being too small and too big).
Ensuring high quality educators and resources for all students	Rightsizing our staffing to our workforce
Increased collaboration to improve education service delivery	Sharing resources, protect planning time, teacher collaboration support.
Increasing average teacher salaries and pay parity	Allows to reinvest in teacher salaries

Equity Objectives

Reduced district differences in terms of need	This objective is more consequential the smaller the district gets. The intent is to promote equitable policy making and to support ____ based on what works best for kids
Reduced district differences in terms of property wealth	Reduce the variation in local taxing capacity and pool resources to serve a broader group of students.

Model Comparisons

Potential Governance Structures	Current Districts	Current SU/SDs	Senate Model	VSBA Regions***	Five District Model
Number of Districts	119	52	19 districts in 9 SU/SDs + interstates (excl. below)	11	5
District Size					
Average	683	1,603	9,163	7,579	16,674
Minimum	1**	187	6,828	4,044	10,175
Maximum	4,126	4,126	12,739	11,936	34,105
Number of Schools Operated					
Average	2.7	5.5	31	26	57.2
Minimum	1	1	21	16	40
Maximum	9	11	39	44	86
Economically Disadvantaged					
Average	46%	44%	45%	45%	47%
Minimum	0%	8%	29%	22%	36%
Maximum	100%	76%	54%	60%	55%
Ratio between Lowest/Highest Districts in terms of Need	100.0	9.13	1.86	2.71	1.53
Property Wealth					
Average	\$437,346	\$461,212	\$437,825	\$436,326	\$419,888
Minimum	\$133,677	\$157,043	\$180,015	\$279,438	\$299,291
Maximum	\$1,464,661	\$1,064,056	\$698,259	\$612,499	\$525,913
Ratio between Lowest/Highest Districts in terms of Property Wealth	11.0	6.8	3.9	2.2	1.8

**gores or unorganized towns

***This VSBA region model is not endorsed by the VSBA

Additional Objectives?



Resources

- [Transformation Budget Request Testimony](#)
- [Education Policy Brief](#)
- [Education Governance Brief](#)
- [Education Funding Brief](#)
- [Listen and Learn Tour](#)
- [Education Funding Report](#)
- [Example budgets in 5 district model](#)