

2025 Legislative Priorities Vermont Superintendents Association

Who Are We?

The Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA) supports 56 superintendents across all supervisory unions/districts and 33 additional aspiring superintendents and central office leaders, including business managers, curriculum directors, special education directors, and assistant superintendents. The association's work is grounded in member services, professional learning, and advocacy. VSA is governed by a board of ten superintendents and staffed by two full-time employees, an executive director and an office manager.

Mission and Vision

Education and educational opportunity are the foundation of a free and democratic society. A quality education for all citizens is essential to maintain the benefits that accrue to every individual as the result of living in a free and democratic society. Furthermore, a well-educated, knowledgeable electorate is requisite to maintaining that status. Vermont will prosper in direct correlation to the education and skills of its citizens.

The Vermont Superintendents Association works to ensure that Vermont public education supports each and every student in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for success in a rapidly changing world. To achieve that result, the Association:

- Promotes improvements to laws, regulations, and practices.
- Engages partners to support a framework for transforming public education to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.
- Supports superintendents through transparent, proactive analysis and communications specific to educational issues at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Supports superintendents through high-quality professional development and supports the work of superintendents within the districts they serve.

Core Principles for the 2025 Legislative Session

1. VSA recognizes that change in the educational delivery system is necessary to develop an affordable system for taxpayers while providing high-quality education for all students.
2. We believe that VSA plays a key role as a change agent to improve equitable outcomes for Vermont's students, communities, taxpayers, and employees.
3. Recommendations must address disparities in opportunities and resources to ensure every student can succeed.
4. Legislative changes must address cost drivers. Mechanisms that only aim for cost containment will likely negatively impact students. Upholding and improving quality must be a top priority.
5. Making changes that avoid unintended consequences for students will require a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness of education finance, governance, and physical size and footprint levers.

6. The education system does not operate within a vacuum. It is deeply intertwined with the state's housing, childcare, environmental, workforce, and healthcare needs and often bears additional responsibilities related to these challenges.
7. Any changes must recognize that FY26 budgeting is underway and must be as minimally disruptive to this process as possible.

Legislative Priorities

1. Education Funding Reform

- Address Spending Disparities: Create more significant equity in the education funding system by addressing the state's considerable range in weighted per-pupil spending (~\$10,000–\$18,000). Any overarching changes to the funding system must be properly modeled and ensure adequate funding for high-quality education.
- Ed Fund Analysis: Conduct a full analysis of the use of the Education Fund to ensure dollars are directed to educational purposes and not diverted to non-educational items. Prioritize maintenance and support for initiatives that create safe and high-quality schools.
- PreK Funding: Revise the funding formula to incentivize public schools to run PreK programs and consolidate oversight under one organization to simplify regulations.

2. Instructional Delivery Size and Structural Change

- Class Sizes: Amend the law to require a minimum average class size and reexamine the maximum class sizes outlined in the Education Quality Standards (currently 20 for K-3 and 25 for 4-12). This ensures more consistent, equitable class size policies statewide. Refer to Act 153 of 2010, which requires all districts to establish a minimum and optimal average class sizes policy.
- Staff-to-Student Ratios: Establish a clear and consistent method for calculating staff-to-student ratios, aiming to align Vermont's ratios with the Northeast average over time. This requires improved data reporting and alignment with best practices, such as those outlined in Act 173 of 2018.
- District and School Efficiency: Identify the optimal size of schools and districts to improve efficiency and increase equitable opportunities for students. Provide support for reimagining what community looks like in places that might not meet those efficiency criteria.
- School Designation: Require that districts without their own schools for certain grade levels designate up to three schools to serve as the allowable school(s) of the district. This ensures districts without schools for certain grades still meet the educational needs of their students in a more efficient delivery model.
- Facility Modernization: Use Vermont's Facilities Condition Analysis to guide investments in modern, safe, and efficient school buildings. Prioritize funding for "newer and fewer" schools that meet enrollment, staffing, and efficiency standards, taking cues from Massachusetts' School Building Authority (MSBA) model.

3. Education Quality

- Maintain focus on a collaborative vision for high-quality education in Vermont.
- Strengthen and develop the educator workforce by fostering robust partnerships with higher education institutions, creating incentives to recruit educators in high-need geographical and

content areas, supporting "Grow Your Own" programs, and enhancing retention efforts during the critical early years of teaching.

4. Use of Public Funds to Private Entities

- To ensure accountability for public funds, independent schools and Pre-K programs that receive public tuition must adhere to the same standards of quality, equity, efficiency, and transparency as public schools. Changes to the education funding system must not put an unequal burden on public schools paying for private entities.

5. Mental Health and Social Services

- Mental Health Funding: Provide clarity on funding responsibilities between education and human services for school-based mental health services. Invest in mental health support for youth and their families.
- Medicaid Expansion and Efficiency: Ensure Vermont takes full advantage of Medicaid reimbursements for school-based services, including those provided to students without IEPs. Simplifying and streamlining the Medicaid process for school-based services will enhance funding and reduce administrative burdens for school districts.

6. School Construction and Facilities Aid

- School Construction Aid: Reestablish and fund a statewide school construction aid program to help districts address urgent facilities needs, modernize infrastructure, and ensure safe, equitable learning environments.
- Capital Reserves and Excess Spending: Use the equitable standards for capital reserve accounts (Act 183 of 2024) to allow facilities investments to remain outside per-pupil spending calculations and to ensure responsible investment in safe and healthy schools.
- PCBs: Halt the PCB testing program and fully fund and support remediation for schools with spaces identified above the actionable levels.

7. State Governance and Oversight of Education

- Examine the statewide oversight structures of education in Vermont, including the relationship between the State Board and Secretary of Education to ensure proper checks and balances, such that one branch of government does not have total authority over appointments.

8. New Legislation Consideration and Implementation Support for Recent Legislation

- Unfunded Mandates: Require sustainable funding sources for all new education programs and mandates. Uphold the requirement for fiscal impact statements for any legislation that imposes costs on districts. Many legislative initiatives hold unforeseen costs that add up in school district budgets.
- Effective Implementation: Allow adequate time for recently passed legislation to be implemented effectively, ensuring the necessary support, resources, and guidance are provided to districts to meet new requirements successfully.