

# **A Response to Governor Scott's Education Transformation Plan**

This document was authored by Public Education Consulting Services  
on behalf of the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative  
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On January 22, 2025, the Vermont Secretary of Education presented the Administration's proposed [Transformative Education Plan](#). Since that presentation there has been a flurry of subsequent presentations and press conferences providing some additional detail or justifications related to the three pillars of their proposal that we have included below:

**Pillar 1 - Funding Formula: Intentionally linking funding to education quality and expectations, with a focus on predictability, transparency, and equity.**

*Revise the Funding Formula*

- Create an evidence-based funding model that prioritizes opportunity and equity, ensuring that students with similar needs will receive the same funding, regardless of geography.
- Address school and district disparities and characteristics such as district sparsity, district scale, school scale, etc.
- Adjustments (weights) are made for student needs, including for economically disadvantaged students and English learners (ELs).

*Supported by an Easy-to-Understand Property Tax System*

- A single statewide Education Property Tax rate for both homestead and non-homestead property.
- Income-eligible homesteads can file to exempt a portion of their home value from the statewide Education Property Tax.
- Communities could choose to raise limited additional funds, and a state guarantee would equalize each district's ability to raise revenue, up to a capped amount.

**Pillar 2 - Governance: Adjusting scale at the district and school levels to promote consistency, sustainability, capacity, and cost savings.**

*Improve Governance*

- Establish five regional school districts to increase efficiency and reduce costs, while maintaining local community input.
- Elected, part-time school boards (one for each district).
- Local school advisory councils will allow for local input on budget development and district strategic planning.

**Pillar 3 - Accountability & Guardrails: Improving consistency and capacity at the state level to promote cost savings and education quality.**

*Improve Quality*

- Strengthen state oversight to ensure quality education and efficient use of resources.
- Define average school and class size minimums and maximums.
- Standardize graduation requirements for all districts.

While there are a myriad of issues with both how this plan has been developed and presented, we believe it's important to take the time to address the many assumptions and assertions that underlie the proposed plan itself, and to reject the premise of the problem statement outlined in the [Administration's Policy Brief](#):

*Vermont faces significant challenges across its public education system, requiring changes to governance, funding, and accountability to ensure long-term sustainability and equity. These challenges stem from declining enrollment, persistent achievement gaps, and inefficiencies in resource allocation, all of which are compounded by Vermont's overly complex organizational governance structure and confusing education funding system. Without a comprehensive approach to reform, Vermonters will continue to face difficult choices between offering robust education opportunity or making deep cuts to education to keep Vermont affordable.*

Like so many Vermonters, education professionals, and organizations have had to do when engaging in the democratic act of disagreement, we state unequivocally that despite the Administration's tendency toward finger-wagging, leveraging a critique of the Governor's plan is not a defense of the status quo.

**But, incomplete information and bad data results in bad decision-making and incomplete solutions. The Administration's plan is built on a subsidence; it is so far-reaching, so unfinished, and so imperfectly informed that it poses to exacerbate an ever-growing reality in Vermont. Those who have more, get more; those who have less, hope for the best.**

**This is our concern.**

What follows is a selection of what we call "Assertions" that the Administration has made, and then a review of research, data and documents that offer a different perspective and challenges the Administration's assumptions and proposed reforms. The assertions are organized under the Administration's three reform pillars referenced above. We have bookmarked each of the assertions below for ready navigation of the document.

We hope this response from the field communicates a desire for genuine reflection on the part of State policymakers to engage in the long-desired moral decision-making, transparent communication, and meaningful collaboration that is necessary to determine what's best for the future of Vermont - our kids and our communities – during uncertain times.

**Pillar I - Funding Formula**

**Assertion 1**

**Assertion 2**

**Assertion 3**

**Assertion 4**

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**Assertion 6**

**Pillar 2 - Governance**

**Assertion 7**

**Assertion 8**

**Assertion 9**

**Assertion 10**

**Pillar 3 - Accountability and Guardrails**

**Assertion 11**

**Assertion 12**

**Assertion 13**

**Assertion 14**

**Assertion 15**

**Assertion 16**

Additionally, **Data Tables** are included at the end of this response. Data contained within these tables are referenced throughout this counter-argument.

**Pillar I - Funding Formula: Intentionally linking funding to education quality and expectations, with a focus on predictability, transparency, and equity.**

**Revise the Funding Formula**

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**Supported by an Easy-to-Understand Property Tax System**

- A single statewide Education Property Tax rate for both homestead and non-homestead property.
- Income-eligible homesteads can file to exempt a portion of their home value from the statewide Education Property Tax.
- Communities could choose to raise limited additional funds, and a state guarantee would equalize each district's ability to raise revenue, up to a capped amount.

**ASSERTION 1: What They Say**

*Vermont is one of the highest per-pupil spending [states] in the nation.*

(Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.2))

**What You Should Know**

According to IES/NCES, whose most recent data sets are based on [2021](#) and [2022](#), it is true that Vermont has ranked high in per pupil expenditures. Different publications during different years have ranked VT anywhere between 3rd to 6th in the nation (e.g., [Statista](#)).

**But the details matter.**

For instance, in the [National Center for Education Statistics 2024 report](#), **our 2021 per pupil expenditures included Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) of 2021 funds.** Additionally, states reported if pre-kindergarten populations and expenditures were excluded from those per-pupil ratios (e.g., California). Vermont had no such caveats. In 2022, additional states indicated if charter school expenditures

and populations were excluded (e.g., Illinois and New Hampshire) as well as pre-kindergarten expenditures and enrollment numbers (e.g., Arizona, New York, and Oregon). Again, Vermont reported no such exceptions or caveats.

**This means that national figures that put Vermont as one of the top per-pupil spending states reflect spending based on all publicly-funded students - inclusive of pre-kindergarten and our private school students supported with taxpayer dollars.**

We've noticed a developing trend that Administration officials at the AOE have a habit of suggesting that data sets that don't endorse their political perspective are incorrect or can't be trusted. If this is an argument to be leveraged, this is a problem of the State's own making as those data are based on Vermont's data. The Agency does publish [per-pupil spending reports](#) based on school type to report an average per-pupil rate. The table below provides a summary of FY21 - FY25:

Fiscal Year	Equalized Pupil/ LTWADM (2025)	Per-pupil Spending
FY21	87,305	\$16,975
FY22	86,799	\$17,210
FY23	85,814	\$18,373
FY24	84,415	\$20,254
FY25	142,810	\$18,169

This would correspond with the inflated federal data including pandemic-related funding.

**An important reform we recommend is to insist on appointed and exempt officials at the AOE be precise, not political when discussing per-pupil spending in PK-12 education. Data they produce should be subject to scrutiny, and the crumbling data infrastructure that has been a perennial concern under this Administration should be supported with a substantial investment so that the committed classified public servants at the AOE who serve this state can do the work they know how to do.**

It's also important to note the failure of this Administration to reference that Vermont has moved to a publicly-funded **PreK-12 system**. As per testimony provided by the Administration in [January 2025](#),

- PreK is **“funded by resident school districts (part of a school district's budget),”** and
- that, “[N]ationwide in 22/23, **Vermont had the 2nd highest enrollment of prekindergarten education for 3-year-olds in the**

**nation at 71% of age-eligible children and the 6th highest uptake for 4-year-olds at 64%.”**

According to the AOE’s most recent data, **district payments to private Pre-K providers accounted for more than \$14M of education spending.**

This Administration has continued to promote the concept of a “mixed-delivery” system when it comes to child care, [Universal PreK \(PreK Committee\)](#), and [afterschool](#). In essence, they are currently proposing to do this for the entire system of “public” education based on multiple assertions including this one. Yet the data suggests that it is the Administration’s own initiatives, as well as pandemic funding, that has contributed to these inflated per-pupil spending rates.

**One can’t help wondering if they are blaming public school districts for responding to a global pandemic or successfully implementing a Universal Pre-K program they have promoted?**

## **ASSERTION 2 - What They Say**

*The complexity of Vermont’s funding system makes it difficult for taxpayers to understand how their taxes are calculated and how local school spending impacts them.*

*In a national context, Vermont’s funding system is unusual in that local districts determine how much they wish to spend, and this spending collectively drives the total amount the state must raise through taxes (Vermont’s Education Funding System: Explained and Compared to Other States). This bottom-up approach, where districts effectively set statewide spending levels, complicates efforts to align resources with priorities and manage costs sustainably. It also creates additional layers of complexity for taxpayers trying to understand how their local budget decisions impact broader state finances. From an education quality perspective, the concern is that Vermont’s education funding system results in inequitable funding between communities and creates challenges in managing declining enrollment.*

(Administration’s Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.3))

## **What You Should Know**

**This sounds as much like a transparency issue as a complexity issue, and one with ready solutions at the Administration’s fingertips.**

As is evident from the AOE’s new [school budget training resources page](#), the resources made available **are no older than December 2024** (FY25). That means they are newly created this year. Under [School Governance](#), the AOE’s most recent resources are reflective of guidance provided under Secretary Holcombe (who left in March 2018). In fact, the AOE has no public-facing resources for taxpayers that pertain to how public education is

funded. If there are, they are new and/or hard to find. Instead, there are some pages devoted to [funding resources related to special services](#) and, relatedly, [Act 173](#). The new resources are a step in the right direction, but an insufficient justification that sufficient efforts have been made to support taxpayers' understanding.

**It's also important to note that Vermont is NOT unique in having a complex education funding system.**

For instance, the [Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas](#), located in a state that is referenced by the Administration in justifying a move to an evidence-based funding model, quite simply states:

*State education funding formulas are often very complicated, making it difficult for most stakeholders to understand how they work. Part of the challenge is that these formulas evolve over decades as legislators tweak formula parameters and add/eliminate programs and requirements. School funding formulas in most states have also been impacted by court rulings that push legislatures to make changes that move school funding toward the subjective ideals of adequacy and equity.*

While bodies like the Legislature, or the Commission on the Future of Public Education, or experts at the Joint Fiscal Office or community-based non-profits like the Public Assets Institute, etc. may ultimately determine that there could be changes to Vermont's education funding system that make sense for Vermont, what will remain true whatever is decided is that **taxpayers should be able to rely on qualified experts to provide the necessary technical assistance and support so that Vermonter schools can invest tax-payer dollars appropriately.** The AOE and SBE could be working with membership organizations like the [Vermont School Boards Association](#) to provide professional learning and technical assistance, developing tools that can be shared with Vermont communities during the budgeting cycle and beyond.

However, the promise of an "easy-to-understand" approach in an ecosystem as complex as public education that provides myriad services to students from ages 3 to 22 (and beyond as there is no age limit in Vermont for those without a high school diploma) – in a state that has essentially two publicly-funded education systems – should be approached with significant caution and deliberation and integrity. Further, it should give Vermonters pause that this assertion is made as a justification for a competing proposal that the Administration has developed

- parallel to the legislatively convened Commission on the Future of Publication that the Secretary of Education sits on;
- in secret without the participation of the myriad stakeholders who actually work in the public education system or with input from their membership organizations;
- and developed in (at best) a six month period with a recently confirmed Secretary of Education who is new to the state and has never worked in public education.

**The fact that the Administration and Secretary have largely marshalled the expertise of classified staff at the AOE to support their political agenda – at the expense of performing their core duties to the field – not only calls into question their motives but whether they have engaged in significant waste at the taxpayer's expense.**

Finally, and related to assertions related to Governance further below, it is reminiscent of what [Endowed Chair in Education Accountability and](#)



[Transparency](#) at the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas has stated as Arkansas confronted funding issues:

*Given the varying needs and contexts across the state, it is also unlikely that a group of people sitting in Little Rock can effectively decide how all schools should spend their money to best serve students. Local school leaders working with families are better situated to understand and determine how to meet students' needs.*

**We should all question the Administration's motives, let alone the capacity of leadership at the Agency of Education, based on an outline of a plan and a set of assertions made after a six-month listening tour and the belief that Vermonters are too stupid and local school boards are too irresponsible to make decisions about their own children.**

### ASSERTION 3 - What They Say

*This [complexity; lack of guardrails] had led to increased spending. In 8 years, the Education Fund has grown from \$1.6B to \$2.3B.*

(Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.3))

### What You Should Know

The [Administration testified](#) last session to the Senate Finance Committee on School Finance Cost Drivers, with the intent to "quantify some of the primary drivers for a \$200M plus ed spend increase from FY 2024 to FY2025." They detailed the following major culprits:

- **Health Insurance** = \$42,000,000; 16% increase from prior year, calculated by state auditor's office
- **ESSER\*** = 31,250,000; assumes 100% response based on what 80% responded
- **Salary/benefits\*\*** = 87,336,285; relies on salary and benefits being 75% of school budgets and a 6% increase
- **P&I capital Construction** = 50,000,000; this total represents the change from FY24 to FY25, assumes 100% response based on what 80% responded
- **Inflation** = 29,112,095; estimates 6% inflation on the remaining 25% of school budgets that is not salary/benefits
- **Total: \$239,698,380**

### Inflation should not be ignored.

According to the [Joint Economic Committee Republicans](#) - Inflation by State: December 2024

- *The Census Division where Vermont is located has seen cumulative inflation of 17.9 percent since January 2021. Compared to one year earlier, the average Vermont household needs to spend \$206 more per month to maintain the same standard of living.*

- **Household Food Expenses:** Compared to January 2021, the average household in Vermont is spending \$117 more on food per month. Cumulatively, the average household in Vermont has spent \$3,404 more on food due to inflation since January 2021.
- **Household Shelter Expenses:** Compared to January 2021, the average household in Vermont is spending \$249 more on shelter per month. Cumulatively, the average household in Vermont has spent \$5,157 more on shelter due to inflation since January 2021.
- **Household Energy Expenses:** Compared to January 2021, the average household in Vermont is spending \$99 more on energy per month. Cumulatively, the average household in Vermont has spent \$4,661 more on energy due to inflation since January 2021.
- **Household Transportation Expenses:** Compared to January 2021, the average household in Vermont is spending \$204 more on transportation per month. Cumulatively, the average household in Vermont has spent \$9,075 more on transportation due to inflation since January 2021.

We defer to the expertise of the [Public Assets Institute](#) who has already [testified this legislative session](#) on the impact of inflation on education spending and that education expenditures have been effectively flat for twenty years (slide 10).

The Education Fund has increased, but how and when it has increased matters. For instance:

- The Ed Fund increased by 25.18% between FY21 to FY25 (a 5-year span); thus constituting the majority of the 41% increase between FY18 and FY25;
- From FY20 to FY21 there was 7.88% in the Ed Fund, whereas the two previous years (FY19 and FY20) saw increases of 1.36% and 3.4% respectively.

This sharp increase coincides with the **State's initial response to the Coronavirus pandemic**, and should be considered with a review of Ed Fund Payments (which exclude federal support, state categorical aid, or local contributions). At the same time that there was a sharp increase in Ed Fund (\$ raised from sources):

- Ed Fund payment growth slowed from 4.07% to 3.84% from FY20 to FY21
- Ed Fund payment growth slowed from 3.84% to 1.23% from FY21 to FY22

In fact, to contextualize the Administration's assertion beyond "complexity of funding," "lack of guardrails," or "declining enrollment," responsible government officials should keep in mind the following events in that same 5-year period:

Between March 2020 - January 2025, our public education system responded to and met the challenge of:

- A Global Pandemic that officially "ended" May 9, 2023
- Implemented a new statewide summative assessment with a new testing vendor Spring 2023
- Historic flooding events in Vermont - July 7-21, 2023
- Historic (again) flooding events (3) in Vermont – June 23 - July 31, 2024

And all while Vermont engaged in a relentless cascade of policy-making. For instance:

- during the 2021 - 2022 biennium, **84 bills and 37 Acts affecting education and how it is governed, administered, and/or funded were passed into law.** The 2023 - 2024 biennium was no different.

And this does not include the last massive governance legislation – [Act 46 \(2015\)](#) – or quality and equity legislation – [Act 173 \(2018\)](#) and [Act 1 \(2019\)](#) – that are all still playing out today. Here’s a quick glance at just some of the legislation we’ve asked the field to respond to - frequently without funding or adequate support from the Administration - in the last 20 years:

- **2013: [Act 77 \(Flexible Pathways Initiative\)](#)** (An act relating to encouraging flexible pathways to secondary school completion.)
- **2014: [Education Quality Standards](#) (EQS)\*** (The purpose of these rules is to ensure that all students in Vermont public schools are afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality, and enable them to achieve or exceed the standards approved by the State Board of Education.)
- **2015: [Act 46](#)** (An act relating to making amendments to education funding, education spending, and education governance.)
- **2018: [Act 173](#)** (An act relating to enhancing the effectiveness, availability, and equity of services provided to students who require additional support.)
- **2019: [Act 1](#)** (An act relating to ethnic and social equity studies standards for public schools.)
- **2021: [Act 28](#)** (An act relating to improving prekindergarten through grade 12 literacy within the State.)
- **2021: [Act 66](#)** (An act relating to making miscellaneous changes in education laws. This included the incorporation of comprehensive health education into a model Local Wellness Policy for school districts.)
- **2021: [Act 67](#)** (An act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through community schools.)
- **2022: [Act 127](#)** (An act relating to improving student equity by adjusting the school funding formula and providing education quality and funding oversight.)
- **2022: [Act 166](#)** (An act relating to miscellaneous changes to education laws including standardizing kindergarten entrance requirements, a statewide school calendar, a remote learning policy, PCB testing, etc.)

**Perhaps the brave if not “bold” action we could take for our public education system and Vermont taxpayers is to be deliberate, data-informed, and drama-free with our constant “transformations” that really are just tired tropes and [re-treading of old ideas, policies and proposals](#) under a different name. Let’s see things through and do less better and with the support the field has asked for time and time again. Less razzle-dazzle and more responsible policy-making is what Vermont needs.**

A review of the Ed Fund Outlook reports (produced by the [Joint Fiscal Office](#)) spanning FY18 to FY26 provide some additional detail to consider ([Table 2](#)). Education payments to school districts comprise a percentage of the total Ed Fund, but also included in the total figure are appropriations for things like categorical aid and other costs that **reflect the obligations of the State** that public school districts have no control over. For instance:

- In FY22, Education Payments comprised 78% of the total [Ed Fund Outlook](#) (22). The other 22% included categorical aid and appropriations like the **VSTRS pension costs that saw an increase of \$31.3M** to be paid by the Ed Fund (where it remains and continues to grow today).

- In FY23, Education Payments comprised 81% of the total [Ed Fund Outlook](#)(23). The other 19% included **VSTRS pension costs** at \$33.4M, \$29M for **Universal Meals**, and a newly added **VSTRS OPEB Normal Cost** of \$15.1M - a total of \$77.5M that did not put demand on the Ed Fund in 2021.

In both fiscal years, hefty “rainy day” funds were carried unreserved into the next year and then subsequently used to pay down tax rates - despite highly publicized and anticipated federal funding cliffs in the near future. The Governor wags his fingers but he supported using those funds to pay down the tax rate. It’s also important to note that ed fund payment increases were below [national inflation rates](#) in FY21 and FY22.

**So, let’s be clear (or “transparent”) about what we’re talking about when we talk about increased spending and why. And let’s not set up the dynamic that it’s either public schools and public school children are supported OR the State can meet its pension obligations; or that Vermont families can be assured of their constitutional guarantee to a public education system OR tax-payers can get relief; or that families can be secure knowing that their children will get predictable meals OR retired public servants can be guaranteed health care.**

The Administration also fails to produce the necessary reports based on data that they collect to distinguish what are contributing cost drivers. **Table 1** (further below) perhaps provides some insight with a few comparisons offered directly below:

Schooling Type	Average VT Public School Tuition Rate	Average VT Private School Tuition Rate	Additional Public \$\$ Cost per Pupil Tuition to VT Private School
<b>Pre-Kindergarten</b>	\$3,650.18	<b>\$3,724.22</b>	\$74.04 more per private PreK FTE
<b>Elementary</b>	\$13,932.22	<b>\$17,579.73</b>	\$3,647.51 more per private Elementary FTE
<b>Secondary</b>	\$18,909.31	<b>\$20,434.63</b>	\$1,525.32 more per private Secondary FTE
<b>CTE</b>	\$10,304.16	<b>\$16,184.98</b>	\$5,880.83 more per private Secondary CTE FTE
<b>FTE = Full-time Equivalent</b>			

What does this mean? On average:

- If the 3852.5 PreK FTE attended VT public PreK vs. VT private PreK the state would save **\$285,239.10 per year**
- If the 271.7 Elementary FTE attended VT public school vs. VT private school the State would save **\$991,028.27 per year**
- If the 2507.9 Secondary FTE attended VT public school vs. VT private school the State would save **\$3,825,350.03 per year**
- If the 12.8 Secondary CTE FTE attended VT public school CTE vs. VT private school CTE the State would save **\$75,274.62 per year**

In total, **the State could save or reinvest \$5,176,829.02 annually** if these publicly-funded FTEs in Choice towns attended public schools.

It's important to understand these 6,644.9 total FTE who are publicly-funded to attend private schools and PreK providers are not the full universe of Vermont students whom the taxpayer pays for. Vermont taxpayers also pay for 323.5 elementary FTE and 314 secondary FTE to attend out-of-state public and private schools.

**In total, Vermont taxpayers pay for 7,282.4 Vermont PK-12 student FTEs to attend private school in VT and out-of-state, as well as public schools out-of-state.**

If we were to include this total population of Vermont student FTEs, on average:

- If the 595.2 Elementary student FTEs attended VT public schools instead of private and/or out-of-state schools (at an avg. +\$9,248.44/per FTE), the State would save **\$5,504,671.49**;
- If the 2821.9 Secondary student FTEs attended VT public schools instead of private and/or out-of-state schools (at an avg. +\$1,248.57/per FTE), the State would save **\$3,523,339.68**; in addition to,
- If the 3852.5 student FTEs attended VT public schools instead of private and/or out-of-state schools the State would save **\$285,239.10 per year**, and
- If the 12.8 Secondary CTE FTEs attended VT public school CTE instead of private or out-of-state CTE the State would save **\$75,274.624 per year**.

**Addressing the entire issue of our publicly-funded private schools and the massive expansion of school choice, the State could save or reinvest an estimated \$9,388,524.89 annually if these parentally-placed PreK and publicly-funded FTE in Choice towns attended public schools.**

Finally, let's return to Vermont's choice to invest in Universal Pre-kindergarten. According to the [Administration's testimony on 1/21/25](#), "Nationwide in 22/23, Vermont had the 2nd highest enrollment of prekindergarten education for 3-year-olds in the nation at 71% of age-eligible children and the 6th highest uptake for 4-year-olds at 64%." (slide 8)

**So again, what is the Administration saying...it's the fault of public school districts that they've implemented a program that the Administration supports?**

## ASSERTION 4 - What They Say

*The rising costs have required additional sources of revenue to meet the need for funding.*

(Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.3))

## What You Should Know

The Administration's plan fails the transparency test because it doesn't surface what else the Education Fund supports beyond our PK-12 public school system - in several instances funding that public school districts never see. Here are a few recent examples:

- Post-Secondary Education (e.g., approximately \$8M for DE and EC that districts never see)
- Workforce programs like Adult Education (approx. **\$3M** of Education Funds appropriated for FY25 after adding a notwithstanding to 16 VSA 2025)
- Retired Teachers Fund (an additional **\$3M** of EF in FY24)
- **\$1.3M** of EF to the Tax Computer Modernization Fund (FY24)
- **\$2,836,982.94** to the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund (FY24)
- **\$9,340,000** in Education Fund dollars is transferred to the Vermont Teachers' Retirement Fund (FY24)
  - See [Act 87 \(2024\) Budget Adjustment Act](#) for some of the figures above

**And much of this is a consequence of the 6 to 7-year cycle of playing hot potato between the Ed Fund and Gen Fund - something wholly outside the locus of control of public school boards and public school districts.**

When the Governor says, "And at times, we've bought down rates with general fund money that could have gone to housing, human services, climate mitigation, public safety and so much more" he's not being wholly transparent ([Gov Scott Inaugural Address](#)). **Nor is he being wholly truthful when he says, "100% of our Sales and Use tax – about \$600 million a year – goes into the Ed Fund" when we know last year his Administration lobbied successfully to redirect cannabis sales and use tax out of the Ed Fund to a Special Fund.**

Speaking of special funds, according to the [Department of Finance and Management](#), "*Special Fund Report: 32 V.S.A. § 588(6) requires the Commissioner of Finance and Management to report to the Joint Fiscal Committee a list of Special Funds created in the previous Legislative Session and report on the final balances in Special Funds at the prior fiscal year.*" Unfortunately, we have yet to find a full accounting of all the "special funds" that the State has created that redirect sources of funds away from the Education Fund - one of the few components of state budgeting that taxpayers might actually understand.

**If the Administration wants education funding to be more transparent and understandable to the taxpayer, perhaps it's time to revisit the process by which the State pays for things with Education Funds newly disguised as "special funds."**

**Finally, let's talk about the [Tax Increment Finance \(TIF\) Program](#)** as this is an economic development practice the Administration frequently promotes. A list of active TIF Districts include:

- Barre City Downtown TIF District (created 2012)
  - Split of Increment: Education Fund = 75%/25%
- Burlington Downtown TIF District (created 2011)
  - Split of Increment: Education Fund = 69%/31%
- Burlington Waterfront TIF District (created 1997)
  - Beginning 2010: Education Fund = 75%/25% (Except 2 parcels which are at 100%/0%)
- Hartford Downtown TIF District \*created 2011)
  - Split of Increment: Education Fund = 75%/25%
- Killington TIF District (2022)
  - Approved Split of Increment: Education Fund = 70%/30%
- Milton Downtown TIF District (created 2008)
  - Split of Increment: Education Fund = 75%/25%
- South Burlington City Center TIF District (created 2012)
  - Split of Increment: Education Fund = 75%/25%
- St. Albans Downtown TIF District (created 2012)
  - Split of Increment: Education Fund = 75%/25%
- Winooski Downtown TIF District (created 2000)
  - Beginning 2004: Education Fund = 98%/2%

What does this mean? **It means, dating back to 1997, each TIF Districts contribution to the Ed Fund is frozen at the date of its creation, and the largest percentage of any new revenue earned over the base amount as a function of its economic development project they keep (e.g., Killington keeps 75%), and they pay to the Ed Fund the smallest ratio (e.g., Killington pays 25%).**

This means that our public education system does not in fact realize all the benefits of this economic development.

**We are all for economic development. However, we're also for transparency, just like the Governor. When the Administration persists in this narrative that the State keeps having to find other sources of revenue to pay for Education, perhaps that's because Education - in twenty year cycles - is paying for economic development at the expense of its future.**

- [TIF projects](#) (e.g., [Killington TIF project](#) that use Education Funds; see also [Killington TIF Workbook](#))
- [TIF One-Pager](#)
- [TIF Districts Adopted Rule](#)

## ASSERTION 5 - What They Say

*An evidence-based approach has been used as the basis for the funding systems in Arkansas and Wyoming, both of which are subject to court decisions, so the approach has been further upheld as meeting each state's legal requirements.*

(Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.8))

## What You Should Know

Okay. What does that have to do with Vermont? That's like saying we don't need conceal carry permits for guns in Vermont because it's legal in Arkansas. So what?

What it does reveal is that this is a significant change they are proposing, one that comes with significant consequence; and that the Administration may be missing the point. For instance, in the [Wyoming case](#),

*A lawsuit filed by the Wyoming Education Association (WEA) charging that **the State has for years refused to adjust school funding to account for inflation and to update the current school funding model** will be allowed to proceed to trial.*

Further, *The judge also rejected the State's claim that the constitutional right to education is exclusively held by students. Rather, the judge emphasized that the fundamental right to education "exists to benefit not just students but all Wyoming citizens through education of its youth." The judge also concluded that the WEA's allegations sufficiently stated a claim for a constitutional violation, and therefore the case can proceed to trial.*

And, according to one [news report](#),

*The Wyoming Supreme Court ordered the Legislature to recalibrate its public education model once every five years to ensure education funding is adequate and equitable. **The Legislature is supposed to adopt each newly recalibrated model, but the last recalibration adopted by the state was in 2010. [...] The Legislature has failed to provide ongoing external cost adjustments (ECAs), or periodic increases in funding that help cover rising costs due to inflation.***

While the players may be different...sound familiar?

## ASSERTION 6 - What They Say

*This base amount is based on an identified set of resources (personnel and non personnel) in prototypical schools, to which average salaries and*



benefits for each personnel position are applied. APA has partnered with POA in several states (Colorado, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada and Washington, D.C.) to implement the evidence-based approach and reconcile the resources identified in the evidence-based model responding to state educator input to adapt it for each state's unique context.

(Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.8))

## What You Should Know

So, let's look at what the research has found with some of the states that APA has worked with.

Illinois moved to EBF in 2017. [A study](#) of EBF in Illinois conducted in 2023 states, ***"The findings above show that EBF has shown little to null effects regarding improving the academic performance of students in grades 6 to 8. The lack of statistically significant positive effects of EBF on PARCC proficiency show that the EBF is not a short-term fix to funding discrepancies in Illinois school districts. Instead, EBF is an approach that takes time, money, and strategy to see significant positive change."***

Certainly, folks might say the same about the Governor's proposal. But if that's the case, might not that be true for [Act 127 \(2022\)](#) whose funding change only went into effect this year?

As a reminder, Act 127 stated the following

- *(d) 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173, Sec. 11 directed the Agency of Education to study the efficacy of the current pupil weights, which are used in Vermont's school funding formula to provide equitable tax capacity to local school districts for spending on various student needs, and to consider whether increased or additional weights should be included in the equalized pupil count. (P.2)*
- *(e) On December 24, 2019, the Agency issued its Pupil Weighting Factors Report, which was produced by a University of Vermont-Rutgers University team of researchers. **The Report found that neither the cost factors incorporated in the weighting formula nor the values of the current weights reflect contemporary educational circumstances and costs and that stakeholders viewed the existing approach as "outdated."** The Report found that values for the existing weights have weak ties, if any, with evidence describing differences in the costs for educating students with disparate needs or operating schools in different contexts and recommended that the General Assembly increase certain existing weights and add certain new weights. (p.2)*
- *(g) Under current law, 16 V.S.A. § 4010, a weight of 0.46 is applied to a student enrolled in a prekindergarten program. **The Pupil Weighting Factors Report did not review whether this weight reflected the actual cost of providing pre kindergarten educational services because that review was not within the scope of the authors' mandate.** That review is now being undertaken pursuant to 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 45. Therefore, although the 0.46 prekindergarten weight is in current law, its status should be viewed as transitional pending the outcome of this review. (p.3)*

- ***This act updates and adds new pupil weights for fiscal year 2025 and thereafter. Because this change will affect homestead property tax rates, this act limits the degree to which these rates can increase over fiscal years 2025–2029. (p. 4)***
- (g) Guidelines. The Secretary shall develop guidelines to enable clear and consistent identification of pupils to be counted under this section. (p. 12)

Just consider, under this Administration this is what guidelines looked like:

- Under the [AOE's Education Laws webpage](#) Act 127 (2022) and any related **guidance fails to show up.**
- An [Act 127 summary from 2022](#) can be found **linked in an SBE Meeting Agenda as an agenda item.**
- Under [School Reports, Average Daily Membership](#) there is a list of terms and then a list of hyperlinked Resident District Reports that “reflect the data received by the Agency of Education on or before December 1.” It is unclear if these data have been cleaned in any way.

**Before Vermonters embrace the Governor's Transformation Plan, we should consider whether this year's transformation plan (Act 127) has been given sufficient study and time to be effective before we – yet again – disrupt our public schools, including some who started the year learning in tents due to yet another bright idea Vermont had.**

**Pillar 2 - Governance: Adjusting scale at the district and school levels to promote consistency, sustainability, capacity, and cost savings.**

### **Improve Governance**

- Establish five regional school districts to increase efficiency and reduce costs, while maintaining local community input.
- Elected, part-time school boards (one for each district).
- Local school advisory councils will allow for local input on budget development and district strategic planning.

### **ASSERTION 7 - What They Say**

[Vermont has the] *smallest schools in the nation (ranked 46th).*

(Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.2))

## What You Should Know

It shouldn't be surprising that Vermont, being the second smallest state by population in the nation, might have some of the smallest schools in the nation. However, population and geography are not always equivalent and applying a population model to a unique context can be dangerous.

**What is surprising is that our publicly funded private school system is excluded from the Administration's plan for saving money. If the theory is that small schools with low student-to-teacher ratios are more expensive to operate, what does that mean for the 86 private schools approved by the State to receive public funds (as per FY24 Vermont Education Directory) and the 53% of those schools that have less than 50 students?**

Their focus on reducing school districts, a public school structure, versus speaking to the impact of more than 120 private schools operating in this state is troubling - it means they either don't know or don't care and either scenario in our elected and appointed officials is disturbing.

## ASSERTION 8 - What They Say

*Highest staffing levels (1st in staff-to-student ratio) [in the Nation].*

Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.2)

## What You Should Know

Secretary Saunders almost got it. But, there's a bit more to understand.

First, for precision's sake, of the 53 states and territories in the United States (a brush up on geography and civics may be in order), Vermont does not have the lowest student-teacher ratio (as cited in the policy brief and repeated during the 2/5/25 Governor's press conference). Puerto Rico does and it has a student body of over 250,000 students (three times that of Vermont).

Second, Vermont is very much in line with its sister states' student-teacher ratios (see below).

**And finally, Vermont's student-teacher ratios have remained essentially unchanged since 2005.**

Here are the facts based on the [IES National Center for Education Statistics\\*](#) maintained by the United States Government:

- **17 states and territories** have a student-to-teacher ratio below 13:1
- **9 states and territories** have a student-to-teacher ratio below 12:1

- Vermont's sister states' student-to-teacher ratios:
  - Rhode Island (12.7 to 1)
  - New York (11.7 to 1)
  - New Hampshire (11.5 to 1)
  - Massachusetts (12 to 1)
  - Maine (11.4 to 1)
  - Connecticut (11.7 to 1)

[Vermont's student-teacher ratios](#) have effectively been unchanged since 2005, never rising higher than 11.6 to 1 in the last 20 years:

- Fall 2005: 10.9 to 1
- Fall 2010: 11.6 to 1
- **Fall 2015: 10.5 to 1**
- Fall 2016: 10.8 to 1
- Fall 2017: 10.6 to 1
- **Fall 2018: 10.5 to 1**
- Fall 2019: 10.8 to 1
- **[Fall 2022 \(FY23\): 10.5 to 1](#)**

It is in fact untrue that low student-to-teacher ratios have driven up costs or contributed to inequitable outcomes or poor performance when looking at [nationally reported data sets](#). For example, at the height of academic achievement that is frequently cited (see 2005) or when viewing the trend line the Secretary provided on NAEP in her presentation (beginning in 2015) you can see that VT student-to-teacher ratios have largely remained unchanged.

**This means that public schools and districts have been adjusting to declining enrollment.**

Of note, the federal dataset for student-teacher ratios is informed by state reporting. (Note: We are unclear why Secretary Saunders is reporting a figure of 10.3 to 1 in her presentation to the [General Assembly](#) on January 22, 2025 and would like to see those data).

What does that mean? Well, **according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), trends in public versus private school student-teacher ratios indicate that as Vermont proposes to further consolidate public schools and districts to increase student-teacher ratios in public schools, private school student-teacher ratios will continue to decline - thus passing costs on to the public who may or may not enjoy the “benefits” of small student-teacher ratios.** Here's an example:

- 2021 data had public school ratios at 15.4 versus private school ratios at 12.5
- 2025 projections put public education ratios at 15.1 and private school ratios at 11.4

If there is something to be learned from private schools, then perhaps their low student-teacher ratios might be one of them. This is not to vilify private schools, but considering that they are opposed to capping their tuition consistent with any plan foisted on public schools (e.g., <https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-steering-group-cofopevt-public-comment-taconic-green-11-13-24.pdf>) then **one does wonder if continuing to publicly fund private school tuition and private pre-k providers - all while asserting we have declining enrollment and under-utilized public schools – makes sense in a state looking to curb rising costs.**

Finally, according to the [State Digest Dashboard](#) maintained by IES/NCES, and to speak to our concerns of doubling down on double-standards for private schools, here’s a comparison for Vermonters to carefully consider:

	<b>Vermont Public Schools</b> (2022 data)	<b>Vermont Private Schools</b> (2021 data)
<b>Number of Students</b>	83,654	9,180
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	7,934	1,300
<b>Number of Schools</b>	305	120
<b>students/school</b>	274.3	76.5
<b>students/teachers</b>	10.5	7.1

**Again, if the Governor’s proposal is to significantly expand or move to a statewide choice option (also known as voucher programs) that includes private schools, will they be held to the same standards of size and student-teacher ratios? We haven’t heard any mention of setting student-staff ratios and decision matrices regarding private school closures if they’re just too small. If that is in the works - very possible in this slow play of an unfinished plan – what does that mean for them?**

\*In case anyone has concerns about the reliability and validity of IES/NCES, this federal agency is endorsed by: [American Educational Research Association](#), [American Statistical Association](#), [Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics](#) (COPAFS), [Consortium of Social Science Associations](#), [Population Association of America](#), [Association of Population Centers](#)

## ASSERTION 9 - What They Say

Declining enrollment - *K-12 public school enrollment has declined by 21.5% between 2003-04 and 2022-23*

Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.3) and Governor's Press Conference (2/5/25)

## What You Should Know

In addition to what was shared above, there's additional components to the enrollment picture.

While it appears that our K-12 public school enrollment has declined and costs have increased, it's important to understand **a few specifics regarding cost drivers and why student-to-teacher ratios and declining enrollment are not the culprits.** For instance:

1. Currently, and as a result of the Administration's Universal PreK initiative and how they have elected to administer it, our **PK-12 public education system is responsible for paying the tuition of this population** – the vast majority parentally placed at private PreK providers. This is reflected in public school budgets. While AOE data related to this cost is likely unvalidated, figures they have produced reflect that our public school districts made payments to private registered pre-k providers in excess of **\$14M.**
2. **Our declining enrollment figures are a result of changes in how the AOE/State has collected and reported publicly funded students attending private schools.** For some years now the publicly funded students who attend private schools inside and out of the state have been removed from the Education Dashboard and datasets and are not consistently reflected in school and district populations. However, public school districts are still responsible for paying for those students, frequently at tuition rates well above the announced tuition. Unfortunately, the AOE only includes tuition rates from the historical academies in their [announced tuition report](#) (2025).
3. According to the [Vermont Education Dashboard](#):
  - a. 2017 enrollment = 84,432
  - b. 2023 enrollment = 82,901
  - c. **This decline in enrollment from 2017-2023 (six year span) = 1,531 students; a decrease of 1.8%**

**This would suggest that not only is declining enrollment significantly slowing, but that perhaps instead of mandating another massive and destabilizing initiative for the PK-12 public school system (who will likely be left to pick up the pieces) we should address some of the elephants in the room - school choice, privatization, and the steady outflow of public dollars away from public school districts to various sectors like economic development, higher education, private non-profit and for-profit organizations, etc.**

## ASSERTION 10 – What They Say

### The Governance Plan

- *Eliminates the supervisory union structure, moving from 119 school districts to 5 regional districts*
- *Each school district would be governed by an elected, part-time board and operated by 5 district offices for a total of 5 school boards and 5 central offices across the state*
  
- *Every public school required to have a School Advisory Committee, led by the building-level principal with membership that includes: parents/caregivers, students, educators, community members*
- *Duties will include:*
  - *Provide input to the District School Board on equitable budgeting parameters and feedback on the proposed school budget*
  - *Development of the School Improvement Plan, required by state and federal law*
  - *Direction over a discretionary amount within the budget that the school board will be required to set aside for that purpose*

### Education Service Agencies

- *Build capacity in the education system to deliver key services and support that cannot otherwise be met by the districts or the AOE;*
- *Increase coherence across the system and should include close collaboration and alignment between the ESA and the AOE to limit mixed messaging or the creation of competing priorities;*

[Governance presentation \(2/7/25\)](#)

## What You Should Know

In their slapdash rush to come up with details for the dramatic reveal of their education plan (a plan predicated on demonization, consolidation, centralization, demolition, and ultimately privatization), the Administration has suggested that one way to get to prescribed school numbers for “prototypical schools” is to create uber regional districts based on the Superintendent’s regional configuration (created to organize a handful of superintendents by region for the purposes of connecting professionals and supporting communication - not for governance). The obvious attempt to use this as a tool to suggest “collaboration” and “agreement” is both ineffective and divorced from educational pedagogy. **If it takes a village to raise a child, why is the State proposing to bring 11,000 to 34,000 children under the auspices of 1 superintendent, 5 “professional” school board members elected from across a huge geographic region, to be supported and possibly regulated by private Education Service Agencies hired by the State?**

Here are some facts:

- [Census-based estimate of Northeast region](#)
- [Census-based estimate of Champlain Valley Region](#)
- [Comparison between the two proposed Regional Districts](#)

Of greatest alarm, however, is looking at the likely result of the proposed Uber District approach. Based on 2023 Census data, the Administration's proposal would create the following demographic conditions when [comparing the Northeast District to the Champlain Valley District configuration](#), **the Northeast District** (census data regions created based on our best estimate based on Administration materials):

- Is **25% larger** in square mileage;
- Has **one-third the population**;
- Has **400% fewer people per square mile**;
- Is on average **is older** (approx. 5 years);
- Has **fewer people under the age of 50 years** (approximately 5% fewer);
- Is on average **earning \$10,000 less per year**;
- Has an average **Median Household Income of \$22,000 - \$26,000 less**;
- Has **4% higher rates of people living in poverty**;
- Has **9% more of its children under the age of 18 living in poverty**; and
- Also has an average drive time to work of more than 26 minutes.

**What this means is that the State – contrary to the Governor's assertion during his Inaugural Address that he's thinking about the little people of the Northeast Kingdom (and every day Vermonters generally) – is aggregating social, geographic and financial isolation into one mega district that, according to their plan, shouldn't be alarming because for those who have more they can certainly raise their own funds if they want to offer more opportunity to their children.**

Those who have less shouldn't worry, the State will decide what they need.

One also wonders about the implication financially of requiring every school to have a School Advisory Committee. Is this genuinely an efficiency step, or just asking working people to do the same work for free? When one looks at the duties – duties that school boards have traditionally engaged in - this will mean either:

- They will have to compensate these committee members (so will there be limitations on membership and compensation?);
- They don't plan on compensating them but expect them to do this work for free (thus passing the cost down to individuals who used to be compensated in their school board capacities);
- They expect these folks to do the work but will have no authority or decision-making opportunity that is reserved for the "semi-professional" school board members.

Taking a lesson again from the [Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas](#):

***Given the varying needs and contexts across the state, it is also unlikely that a group of people sitting in Little Rock can effectively decide how all schools should spend their money to best serve students. Local school leaders working with families are better situated to understand and determine how to meet students' needs.*** Just substitute "Montpelier" for "Little Rock."



Finally, yet again, this feels like waste when the Administration says they care about cost. Why not let supervisory unions afford themselves of the legislation passed just last June ([Act 168 of 2024](#)) and enter into their own agreements with each other and/or ESAs before a group of individuals with little to no experience in public education make that determination for them?

### ***Pillar 3 - Accountability & Guardrails: Improving consistency and capacity at the state level to promote cost savings and education quality.***

#### ***Improve Quality***

- *Strengthen state oversight to ensure quality education and efficient use of resources.*
- *Define average school and class size minimums and maximums.*
- *Standardize graduation requirements for all districts.*

### **ASSERTION 11 - What They Say**

*The system lacks guardrails to ensure consistent budgeting across districts.*

Administration's Education Plan [Overview Policy Brief](#) (p.3)

### **What You Should Know**

In a [September 2022 memo](#) as a result of the passage of Act 127 (2022), Secretary French acting on behalf of the Administration detailed that:

- ***Act 127 describes three topics for District Quality Standards: Business Operations, Facilities Management, and Governance. We have reviewed these topics and believe no additional topics are needed at this point. However, the topic of Facilities Management has been expanded to be Facilities Management and Safety.***
- ***The second aspect of the rulemaking in Act 127 refers to the development of a process of, “school district quality reviews to be conducted by the Agency of Education.” The Agency intends to outline this process in “Quality Assurance Rules” that will pull elements from both the existing Education Quality Standards (EQS) and the new District Quality Standards (DQS). These quality assurance rules will lead to a revision of the state’s ESSA State Plan including a re-examination of current quality assurance processes such as the Annual Snapshot and Integrated Field Reviews.***

The [District Quality Standards webpage](#) on the AOE website states:

***The purpose of the District Quality Standards (DQS) rules is to improve school district quality as a means to support the State’s goal, set forth in 16 V.S.A. § 165(a), “that all Vermont children will be afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality.”***

*The State has ultimate responsibility for ensuring all students receive substantially equal access to a quality education. This responsibility originates from the Vermont Constitution. To fulfill its responsibility, the State delegates considerable authority to school districts, supervisory unions (SU/SDs) and superintendents. Therefore, **the State has an obligation to provide public assurance that its delegated authority is being implemented in a manner that will likely achieve its responsibility.***

*The standards provided in **these rules describe the core elements of a quality education delivery system. They also describe the role of the Agency of Education in providing the necessary support and oversight to attain those standards, so all students receive substantially equal access to a quality education.*** [District Quality Standards - Rule Series 100](#)

These rules are poised to go into effect July 1, 2025.

So, what happened? **Much of what is described above is what the Administration is proposing - things that have already been stated in new legislation and new education rules. We don’t need a NEW plan, we need the Agency of Education to do its job.**

The continued use of the term “the system” tends to divorce the Administration and Agency of Education from the overall public education system that it is ultimately responsible for overseeing, supporting and holding accountable. In fact, in their 17-page policy brief, the Administration refers to this amorphous, “system,” ten times - not once acknowledging the constitutional and legal duty of the State to administer this “system” - instead blaming local school boards and districts for failures of the State.

**If the District Quality Standards, created as a result of Act 127, are for the exact purpose and goals of establishing “guardrails.” Are we as a State really going to engage in yet another monumental example of extraordinary waste by throwing out an education reform BEFORE it's been fully enacted only to replace it with something more complicated and overreaching? And, even with the nod to DQS in the Governor’s plan - oversight rules that the Agency is now proposing to transfer onto the State Board of Education – does anyone believe that the Agency can implement this ambitious education plan when it is already giving up on implementing a set of its own rules that haven’t even gone into effect yet?**

## ASSERTION 12 - What They Say

*Variability of education standards creates inconsistent expectations and performance outcomes*

[\(2/6/25 testimony\)](#)

#### *Balancing Freedom and Unity*

- *Strengthen implementation of key strategies that drive student success to ensure fidelity, rigor and consistency*
- *Connect and create coherence across curriculum, proficiency based learning, local and state assessments and grading*
- *Statewide standards for graduation requirements and coordinated Curriculum*
- *Single statewide calendar*
- *Focus on high leverage educational standards and ensure that the Agency can provide support and oversight*
- *Align rule-making and implementation in state statute*

[Presentation to the General Assembly](#)

#### **What You Should Know**

##### **It almost feels redundant to address this when one reflects on the AOE's Purpose Statement:**

*The Agency of Education implements state and federal laws, policies, and regulations to ensure all Vermont learners have equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities. The Agency accomplishes this mission through the provision of its leadership, support, and oversight of Vermont's public education system.*

##### **With this in mind, we recommend to the Secretary of Education and the Administration that they can achieve each of the following right now. They want to**

- *Strengthen implementation of key strategies that drive student success to ensure fidelity, rigor and consistency - **Okay, do your job.***
- *Connect and create coherence across curriculum, proficiency based learning, local and state assessments and grading - **Yep, that's why so much effort was put into Act 173 and Act 1. Do your job.***
- *Statewide standards for graduation requirements and coordinated Curriculum - **Yep, got em. Do your job.***
- *Single statewide calendar - **Remember Act 127? The Acting Secretary didn't last year during testimony. Do your job.***
- *Focus on high leverage educational standards and ensure that the Agency can provide support and oversight - **Remember the Education Quality Standards, District Quality Standards, Act 173, Act 1, Act 67, Act 66, Act 28, Act 139, etc. etc.? Do your job.***
- *Align rule-making and implementation in state statute - **It's the job of the executive to implement and enforce rules and statute. DO YOUR JOB.***

**Vermont needs the Secretary of Education to focus on her statutorily defined duties that include the laundry list above, and the Administration needs to finally provide the necessary staffing and resources to the dedicated classified frontline staff at the Agency who have been doing so much with so little for so long.**

### ASSERTION 13 – What They Say

*Keep in mind, the Education Fund is now more than \$2.1 billion dollars. With fewer than 83,000 Pre-K through 12 students, we're spending about \$25,000 a year per student, among the very highest in the country. **And that might be okay with me if we were leading in student performance. But in several areas, we're in the middle of the pack, according to the U.S. Department of Education.** [emphasis added]*

*([Gov. Scott's State of the State, 2024](#))*

### What You Should Know

The governor is engaging in political rhetoric when he makes statements like the above. Here's why.

According to the [Nations Report Card \(2024\)](#) and Vermont's state report.

- 10 out of 53 states and jurisdictions had higher scaled NAEP scores than VT on [8th grade math](#)
- 23 out of 53 states and jurisdictions were higher than VT on [4th grade math](#)
- 13 out of 53 states and jurisdictions were higher than VT on [4th grade ELA](#)
- 9 out of 53 states and jurisdictions were higher than VT on [8th grade ELA](#)

That's not quite "middle of the pack," but we agree, **we want more for our kids** - does he? As a country, last year's NAEP scores indicate a slow recovery from the effects of the pandemic. But, it's important that we celebrate small successes and reflect on how ESSER-funded initiatives like Act 28 and Act 67 and others provided substantial state-level support to public school districts who had high uptake rates – and that may be indicative of what we sorely need in this state - investment in professional learning, support and technical assistance at the state level.

**But time and time again, resources were denied the AOE as the Administration insisted that staffing levels and resources were sufficient to requirements. One wonders if the goal all along was to destabilize, diminish and then dismantle. Here we are. We need less destabilizing change, less policy overlay and re-tinkering, and more commitment and sustained support for our public schools and the classified public employees who serve them.**

Further, consider comparisons between Vermont and those states that APA has worked with to implement an evidence-based funding formula:

[Table 3: VT 2024 NAEP Math Performance in Context with EBF States Supported by APA](#)

- Vermont ranks 3rd out of 7 states

[Table 4: VT NAEP Reading Performance in Context with EBF States Supported by APA](#)

- Vermont ranks 4th out of seven states

**Is this an overwhelming argument to engage in a years-long massive disruption and reorganization of the funding, governance and accountability structure of our public education system - at the expense of the local democratic exercise of governance of public education? And if so, what's the cost?**

Finally, we should take pride in decisions we have made in Vermont about how we approach statewide summative assessments. We have chosen not to shy away from the data that identifies Vermont students who need additional support. In FY22 the AOE put out [Why We Assess](#) in response to understandable concerns educators and families raised about the stressors of standardized testing during the pandemic (tests required by the U.S. Department of Education). In that document the AOE shared:

*Beginning in 2015, Vermont pioneered practices in our ESSA State Plan development that now exemplify all the most lauded approaches outlined in the National Academy of Sciences' 2020 publication [Building Educational Equity Indicator Systems: A Guidebook for States and School Districts](#). Vermont's focus on equity has been so strong, that the [Alliance for Excellent Education's assessment of Vermont's Annual Snapshot](#) through their [ESSA Equity Dashboard](#) "stoplight" system (green, yellow, red), which assesses indicators most essential for advancing equitable educational opportunities for all students, rates us as majority "green," with no "red" areas for the entire plan because of its careful design. ESSA state plans hinge on Statewide Summative Assessment data, meaning they are not only required, but they are a critical tool for educational equity.*

Vermont has invested in having the same goals for all of its student subgroups as part of its [ESSA Plan](#), which can't be said for all states including some of the states that may have "better" results on their summative assessment like [New Hampshire](#) or state's that this Administration have turned to as a model like [Wyoming](#).

**ASSERTION 14 - What They Say**

*We don't have the workforce to fill these positions...the number of teachers on emergency ad provisional licenses have increased upwards of 80%*

since 2017.

([Governor's Press Conference 2/5/25](#))

## What You Should Know

Going back to that Wyoming [news report](#),

*The Legislature has failed to provide ongoing external cost adjustments (ECAs), or periodic increases in funding that help cover rising costs due to inflation. Historically, lawmakers will approve one-time or partial ECAs to cover inflated costs of utilities or educational materials, but salaries often go unaccounted for. LCSD1 finance director Jed Cicarelli said the **lack of a consistent ECA adjustment for personnel costs has hindered school districts' ability to retain and recruit staff.***

This is worthy of reflection on broader implications to the educator workforce beyond just the impact of the pandemic. However, in Vermont's recent history, it's not the Legislature but this Administration that failed to invest in shoring up the educator workforce when there was still an opportunity.

**At best, this Administration approved the use of state set-aside ESSER funds to conduct a study of whether we had a problem with our educator workforce. A study that has never been published because it was determined to have little value. This study was conducted while the house was effectively burning down around us, and when we knew this fire had been smoldering for more than a decade.**

It was only after the Legislature took the initiative that in FY24 the Agency of Education made a larger investment of ARP-ESSER funds to support an educator workforce pilot in the Northeast Kingdom.

In 2021, according to the U.S. Department of Education Teachers Shortage Area report (<https://tsa.ed.gov/#/home/>), the following shortage areas were reported statewide for 2020-2021:

- Support Staff – Nurses; PK-12
- Support Staff – Library/Media Specialists; PK-12
- Science – General Sciences; 7-12
- Health & Physical Fitness – Physical Education; PK-12
- Health & Physical Fitness – Health Science; PK-12
- World Languages – Spanish; PK-12
- World Languages – French; PK-12
- CTE – Design & Technology Education; 6-12

- Mathematics – Basic & Advanced Mathematics; 7-12
- Administrative – Principals; PK-12

These data call out shortage areas related to both math and science (STEM) for grades 7-12, CTE educators, and world languages teachers (who would also be deemed bilingual educators) for PK-12. This picture was further reinforced by data related to difficulty in adequate staffing to support our virtual academies in the beginning of the 2021 fiscal year through our Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (VTVLC). In September 2020, the Agency of Education put a call out to education networks around the state and to our New England State Education Agency (SEA) partners looking to recruit math, science, social studies and foreign language teachers (especially at the middle level) to little effect. Additionally, it identified statewide shortages for Nurses, Library and Media Specialists, Principals, and Health and Physical Education.

The Vermont Department of Labor's 2018-2028 Long-Term Occupational Projections report (<http://www.vtlmi.info/projlt.pdf#page=9>) indicated that Education, Training and Library Occupations ranked sixth out of all Major Occupation Clusters in number of annual openings in the state. This was pre-COVID. Teacher assistants, registered nurses and nurse assistants, and childcare workers ranked in the top 25 occupations with the greatest number of annual openings. Finally, of the top twenty-five occupations at each level of educational attainment typical for entry, ranked by the number of openings and by rate of growth, the following school-related positions ranked in the top ten:

- Educational guidance, school, and vocational counselors
- Clinical, Counseling and School Psychologists
- Education Administration, Elementary and Secondary School
- Librarians
- Instructional Coordinators

Sadly, this picture remains largely unchanged. The Vermont Department of Labor & McClure Foundations joint report on promising careers list K-12 teachers as the highest need in Vermont over the next 10 years (7850 openings). Meanwhile, the number of students participating in teacher education programs has declined in Vermont and nationally. Schools are all too often not filling essential positions and relying on hiring individuals entering the teaching profession through non-traditional pathways, or calling upon existing licensed teachers to take on a provisional license in another endorsement area (a nuance of the 80% figure that Secretary Saunders either failed to know or failed to mention).

**But most importantly, this Administration cannot use our current challenges in staffing as a justification for change when it has dragged its heels to support shoring up the educator workforce, has made minimal investment, and frankly has contributed to challenges in recruiting educators and administrators with the very public and prolonged blaming and shaming of our public education system. And now, pushing the current consolidation and centralization plan, the Administration is not making the**

**education field more attractive to any thinking person who sees several years worth of disruption and insecurity ahead.** The best thing this State could do right now to RETAIN the educators we have is to focus on stability. Recruiting educators into our workforce will require both stability and a sustained investment - not massive layoffs and pushouts that will become Vermont's next unemployment problem.

### ASSERTION 15 - What They Say

*The Agency will retain its current responsibilities and will include increased support to the field.*

*New responsibilities through rulemaking that are intended to ensure strong implementation of the new finance, governance and education quality systems, and to improve district implementation of education quality standards and district quality standards.*

[Governance Presentation 2/6/25](#)

### What You Should Know

We have significant concerns about the rationale for the Administration (in the body of the Agency of Education) wanting to take on rule-making. **The Executive is subject to the law. It does not make the law.** And "rules" at the state level have the power of law.

**Essentially, the Agency is saying that it needs to make the law to follow the law, and that is concerning on its face, let alone as part of a plan to engage in a multi-year long, half-baked, destabilizing "transformation" plan that is seeking to radically expand choice and introduce private entities into the oversight of public agencies and institutions. Sound familiar?**

Perhaps Vermont taxpayers could save money and meet their legal obligations if they were only allowed to set tax law and regulations.

**The AOE should do its job before it tries to do someone else's.**

There have been a multitude of stakeholders, many of them asked by the Government to do this work to develop a vision for public education. And many have made practicable and immediate term recommendations - several focused on how the state apparatus could perform better - that the Secretary could begin working on right now. For example, the VSBA's [Final Report on the Task Force on Collaboration to Benefit All Students](#) and [1/23/25 Testimony](#) (Diaz-Smith) and [1/23/25 Presentation](#) (Wool)

And in a desperate appeal to not engage in yet another example of government waste, we would like to highlight just one of their recommendations that also happens to be truly democratic and not an example of elite capture at the Executive level.

- **Acknowledge the work of the [Commission on the Future of Public Education](#)**



[Act 183 of 2024](#) convened the Commission to make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding public education funding, delivery and governance. Many of the issues outlined here also seek to be addressed in the Commission's work. The Task Force affirms the need for this work to be completed in order for substantive improvements to be made.

- **Improve the Capacity of the Agency of Education to Meet Statutory Responsibilities.** The Agency should conduct a comprehensive organizational analysis in order to understand why it has been unable to meet its statutory responsibilities to oversee public education in Vermont. This analysis, inclusive of feedback from the field and an evaluation of the culture of the organization, should result in a redesign to support better Agency function.

### ASSERTION 16 - What They Say

*Yet, defenders of the current system – which has declining test scores, massive annual property tax increases and pays teachers unequally – have misleadingly referred to this proposal as a “voucher system.” They are wrong. The plan eliminates the flow of public dollars to private schools outside of the state and country. The plan also assumes the General Assembly will maintain the current moratorium on new independent schools and proposes more accountability standards for independent and public schools.*

(Governor's [Press Release](#))

- *Criteria for school choice approval (shared accountability with public schools)*
  - *Consideration around allowing public schools to also be a School Choice*
- *School (SCS) - (opportunity to create special programs that all students in a district could access)*
- *Enrollment process for SCS may include preferences for geography and siblings*

[Governance presentation \(2/7/25\)](#)

### What You Should Know

It's worthy of reminding folks of what the Governor said during his 2024 State of the State:

*With fewer than 83,000 Pre-K through 12 students, we're spending about \$25,000 a year per student, among the very highest in the country. And that might be okay with me if we were leading in student performance. But in several areas, we're in the middle of the pack, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Please know, this is not a critique of our teachers or our students. It's the result of an education infrastructure that is too large for the number it serves, so not enough money is making it to the kids.*

Whatever the Governor has previously said, this press release betrays a few biases and beliefs:

- He believes that standardized test scores are the sole determinant of what students know and can do.
- He believes that education is transactional and operates as money in, widgets out.
- He believes that anyone who critiques his plan is a “defender” of the “current system” - as yet still undefined or at least not agreed upon.
- He does not invite conversation, collaboration or consideration of changes to his unfinished plan (let’s be honest, it’s a proposed outline).
- He does not understand what voucher systems are.
- He has not included a resolution of the public funding of private schools in his plan but rather has “assumed” the General Assembly will fix it.
- He believes this system is indefensible.

**We are asking for less politicking, less rhetoric, more transparency, more problem-solving and a real commitment to the public education system this Administration has let languish since he came into office...except when he uses it as his favorite whipping post.**

What the Administration is proposing is effectively a “mixed-delivery system” of publicly-funded education. **He’s right - it’s not just a voucher model; it’s a hybrid voucher-funded charter school model that is being proposed.**

The current plan seeks to reconfigure our public education system **only**, effectively passing on the cost of the Administration’s education proposal – significant disruption, closures, and massive layoffs – to public school students **only**. Meanwhile, private schools who earn revenue from the public school districts who pay tuition to them will continue to operate – status quo. This calls into question the Administration’s claims of equity and transparency.

It also calls into question the Administration’s assertion that this plan’s goal is to ensure high-quality education for all; especially when the AOE and members of this administration have [previously testified](#) that private providers don’t attract or hire the same quality of educators as public schools do:

*Qualitative findings from program interviews suggest that public PreK programs have a marked advantage in hiring AOE ECE/ECSE licensed PreK teachers. **Both public and private programs perceived that public programs tend to draw higher quality teachers than do private programs, due to their ability to offer substantially higher salaries**, Act 11: Prekindergarten Study Final Report (Revised: July 1, 2019) Page 5 of 72 benefits and working conditions. In contrast, private programs struggle to attract AOE ECE/ECSE licensed educators. This finding aligns with predictions from early childhood education researchers, who have warned that, over time, such disparities in wages and environments might result in a concentration of the highest quality PreK classrooms in public schools. (Dan French, Secretary of Education)*

This issue of quality and educational rigor, and the misperceived difference between public and private, isn’t constrained to this state and, in fact, has a **well-established research and literature base that warns that what is being proposed by the Administration will cost taxpayers more - way more**. Here are a few considerations:

The problem with the rhetoric of “choice” which has already happened in Vermont:

- *Rather than moving money around to “follow the child” as advocates of “choice” programs claim, **voucher schemes create an entirely new school system that must also be supported by taxpayers.***
- ***Vouchers end up costing a LOT of money and creating huge budget problems for policymakers.** (myriad specific state examples are included and reviewed) (<https://theeducationreport.substack.com/p/vouchers-are-expensive-and-ineffective>)*

“Choice” for some often diminishes choices for others - we’ve seen it already happen time and time again in Vermont - and does not have the corresponding quality improvements that proponents claim:

- ***Virtually all current studies of academic outcomes for voucher students have found that students perform no better—and in many cases worse—than their peers who remain in traditional public schools.** An evaluation of Washington, D.C.’s voucher program found “no conclusive evidence that the [program] affected student achievement.” [i] In Louisiana, researchers found that the voucher program had a negative impact on participating students’ academic achievement in the first two years of its operation. [ii] The Fordham Institute, expressed concern that students suffered academically at Ohio’s voucher schools. Fordham noted that many of the schools that participate in the voucher program are of poor quality. Yet because they are private entities, there are few accountability measures that would force these schools to close or improve.*
- ***Voucher programs reduce available funding for public schools.** Whether they are funded directly with public dollars, or funded through tax credits, vouchers reduce the amount of money available to public schools. Like charters, over time they drain much needed resources away from public schools, causing layoffs, program cuts and even school closings.*
- ***Indiana’s voucher programs together cost the state’s public schools \$115 million in transferred revenues in the 2014-2015 school year alone.** An evaluation of the state’s programs confirmed that diverting taxpayer dollars away from the state’s public education system, into lower-performing private religious schools, was likely to lower student achievement in the state over time. [iii] (<https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/ejroc/myths-and-facts-about-vouchers>)*

And letting the wolf through the door costs money:

- ***Private-school vouchers are multiplying. In 2021, at least a dozen state legislatures expanded voucher programs or created new such programs. This growth poses questions about what effects a universal voucher system would have on taxpayers. According to a new economic analysis, this economic cost would conservatively amount to between \$66.5 billion and \$203 billion annually.** (<https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication-announcement/2021/05/voucher-costs>)*

**What the Secretary of Education and Administration are proposing is effectively a charter school choice system. This should not be surprising – when you hire someone with one tool they will treat everything like a nail. What the Administration’s proposal does**

**put paid to is the suggestion that Vermonters' engaging in the democratic process of voicing their concerns about the Secretary's appointment last spring were "false accusations and judgements [...] based on the state she currently lives in."**

Here's what folks should continue to be concerned about in addition to what has been shared above:

- Charter schools are a primary driver of privatization [in education].  
([https://gspp.berkeley.edu/assets/uploads/research/pdf/Privatization\\_and\\_Charter\\_School\\_Reform.pdf](https://gspp.berkeley.edu/assets/uploads/research/pdf/Privatization_and_Charter_School_Reform.pdf))
- Choice is also a hallmark of privatization and frequently, "*Privatization in education occurs when countries shift towards a "subsidiary state" model that primarily outsources social sector management to private firms.*"  
(<https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/scope-investment-public-ed-brief-final.pdf>)

This should sound familiar - think Education Service Agencies. It would not be surprising if ESAs were subsequently replaced with Education Management Organizations (EMO) – for-profit entities that manage schools like Charter Schools USA.

We have a choice to make. We cannot sustain what has become, essentially, a fractured publicly-funded education system with different sets of rules for different types of schools and private partnerships. Nor can we afford to forego a close examination of the impact of "choice" on our education system overall. Not just because it is financially and systemically unsustainable, but because it risks undermining Vermont's rich tradition of ensuring that every student has access to "convenient instruction" and "substantially equal" education.

This is not a partisan issue. Nor is it a simple issue with only one culprit. Declining enrollment is not the only issue when taxpayers pay for over 7,000 students that attend private pre-k, elementary and high schools and go uncounted when it comes to talking about the cost of education. Small schools are not the only problem when we can't get health care, housing or inflation under control. And educators, administrators and school boards are not the culprits when the State can't meet its minimum obligations to them.

**Let's not use "choice" and "transformation" as a substitute for "public good" and "commitment." Let's not entertain a half-baked, opportunistic proposal to destabilize a cherished public institution at the expense of our future leaders (students), dedicated public school staff, communities and, ultimately, democracy. Let's not confuse agents of chaos as agents of change, especially at a time when we can't rely on stability at the federal level.**

## Data Tables

**Table 1: Private Tuition vs. Public Tuition in VT School Choice 2024**

*Based on AOE's FY24 SW1 Report 1-28-25*

Type	Student Count	Tuition Totals	Per pupil Rate
<b>PreK - Private</b>	<b>3852.5</b>	<b>\$14,347,569.00</b>	<b>\$3,724.22</b>
<b>VT Public - PreK*</b>	<b>112.1</b>	<b>\$409,185.68</b>	<b>\$3,650.18</b>
VT Private - RegE	271.7	\$4,776,412.00	\$17,579.73
Public OOS - RegE	313	\$8,889,108.00	\$28,399.71
Private OOS RegE	10.5	\$131,606.00	\$12,533.90
<b>Total Elementary - Private + OOS</b>	<b>595.2</b>	<b>\$13,797,126.00</b>	<b>\$23,180.66</b>
<b>Total Elementary - VT Public (RegE)**</b>	<b>326.6</b>	<b>\$4,550,264.00</b>	<b>\$13,932.22</b>
VT Private - RegS	2507.9	\$51,247,999.00	\$20,434.63
Public OOS - Reg S	230.3	\$4,192,324.00	\$18,203.75
Private OOS - RegS	83.7	\$1,443,200.00	\$17,242.53
<b>Total Secondary - Private + OOS</b>	<b>2821.9</b>	<b>\$56,883,523.00</b>	<b>\$20,157.88</b>
<b>Total Secondary - VT Public (RegS)***</b>	<b>2107.8</b>	<b>\$39,857,043.00</b>	<b>\$18,909.31</b>
CTE - Private+OOS	12.8	\$207,167.73	\$16,184.98
<b>VT Public - RegV</b>	<b>247.6</b>	<b>\$2,551,310.31</b>	<b>\$10,304.16</b>
<b>Notes</b>			
<b>*VT Public - PreK outliers</b> (2 Districts who operate choice tuitioning)	5	\$52,750.00	\$10,550.00
<b>**Removed 1 entry (1 District) that had 1.0 FTE student at tuition of \$1</b>	1	\$1.00	\$1.00
<b>***Non-operating VT Public Districts - RegS</b>	89.5	\$1,797,602.31	\$20,084.94

**Table 2 - Ed Fund Outlook FY18 - FY26**

<b>ED FUND OUTLOOKS (ACTUALS ONLY) by Fiscal Years ( In millions)</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>	<b>FY20</b>	<b>FY21</b>	<b>FY22</b>	<b>FY23</b>	<b>FY24</b>	<b>FY25 (1/22/25 Gov. BAA)</b>	<b>FY26 (Projected)</b>
<b>SOURCES</b>	\$1,622.90	\$1,645.00	\$1,695.00	\$1,828.50	\$1,919.70	\$1,945.90	\$2,058.90	\$2,288.90	\$2,402.80
<b>APPROPRIATIONS (Total Uses)</b>	\$1,635.40	\$1,655.40	\$1,726.70	\$1,794.50	\$1,850.10	\$1,961.20	\$2,151.30	\$2,312.10	\$2,436.60
<b>Education Payment</b>	\$1,352.20	\$1,372.90	\$1,428.80	\$1,483.70	\$1,502.00	\$1,576.50	\$1,711.10	\$1,882.30	\$1,996.20
<b>Ed Fund Payment Increases from Previous Year (%)</b>		1.53%	4.07%	3.84%	1.23%	4.96%	<b>8.54%</b>	<b>10%</b>	6.05%
<b>Source Increases from Previous Year (%)</b>		1.36%	3.40%	7.88%	4.99%	1.36%	5.81%	11.17%	4.98%
<b>Appropriation Increases from Previous Year (%)</b>		1.22%	4.31%	3.93%	3.10%	6.00%	9.69%	7.47%	5.38%
<b>Difference Between Sources and Education Payments</b>		\$272.10	\$266.20	\$344.80	\$417.70	\$369.40	\$347.80	\$406.60	\$406.60
<b>Difference Between Education Payment &amp; Appropriations</b>		\$282.50	\$297.90	\$310.80	\$348.10	\$384.70	\$440.20	\$429.80	\$440.40
<b>Difference Between Sources and Appropriations</b>		<b>-\$10.40</b>	<b>-\$31.70</b>	\$34.00	\$69.60	<b>-\$15.30</b>	<b>-\$92.40</b>	<b>-\$23.20</b>	<b>-\$33.80</b>
<b>APPROPRIATIONS (in millions)</b>									
<b>12 - Special Education Aid</b>	\$188.70	\$198.50	\$213.00	<b>\$223.70</b>	\$229.00	\$208.10	<b>\$235.30</b>	<b>\$264.60</b>	
<b>13 - State-Placed Students</b>	\$14.70	\$20.40	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$17.00	\$17.50	\$19.00	\$20.00	
<b>14 - Transportation Aid</b>	\$18.70	\$19.20	\$19.80	\$20.50	\$20.50	\$21.80	\$23.50	<b>\$25.30</b>	

<b>15 - Technical Education Aid</b>	\$13.60	\$13.90	\$14.20	\$14.80	<b>\$17.20</b>	<b>\$31.30</b>	\$17.00	\$17.90	
<b>16 - Small School Support/ (FY25 Merger Support)</b>	\$7.60	\$7.80	\$8.40	\$8.20	\$8.10	\$8.20	\$8.30	\$1.80	
<b>17 - Essential Early Education Aid</b>	\$6.40	\$6.60	\$6.80	\$7.00	\$7.10	\$7.50	<b>\$8.40</b>	\$8.70	
<b>18 - Flexible Pathways</b>	\$7.20	\$7.30	\$7.70	<b>\$8.30</b>	\$8.20	\$8.30	<b>\$9.30</b>	<b>\$10.70</b>	
<b>19 - Teachers' Pensions (Normal Cost Only)/ 22 - VSTRS Pension Normal Cost (starting in FY23)</b>	\$7.90	\$7.70	\$6.80	\$6.90	<b>\$37.60</b>	<b>\$33.40</b>	<b>\$42.50</b>	<b>\$36.00</b>	
<b>20 - Other Uses (Accounting &amp; Auditing, Financial Systems)/ 26 - Other Uses (Accounting &amp; Auditing, CMF transfer, Financial Systems) (starting in FY23)</b>	\$1.40	\$1.00	<b>\$3.40</b>	\$3.40	\$3.40	\$3.40	<b>\$4.80</b>	<b>\$6.00</b>	
<b>21 -- Adult Education &amp; Literacy (FY18)</b>	\$2.70								
<b>22 -- Community HS of Vermont (FY18)</b>	\$3.20								
<b>23 -- Renter Rebate (FY18)</b>	\$7.70								
<b>24 -- Reappraisal &amp; Listing (FY18)</b>	\$3.50								
<b>11a. E-Board Release of Funds for PCB remediation</b>						\$1.10			

19. Universal School Meals						\$29.00	\$24.00	\$10.70	
20 - English Learners Services								\$2.30	
21 - PCB Remediation Grants							\$29.70		
23 - <u>VSTRS OPEB Normal Cost</u>						\$15.10	\$15.40	\$19.10	
24 - One-time COLA payment							\$3.00		
<u>25 - 5 H.874 - Community Schools</u>								\$1.10	

**Northeast District Region Counties' Census Data** (red = below the state avg.; green = above)

County →	<u>Orleans</u>	<u>Essex</u>	<u>Caledonia</u>	<u>Orange</u>	Northeast District Region Totals, % of State, and/or Avg.	<u>Vermont</u> <sup>1</sup>
<b>Square mileage</b>	694.6 mi. <sup>2</sup>	662.4 mi. <sup>2</sup>	649.2 smi. <sup>2</sup>	687 mi. <sup>2</sup>	<b>Total:</b> 2693.2 mi. <sup>2</sup> <b>% of State total area:</b> 29.2%	9,217.3 mi. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population</b>	27,492	5,972	30,425	29,594	<b>Total:</b> 93,483 <b>% of State total population:</b> 14.4%	647,464 pop.
<b>People/square mile</b>	39.6	9	46.9	43.1	<b>Avg. ppl/square mile in service region:</b> 34.65	70.2 ppl/mi. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Census data for Vermont is within 1 year of the most recent census data (2023); this is contrast with the County data that is anywhere within the last five years of the last census. Within each county profile a comparison to the State data corresponding with the county data is provided. Whether the county data is above or below that descriptive number is indicated in the table



<b>Median Age</b>	<b>45.4</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>45.6</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>Avg. median age in service region: 47.3 years</b>	43.7 yrs /( <b>43 yrs</b> )
<b>% below the age of 50</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>54%</b> (15,980.76)	<b>% of population below the age of 50 in service region: 53%</b>	58%
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	<b>\$36,459</b> (≅\$8,000 below State)	<b>\$34,221</b> (≅\$10,000 below State)	<b>\$38,153</b> (≅\$6,000 below State)	<b>\$41,343</b> (-\$3,000 approx.)	<b>Avg. per capita income of service region: \$37,544</b>	\$46,029 /( <b>\$44,365</b> )
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$66,426</b> (≅\$12,000 below State)	<b>\$58,985</b> (≅\$20,000 below State)	<b>\$66,075</b> (≅\$12,000 below State)	<b>\$77,328</b>	<b>Avg. median household income of service region: \$63,829/\$67,203.50</b>	\$81,211/ ( <b>\$78,024</b> )
<b>% pop. below poverty</b>	10.9%	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>Avg. % of population living below poverty in service region: 12.6%/11.8%</b>	9.7% /( <b>10.3%</b> )
<b>% pop. of children under age 18 living below poverty</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>Avg. % of children &lt; 18 below poverty in service region: 16%/15%</b>	9%
<b>Average travel time to work</b>	<b>26.5 minutes</b>	<b>28.4 minutes</b>	<b>24.2 minutes</b>	<b>25.8 minutes</b>	<b>Avg. travel time to work in service region: 26.4 minutes/26.2 minutes</b>	24.2 minutes/ ( <b>23.4</b> )

**Champlain Valley District Counties' Census Data** (red = below the state avg.; green = above)

County →	Addison	Franklin	Chittenden	Grand Isle	Champlain Valley District Region Totals, % of State, and/or Avg.	<u>Vermont</u> <sup>2</sup>
<b>Square mileage</b>	766.3 mi. <sup>2</sup>	631 mi. <sup>2</sup>	536.8 mi. <sup>2</sup>	81.8 mi. <sup>2</sup>	<b>Total:</b> 2,015.9 mi. <sup>2</sup> <b>% of State total area:</b> 21.9%	9,217.3 mi. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population</b>	37,497	50,379	169,481	7,393	<b>Total:</b> 264,750 <b>% of State total population:</b> 40.9%	647,464 ppl.
<b>People/ square mile</b>	48.9	<b>79.8</b>	<b>315.7</b>	<b>90.4</b>	<b>Avg. ppl/square mile in service region:</b> <b>133.7</b> ppl/mi. <sup>2</sup>	70.2 ppl/mi. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Median Age</b>	44	40.9	38	<b>48.7</b>	<b>Avg. median age in service region:</b> <b>42.9 yrs</b>	43.7 yrs /( <b>43 yrs</b> )
<b>% pop. below the age of 50</b>	57%	<b>60%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>% of population below the age of 50 in service region:</b> <b>58.3%</b>	58%
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$43,524	<b>\$38,447</b> (≅\$7,000 below State)	<b>\$52,802</b> (≅\$7,000 above State)	<b>\$53,254</b> (≅\$8,000 above State)	<b>Avg. per capita income of service region:</b> <b>\$47,006.75</b>	\$46,029 /( <b>\$44,365</b> )
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$88,478</b> (≅\$10,000 above State)	<b>\$79,078</b>	<b>\$99,578</b> (≅\$21,000 above State)	<b>\$90,625</b> (≅\$12,000 above State)	<b>Avg. median household income of service region:</b> <b>\$89,439.75</b>	\$81,211 /( <b>\$78,024</b> )
<b>% pop. below poverty</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	10.1%	7.5%	7.6%	<b>Avg. % of population living below poverty in service region:</b> <b>8.15%</b>	9.7% /( <b>10.3%</b> )
<b>% of children under 18</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>Avg. % of children &lt; 18 below poverty in service region:</b> <b>7%</b>	9%

<sup>2</sup> Census data for Vermont is within 1 year of the most recent census data (2023); this is contrast with the County data that is anywhere within the last five years of the last census. Within each county profile a comparison to the State data corresponding with the county data is provided. Whether the county data is above or below that descriptive number is indicated in the table

below poverty						
Avg. travel time to work	24.5 min.	<b>26.5 min.</b>	<i>21.7 min.</i>	<b>32.9 min.</b>	Avg. travel time to work in service region: <b>26.4 min.</b>	24.2 min./ (23.4)

**Comparison of two Plan districts based on Census Data** (red = below the state avg.; green = above)

Northeast District Region Totals, % of State, and/or Avg.	Champlain Valley District Region Totals, % of State, and/or Avg.	Vermont <sup>3</sup>
<b>Total:</b> 2693.2 mi. <sup>2</sup> <b>% of State total area:</b> 29.2%	<b>Total:</b> 2,015.9 mi. <sup>2</sup> <b>% of State total area:</b> 21.9%	9,217.3 mi. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total:</b> 93,483 <b>% of State total population:</b> 14.4%	<b>Total:</b> 264,750 <b>% of State total population:</b> 40.9%	647,464 ppl.
<b>Avg. ppl/square mile in service region:</b> <i>34.65</i>	<b>Avg. ppl/square mile in service region:</b> <b>133.7</b> ppl/mi. <sup>2</sup>	70.2 ppl/mi. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Avg. median age in service region:</b> <b>47.3 years</b>	<b>Avg. median age in service region:</b> <b>42.9 yrs</b>	43.7 yrs / ( <b>43 yrs</b> )
<b>% of population below the age of 50 in service region:</b> <i>53%</i>	<b>% of population below the age of 50 in service region:</b> <i>58.3%</i>	58%
<b>Avg. per capita income of service region:</b> <i>\$37,544</i>	<b>Avg. per capita income of service region:</b> <b>\$47,006.75</b>	\$46,029 / ( <b>\$44,365</b> )
<b>Avg. median household income of service region:</b> <i>\$63,829/\$67,203.50</i>	<b>Avg. median household income of service region:</b> <b>\$89,439.75</b>	\$81,211 / ( <b>\$78,024</b> )

<sup>3</sup> Census data for Vermont is within 1 year of the most recent census data (2023); this is contrast with the County data that is anywhere within the last five years of the last census. Within each county profile a comparison to the State data corresponding with the county data is provided. Whether the county data is above or below that descriptive number is indicated in the table

Avg. % of population living below poverty in service region: <b>12.6%/11.8%</b>	Avg. % of population living below poverty in service region: <i>8.15%</i>	9.7% / <b>(10.3%)</b>
Avg. % of children < 18 below poverty in service region: <b>16%/15%</b>	Avg. % of children < 18 below poverty in service region: 7%	9%
Avg. travel time to work in service region: <b>26.4 minutes/26.2 minutes</b>	Avg. travel time to work in service region: <b>26.4 min.</b>	24.2 min./ <b>(23.4)</b>

**Table 3: VT 2024 NAEP Math Performance in Context with EBF States Supported by APA**

State/Territory	Student-Teacher Ratio (FY23)	4th Grade Math NAEP	State/Territory	Student-Teacher Ratio (FY23)	8th Grade Math NAEP
Colorado	16.3	239	Colorado	16.3	278
Illinois	13.7	236	Illinois	13.7	277
<b>Vermont</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>Vermont</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>276</b>
Michigan	16.7	235	Michigan	16.7	270
Maryland	14.3	234	Maryland	14.3	268
Nevada	21	233	Nevada	21	265
District of Columbia	11.3	231	District of Columbia	11.3	262
<b>National average = 237</b>			<b>National Average = 272</b>		

**Table 4: VT 2024 NAEP Reading Performance in Context with EBF States Supported by APA**

State/Territory	Student - Teacher Ratio (FY23)	4th Grade Reading NAEP	State/Territory	Student - Teacher Ratio (FY23)	8th Grade Reading NAEP
Colorado	16.3	221	Colorado	16.3	265
Maryland	14.3	216	Illinois	13.7	262
Illinois	13.7	214	Maryland	14.3	258
Vermont	10.5	213	Vermont	10.5	257
Nevada	21	213	Michigan	16.7	255
District of Columbia	11.3	209	Nevada	21	253
Michigan	16.7	209	District of Columbia	11.3	251
<b>National average = 214</b>			<b>National average = 257</b>		