Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA)

2026-2027 Resolutions

The VSBA Bylaws, Article XVI E. states that when passed by sixty percent (60%) of the voting delegates, a resolution shall become a position or statement of the association. Each position shall be voted as a resolution or continuing resolution. Continuing resolutions shall be statements of association policy which are of an ongoing or permanent nature and shall be in effect until amended at a subsequent annual meeting of the association. Resolutions shall be statements of specific positions on behalf of the association and shall be in effect until the next annual meeting when they may be deleted, continued, or amended by vote of the membership.

*All resolutions are continuing unless they are marked with an asterisk (*****) which signifies that this resolution will be in effect until the next annual meeting when it may be deleted, continued, or amended by vote of the membership.*

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I. GOVERNANCE, LOCAL AND STATE

A. THE ROLE OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

Education in Vermont is overseen by local school boards. Each local board serves as the Board of Trustees for education on behalf of the entire community. It is entrusted with assuring that the young people of the community receive a high-quality education and that taxpayers are receiving an excellent return on their investment of tax dollars.

B. THE ESSENTIAL WORK OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Each school board is responsible for leadership in the following areas:

Create a vision for education in the community. Answer the questions: What do you want students to know? What kind of experiences do you want them to have? What kind of long-term outcomes do you desire?

Establish policy parameters to carry out that vision. Establish the district's priorities. Define parameters for carrying out the educational program. Define any limitations to be placed on the administration.

Hire a superintendent to administer the district to achieve the vision. Provide the latitude to do the job. Hold the superintendent accountable for results.

Monitor progress toward the vision. Determine indicators which need to be monitored on a regular basis and assure a plan to regularly monitor performance.

Develop and adopt a budget to support the vision and monitor plan vs actual expenses. Assure the budget reflects the vision and the values of the district and the community.

Advocate for education within the community. Be sure your community understands the needs of the local education system and is supportive of the education being provided to young people. Encourage community involvement.

Meet other legal requirements—*serving as a quasi-judicial board to resolve disputes on appeal and negotiating collective bargaining agreements with teachers and other staff.*

Be sure the system is operated ethically. Acknowledge that members carry no power outside of the context of the board. Assure no actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Adopt and adhere to a code of conduct.

C. LOCAL DECISION MAKING *[2003]*

Local school boards have been given responsibilities by state statute to oversee public education in their districts and to make the important decisions necessary to assure the provision of high quality education in an efficient and effective manner. As local boards are accountable, they must be assured that there is no state interference in their decision-making responsibilities**.**

D. BOARD DEVELOPMENT

School boards have a large responsibility in overseeing the educational system in an increasingly complex environment. School board members should expect to have readily available opportunities for new member orientation and mentoring and for ongoing training. Board members have the duty to seek out and participate in these opportunities. The VSBA will work with the Vermont Superintendents Association to ensure high quality joint training opportunities are available to board chairs and superintendents so that they may fulfill their joint training responsibilities under Act 56 of 2013.

The Board of the VSBA should direct its staff to:

1. devote time to recruiting and training new school board members,
2. provide them with the tools they need to be directly, educationally engaged in their Districts,
3. encourage them to support creative and innovative educational practices which will foster in our students a broad, inclusive world view and will promote civic and cultural literacy.

E. ROLE OF THE STATE IN EDUCATION *[updated 2024]*

The role of the State Board of Education and the State Agency of Education is to guide the creation of a broad design for the education system in a rapidly changing world. The broad design must assure success for every student that includes delivering and using world-class education while engaging and supporting families and communities. The Agency must also promote equity of educational opportunity for students throughout Vermont. In addition, the Agency should provide assistance to school districts and local boards to help them meet statewide per-pupil spending goals. In order to accomplish these goals, the Agency of Education must be properly staffed and resourced to fulfill the statutory obligations.

The State Board of Education should be composed of members who have insight and experience with the delivery and administration of public education and school systems in Vermont. The State Board should model good governance by complying with the governance standards outlined in the District Governance Standards and include an active school board member, a school administrator, and a licensed educator. As school boards are in the best position to assess the needs of Vermont schools, the Governor should consult with the VSBA prior to the nomination of the school board member.

F. CHARTER SCHOOL LEGISLATION

The VSBA supports public school innovation which can offer rich and diverse educational opportunities for all students. VSBA supports the recommendations of the 2001-2002 Charter School Study Commission that state that Vermont should not enact charter school enabling legislation because existing law allows for the establishment of new schools, programs or "'schools-within-schools" that can readily accomplish many of the goals that larger, urban school systems in other states seek in charter schools. By drawing funds away from existing small public schools, charter school legislation may undermine the ability of public schools to serve the educational needs of Vermont's children.

While the existing law allows the granting of waivers to schools relative to meeting specific regulations, all publicly supported schools should adhere to state or comparable standards and administer the statewide assessments.

G. STUDENTS ON LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS *[2001]*

VSBA believes that local school boards benefit from having an ongoing student voice in their discussions of all school matters that are not subjects of executive sessions. The VSBA encourages its members to include students as active participants in the consideration of educational issues, and favors the participation of students as board members. The VSBA will provide guidance and support to boards to achieve this objective.

H. ADDRESSING EQUITY, QUALITY AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

The VSBA supports initiatives that are designed to create greater equity in high quality learning opportunities and to achieve cost effectiveness. Such initiatives shall focus on the needs of the students and taxpayers of the State of Vermont. Any initiative that impacts our governance structure or funding system must be designed in a way that reflects our community values. School boards are in the best position to inform this process and must be fully engaged in this effort. The VSBA will work with the General Assembly and our members to support initiatives at the state, regional and local level that will address our challenges while maintaining and strengthening local communities.

I. CIVIL DISCOURSE

The VSBA urges all educational stakeholders to (1) teach and model conflict resolution and consensus building as those skills are necessary for the health and wellbeing of tomorrow's society and (2) engage in civil discourse as we set a course for the future of our schools and communities.

Accordingly, harassment, coercion and intimidation must be viewed as a fundamental threat to the democratic principles upon which our republic is based. When directed towards elected officials or those running for elected office, violence, the threat of violence and other forms of harassment, coercion and intimidation are not just crimes against individuals, they are direct assaults upon our democratic system of self-governance. Accordingly, we, as elected officials in the State of Vermont, hereby call upon those in law enforcement at the local, state and federal levels to make the investigation of such crimes a top priority. We ask that all levels in law enforcement take such crimes seriously and that they work diligently to identify and prosecute all who would attempt to subvert and interfere with the political process by means of violence, threats of violence or by other forms of harassment, coercion and intimidation.

J. TIMELY AND RELIABLE INFORMATION & IMPLEMENTATION

The VSBA will prioritize and use its influence to support Vermont School Boards in ensuring that Business Managers, Superintendents, and School Boards receive required, useful and timely information from the Agency of Education.

K. MONITOR OUTCOMES FROM ACT 46 GOALS *

The VSBA declares that the Secretary's adherence to the dictates of Act 46 to comprehensively compile and analyze data and present the report with the required conclusions and recommendations is a matter of the highest priority for its member school districts.

L. SCHOOL BOARD OFFICERS *[2020]*

The VSBA propose and promote to the Vermont legislature to update Title 16 to allow for school boards to remove and replace board officers after they are elected, via a fair and judicious process.

M. GOVERNANCE OF CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) SCHOOLS *[2020 Updated 2022]* *

A study should be conducted to better understand the variety of CTE governing models, operations and budgeting structures that exist across the State. The study would examine any inconsistencies that impact student learning and outcomes, and identify and propose new models of funding and governance structures to improve the quality, duration and access to career technical education in Vermont.

N. EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION [2025]

The VSBA advocates for strong, meaningful participation and decision-making by local school boards during all remaining phases of Vermont's long-term education transformation process, especially regarding decisions that affect the future of their schools. Additionally, VSBA supports a process for a community served by a school to have a voice in decisions regarding school closures.

II. FINANCE

A. EQUALIZATION [1984, updated 1997]

VSBA supports the maintenance of "...substantially equal access to a quality basic education…" for all of Vermont's children as required by the Vermont Supreme Court in its *Brigham* decision, and as legislatively promised in 16 V.S.A. §1.

It is the duty of the State of Vermont to ensure fiscal equity for all school districts to allow equal educational opportunities for all students. Significant state expenditure is required to equalize the financial resources of districts and maintain the educational opportunities of students.

B. CAPITAL SPENDING *[2002, updated 2022]*

1. General Education Construction: The moratorium on school construction aid should be removed. Schools require predictability and stability in state aid in order to plan successfully over the long term. The VSBA supports reinstitution of 30 percent or more in state reimbursement aid for all eligible capital expenses irrespective of school district consolidation status.
2. School Building Consolidation: The VSBA supports school building consolidation projects when the local school district or districts believe(s) the result will be greater cost-effectiveness or improved educational outcomes for students. The VSBA supports extending indefinitely 50 percent state reimbursement aid for school building consolidation projects as provided under 16 V.S.A. § 3448(a)(7)(C).
3. Technical Education Capital Expenses: The moratorium on technical center construction aid should be removed.
4. The General Assembly should establish funding mechanisms exclusively focused on the equitable procurement, development and utilization of technological assets, including connectivity, hardware, data, professional development and support. Furthermore, the Agency of Education must develop adequate logistical support for districts to assist districts in achieving world-class technology and the associated transformation of teaching and learning.
5. The VSBA advocates that the Vermont legislature allocate funds to assist school districts with PCB and radon remediation, including districts whose contamination was discovered prior to the legislation and irrespective of costs covered by capital bonding.

C. ADULT STUDENTS IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION *[1997; updated 2025]*

The VSBA urges the General Assembly to fund 100% of the costs of educating, in technical education centers, Vermont residents over 21 years of age who lack a high school diploma and are not enrolled for purposes of pursuing graduation from a high school or technical center.

D. USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS *[2000]*

The VSBA does not support funding private independent educational institutions with public funds in districts that operate public schools for the education of local students, except at the discretion of local school boards. The VSBA opposes indirect public support to private independent educational institutions through the granting of tax credits or tax subsidies for tuition or expenses. Public education funds in Vermont districts that operate schools should be directed to the improvement of those public schools.

E. COMMON LEVEL OF APPRAISAL *

That the VSBA calls upon the Governor and General Assembly to study the mechanics of the Common Level of Appraisal and its effect on education property tax rates.

1. We especially ask for consideration of the effect that calculation and application of the CLA has on small towns.
2. We ask for consideration of alternative methods of adjusting property values for taxation, including but not limited to developing a regional CLA or a rolling reappraisal system.
3. We ask for an examination of a more equitable system of calculating the CLA, which could include such approaches as:
   a. Automatically excluding high value outliers from calculations;
   b. Re-examining how properties are categorized;
   c. Limiting the punitive impacts of annual changes in a community's CLA that result from local reappraisals.
4. We ask that this study consider the effect these recommendations would have on the Education Fund.

F. REFORM THE EDUCATION TAX SYSTEM *

The General Assembly should examine alternative funding sources for our education system that are

more equitable and sustainable, rather than continue a system that predominantly relies on the property tax for revenue.

G. USE OF THE EDUCATION FUND *[2009]*

The VSBA strongly supports the intended limitations on the use of the Education Fund, and opposes any diversion of funds raised through the statewide property tax to programs not within the jurisdiction of public school districts or supervisory unions.

H. TEACHER PENSION PLAN

The VSBA requests the General Assembly to conduct a thorough analysis of the Vermont teachers' retirement system and to make recommendations and take action to ensure its sustainability over the long term, including consideration of conversion from a defined benefit to a defined contribution plan.

I. NO COST-CUTTING DOUBLE JEOPARDY

The VSBA calls on the General Assembly to avoid putting school districts under multiple cost-cutting strictures at the same time, for example: eliminating small schools grants along with further reduction of the excess spending penalty.

J. UNFUNDED MANDATES

All new educational requirements or programs mandated by the federal government or the State of Vermont should be fully funded by either the federal or state government.

K. STUDENT TRANSFERS

The General Assembly should provide a mechanism to allow for PreK through grade 8 student ADM transfers or tuition terms within a supervisory union on terms agreed to by sending and receiving school boards with approval of the Superintendent.

L. INDEPENDENT SCHOOL, PREKINDERGARTEN, and AFTERSCHOOL FUNDING *[updated 2021]*

Public dollars that support private independent schools, prekindergarten programs, and afterschool programs should carry with them the same obligations regarding quality, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability that apply to public school districts. In order for an independent school (other than an independent school with a specific state purpose), prekindergarten program, or afterschool program to be eligible to receive public education funds, the school or program should:

1. Not discriminate or deny enrollment on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability;
2. Operate with an open admissions policy, meaning that it accepts all publicly-funded students on a space-available basis; and
3. Employ teachers and administrators that have licenses and endorsements required by professionals working in public schools.

In addition, independent schools should:

4. Be approved for special education services in *at least* four categories and arrange for special education services related to *any* disability category if required in an enrolled student's individual education plan;
5. Administer state assessments and make outcomes data available to the public in the same manner as public schools; and
6. Provide free and reduced lunch to all eligible students.

M. FEDERAL FUNDING FOR PreK-12 PROGRAMS

The VSBA urges Congress and the Administration to provide full and sufficient funds for public education including, but not limited to, Title I and IDEA, and to protect education as an investment critical to economic stability and American competitiveness.

N. COST CONTAINMENT

The statewide cost of PreK-12 education has been at the center of significant policy debates and interventions for the past decade. The VSBA offers the following recommendations to respond to concerns about costs while maintaining education quality:

1. *Statewide health insurance benefit for school employees:* Any legislative approach for addressing health care for school employees must demonstrate that it will reduce costs to school districts over the near and long term and should reflect the health insurance plan norms for the majority of Vermonters.
2. *Study of state-funded retirement buy-out that conditions rehires on achieving ratios:* The VSBA recommends the creation of a stakeholder task force to explore the advantages and disadvantages of establishing a state-funded initiative in support of early or "on-time" retirement. Two conditions of a district's participation in the initiative would be a commitment to meet staff to student ratio targets by reducing total personnel through the retirement program, and a commitment to sustain these savings through future budgeting processes.
3. *Establish standards for fact-finders in the collective bargaining process:* The General Assembly should modify 16 V.S.A. §2007 to require neutral fact-finders to consider only a statutory list of legitimate measures of a community's ability to pay, rather than a pattern of area salary and health benefits that purports to demonstrate financial wherewithal but in fact does not.
4. *Guidelines for reserve funds and budget surplus amounts:* In light of the goals of affordability, transparency and accountability, the VSBA will work with the Agency of Education, the Vermont Superintendents Association and the Vermont Association of School Business Officials to establish guidelines on the appropriate amounts and uses of reserve funds and the treatment of budget surplus amounts. Guidelines should support best practices in amounts of, establishment of and utilization of reserve funds.
5. The VSBA advises the Vermont General Assembly to allow reasonable time for school districts to plan for cost containment legislation and refrain from passing legislation that affects budgets already adopted by school boards or approved by voters.
6. The VSBA supports the study and consideration of the costs associated with providing social services when making funding decisions.

O. BROADBAND ACCESS FOR EDUCATION [2020] *

That providing universal access to high speed broadband services for every student and family in Vermont must be a goal of the highest order for the government of the State of Vermont. And, where access to such broadband services is available but cannot be reasonably afforded by families with students in our schools, that some form of financial support should be made available to those families (although not as an additional unfunded cost to the school districts) to ensure that the students in those families have the high speed broadband service necessary to support their education.

P. HOLD HARMLESS STUDENT EDUCATION DURING A STATE OF EMERGENCY [2020]

Vermont's PK-12 students should be held harmless from reductions to the education funds available to school districts. Vermont's school districts should be given the necessary resources to operate their schools in a safe manner during a declared state of emergency in Vermont.

Q. FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING OBLIGATIONS, EDUCATIONAL EQUITY, FUNDING ADEQUACY, UNFUNDED MANDATES [2020]

The school boards of Vermont request the state and federal governments provide the financial resources promised in pre-existing laws as well as provide for new burdens placed on public schools by the pandemic and beyond, and that the state and federal governments must provide this financial support in a manner that ensures our children receive the necessary academic, physical and emotional

resources, not by privileges and advantages for some but by the opportunities we generously bestow upon all.

R. PUBLIC FUNDS ACCOUNTABILITY *[2022]*

The VSBA advocates that all rules, regulations, policies, quality standards, reporting requirements and laws regarding public schools in Vermont must apply to any school that receives funds from the statewide education fund, for any reason or for any purpose.

S. SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE *[2023]*

The General Assembly must act to bring Vermont tuition reimbursement policy and practice into compliance with the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the Carson v. Makin without violating the Compelled Support Clause in Article III of Chapter I of the Vermont Constitution.

T. RESIDENTIAL AND NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX RATES *[2024]*

The VSBA calls upon the General Assembly to examine the impact and feasibility of raising the Non-Residential Tax Rate to the same rate as the Homestead Tax Rate in every town where the Non-Residential Tax Rate is lower than the Homestead Tax Rate.

The VSBA calls upon the General Assembly to examine the impact of Non-Residential Tax Rate and Homestead Tax Rates in every town where the Non-Residential Tax Rate is lower than the Homestead Tax Rate.

U. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA *[2025] **

The General Assembly should adjust the current school funding system to address the concern that rising education taxes are unsustainable. This should be done in several ways, including (1) basing more of the funding formula on school district and resident taxpayer ability to pay and (2) addressing school budget cost drivers over which local school boards have no control. These include children's mental health care, staff health insurance, special education services and costs, and transportation. No changes in education funding should be enacted without a thorough analysis of the impact both on individual school districts and individual taxpayers in Vermont.

V. EQUITABLE TREATMENT OF CAPITAL DEBT IN CALCULATIONS OF EXCESS SPENDING *[2026]*

Be it resolved that the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA) urges the General Assembly to provide equal treatment of bonded debt and pay-as-you-go capital in the excess spending calculation by extending the existing exclusion for voter-approved bond principal and interest payments to also exclude capital expenditures funded through voter-approved operating budgets and capital reserve funds.

W. PRE-K FINANCE REFORM AND FUNDING ALIGNMENT *[2026]*

Be it resolved that the Vermont School Boards Association supports incorporating publicly operated prekindergarten education into the education funding formula through equitable and sustainable funding mechanisms that recognize the actual costs of providing high-quality programs and promote equitable statewide access. Pre-K funding should align with the broader education funding formula including its application to excess spending threshold calculations with an increase in the relative weighting of Pre-K students, ensuring that Vermont students of all ages have equitable access to high-quality education.

X. TRANSPARENT, DATA-DRIVEN, AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA *[2026]*

Be it resolved that the Vermont School Boards Association shall advocate to the General Assembly for the adoption and maintenance of a transparent, peer-reviewed, and data-driven education funding model that:

- Reflects the actual cost of educating students with differing needs;
- Is informed by the findings and methodology of the 2019 Pupil Weighting Factors Report;
- Incorporates regular review, public reporting, and independent validation; and
- Ensures that the transition to a statewide foundation funding formula preserves and strengthens equitable resource allocation for districts serving high-need student populations.

Y. ADEQUATE AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION FUNDING SYSTEM *[2026]*

Be it resolved that the Vermont School Board Association advocate to the Vermont General Assembly and the Agency of Education to ensure that Vermont's education funding system, as transformed by Act 73 of 2025 and Act 170 of 2026, is equitable, adequate, and fully responsive to the true cost of educating Vermont's students.

III. INSTRUCTION

A. PERSONALIZATION & PROFICIENCY-BASED LEARNING

The VSBA believes that students learn best when they play an active and meaningful role in their education. The learning styles, interests, and aptitudes of each student should drive instruction and learning activities in every school, as opposed to standardized programs designed to prepare students to perform well on state standardized assessments.

All schools must provide equitable access to meaningful and rigorous learning experiences that will allow students to demonstrate proficiency in multiple ways.

The VSBA supports a study regarding whether the current construct of Vermont's Public High School Choice Law presents a barrier to the personalization of education or the expansion of opportunities for students, and further recommends that there be supports available for school districts to collaborate on joint endeavors to expand access to innovative educational programs.

B. STUDENT ASSESSMENT ***[updated 2024]***

The VSBA recognizes the value of standardized assessments as one tool to be used in evaluating student performance. It must be used in conjunction with other means of evaluation to present an accurate picture of student achievement. The VSBA does not support the use of standardized assessments alone to determine the success of schools, to evaluate teacher performance, to promote students from grade to grade or as a final "gate" to a high school diploma.

State standardized assessments should be designed to provide information about student growth over time, and should include interim assessments so that students and educators are able to measure student performance throughout a school year, rather than just once a year. The Vermont Agency of Education should also continue to support development and administration of local assessment plans which may include national norm-referenced achievement and/or aptitude tests as well as other locally administered evaluation methods. As the reliability of additional local assessments is assured, it may be of value to give more weight to local assessments, and other tools, in the State's Accountability System.

C. ESEA REAUTHORIZATION *[updated 2021]*

The federal Department of Education should provide adequate technical support, guidance, and resources to ensure that the Vermont Agency of Education as well as school districts are prepared to comply with ESSA's provisions. Specifically, Congress should appropriate funding to no less than 95% of the authorized funding level. Vermont's congressional delegation should continue to support state and local decision making in the ESSA rulemaking process.

The Agency of Education's work to implement Education Quality Reviews is crucial to successful ESSA implementation on the local level. The Agency of Education should make up-to-date data gathered in Education Quality Reviews readily accessible to school districts.

D. SCHOOL CHOICE

VSBA recognizes the varied learning styles and needs of students and supports the provision of multiple options for student learning in the public schools. The Association supports the maintenance of the parameters of Vermont's Public High School Choice Law and the thorough monitoring of its outcomes. VSBA urges the General Assembly to examine closely all ramifications of the law to

understand the effects on those students who choose new schools and those who do not, as well as the impact on all schools.

Vermont needs to recognize the long history of school choice in many towns. VSBA is concerned that expanded school choice for all other towns could have significant unintended consequences. If this option is to be seriously considered, it requires extensive study with substantial involvement by VSBA.

E. PRE-KINDERGARTEN *[updated 2024]*

The VSBA encourages the General Assembly to support fully-funded, full-day pre-kindergarten education through a system that emphasizes equity, high-quality simplicity, and sustainability regardless of type or location of the setting. School districts must ensure, equitable access, quality and accountability in public funded pre-kindergarten education.

F. SCHOOL CALENDAR

VSBA is supportive of school calendars that provide for more continuity of learning, better reflect the needs of all students and increase opportunities for professional learning and reflection throughout the school year. The VSBA urges regional superintendent groups to explore school calendars that reasonably distribute the pace of education to maximize student learning, provide opportunities for student interventions during the school year, promote academic momentum for students, and allow for districts to partner with community organizations to provide enrichment, academic, and other skill-building opportunities throughout the year.

G. VERMONT'S DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

The VSBA supports a change to state law to allow access to Vermont's Dual Enrollment Program for Vermont resident students who reside in districts that do not operate a high school, whose tuition is publicly funded and who attend public schools in a state bordering Vermont.

H. EQUITY AND ANTI-RACISM *[2020, updated 2021, updated 2025]*

The VSBA is committed to the success of every student, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, family economics, class, citizenship, immigration status, geography, ability, language, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or initial proficiencies. VSBA will incorporate principles of equity within all policies, operations, practices, and resource allocations, which may include the use of an equity lens when responding to proposed legislation.

The VSBA should demonstrate and promote the unequivocal, collective responsibility for equitable and inclusive education environments by recognizing, responding, and speaking out against injustice and racial inequity. In support of this goal, the VSBA commits to the following: 1. promote and support implicit bias training for all faculty and staff in Vermont public schools, including athletic and co-curricular personnel, and officials across the state; and 2. promote professional learning for school leaders and school board members that include but not be limited to: Equity Literacy, Curriculum Audits, Review Protocols for Examining Bias in School Policies and Procedures, Culturally Responsive Instruction and School Culture, Student Leadership and Voice, and Examining Power and Privilege in Schools.

I. EQUAL AND EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES IN ANY SCHOOL RECEIVING PUBLIC FUNDS [2021]

The VSBA requests the General Assembly guarantee, through law, that all public and independent schools receiving public funds adopt and exercise, equal and equitable opportunities in admissions, programs and practices in order to operate in the state of Vermont, and that the state invigorate the moribund school approval processes for public and independent schools to assure operational, financial, and educational accountability and excellence.

IV. LABOR RELATIONS

A. UPDATING VERMONT'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FRAMEWORK

The VSBA urges the General Assembly to transform the traditional collective bargaining framework in order to best respond to contemporary expectations for education and to elevate the teaching profession in ways that create conditions for innovative schools. The new framework should promote bargaining that is: student-centered, collaborative, evidence-based, flexible and transparent.

B. BINDING INTEREST ARBITRATION

The General Assembly should eliminate the right to strike and impose contracts by updating Vermont's collective bargaining process to be more in line with our New England neighbors. The new approach should not include mandatory binding arbitration because it would turn over important decisions that impact up to 80 percent of school budgets to out-of-state arbitrators generally unfamiliar with community issues and Vermont's education finance system.

C. VOTER RATIFICATION OF NEGOTIATED CONTRACTS

School Boards serve as trustees for education on behalf of the community – assuring that young people of the community receive a high-quality education and that taxpayers receive an excellent return on their investment. VSBA believes that the authority granted to school boards as the final decision makers on collective bargaining agreements should be unchanged.

D. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FOR EMPLOYEES IN SCHOOLS

School district employees accept employment in schools knowing that the work is available only during the school year. Schools cannot be responsible for providing unemployment compensation to those employees during school vacations and the summer months, when there is reasonable assurance that the work will continue when students return.

E. PROBATION FOR NEW HIRES

The General Assembly should amend 16 VSA 1752 to ensure that a probationary period is afforded to supervisory unions/school districts for all new hires. This will provide districts the time and flexibility to determine if the chosen candidate is the best fit for the district. It frees districts to take greater risks on candidates in order to find the best available employee.

F. REDUCTION IN FORCE

Seniority should not be the sole factor for determining which employees are subject to Reduction in Force actions. School boards in Vermont should negotiate Reduction in Force provisions in their master agreements that include clear standards and measures other than seniority – such as performance evaluations that include multiple sources of evidence to measure teacher performance – that will allow administrators to make Reduction in Force determinations that are in the best interests of students. These provisions should also state that if employees are recalled after a Reduction in Force, seniority will not be the sole factor for determination as to which employees are recalled to employment.

G. HEALTHCARE FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYEES *[updated 2024]*

Any legislative approach to addressing health care for school employees must: demonstrate that it will reduce costs to school districts, and thus taxpayers, over the near and long term; reflect the health insurance plan norms for the majority of Vermonters.

H. COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE HEALTH BENEFITS *[updated 2021]*

The VSBA adopts the following requirements for appointing representatives to the Commission:

Statutory Requirements: each appointee shall have (1) an understanding of health care, (2) an understanding of employer-employee relations, and (3) a demonstrated willingness to work collaboratively. The term of each member of the Commission shall be six years provided that of the members first appointed by the VSBA, one appointee shall serve a term of two years and one appointee shall serve a term of four years.

Criteria for Selection: in selecting appointees, the VSBA shall give priority to applicants who provide regional representation, have experience on a negotiations council and demonstrate willingness to participate in training and professional development regarding negotiations.

Application Process: VSBA shall accept applications for appointment to the Commission via an online form. The deadline for submission of applications shall be November 1.

Selection Process: The VSBA Board of Directors shall appoint representatives to the Commission based on the above statutory requirements and criteria at its November board meeting.

The VSBA adopts the following process for ratification of an agreement entered into by the Commission:

The VSBA adopts the following requirements for ratification of an agreement entered into by the Commission:

Notification - Voting Delegates: By April 1 each supervisory union/supervisory district shall notify the VSBA of the name, telephone number and e-mail address of its voting delegate.

Informational Webinar: If the Commission enters into an agreement, the VSBA shall host an informational webinar for the voting delegates within ten calendar days after execution of the agreement.

Electronic Ballot: Within ten calendar days after the informational webinar, the VSBA shall conduct an electronic ballot. Delegates will be provided at least ten calendar days' notice of the day of the vote. Delegates will be able to cast their vote through the electronic system between 7 am and 7 pm on the day of the vote.

I. STATEWIDE TEACHER CONTRACT *[2025]*

Any action by the Vermont General Assembly regarding a statewide teacher's contract must include an in-depth cost/ benefit analysis with the financial impact on the lowest spending and highest spending school districts. In addition, a study should be made of the efforts and best practices used by other states to manage teacher's contracts in light of cost efficiencies and education outcomes and that no move to a state-wide teacher's contract be enacted without a detailed demonstration of how it will provide cost savings and better student outcomes.

J. TEACHER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT *[2026]*

Be it resolved that the Vermont School Boards Association calls on the General Assembly and the Agency of Education (AOE) to address educator workforce development as an integral focus of education transformation through (a) the use of grant programs (e.g., the Emerging Pathways Grant Program), loan forgiveness programs (e.g., the Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program), and apprenticeship programs (e.g., the Registered Apprenticeship Program and Grow Your Own Para-Pathway Program), and (b) refinement of licensing pathways and requirements.

V. MISCELLANEOUS

A. DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING *[updated 2024]*

The passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act as well as state and local needs make the necessity for accurate and informative data more important than ever. The General Assembly should continue to fund the integration and close linkage of state and local information systems to maximize the efficiency and productivity of data collection, analysis and reporting at both levels.

1. The State Agency of Education should promulgate consistent and understandable definitions of data.

2. The Agency must analyze and coordinate all its requests for data from local districts to assure that all such data are needed and utilized in a way that improves student learning.
3. All requirements for information from local districts should be accompanied by a streamlined and easy-to-use mechanism for collection and submission with the goal of reducing the negative impact on local districts.
4. The Agency should gather input regularly from local districts to ascertain how the data collection process could be improved in order to; a. make it more useful for informing curriculum and program development b. make it more useful for evaluation of curriculum and programs c. evaluate the usefulness of the data and identify possible ways to streamline the data gathering process and reduce the burden on local districts.
5. The Agency should report regularly to policy makers, educators, and the public on what the input was and how it was used.

The VSBA strongly supports the protection of student privacy rights. Any data collection, maintenance or distribution system must be developed with the primary objective of protecting personally identifiable information about students.

B. FIREARM SAFETY ZONE

The VSBA supports the enacting of Firearm Safety Zone legislation that would prohibit the firing of any type of firearm within 500 feet of any preK-12 school campus. Appropriate and serious penalties should be included. Exemptions for pre-existing, regulated gun ranges and special events should also be included. The Gun Safety Zone is needed to promote the safety of children and staff from accidental injury and to prevent unnecessary anxiety and safety procedures from firearms discharging nearby schools from unidentified sources.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The VSBA will consider the impact on the environment when deciding whether to support legislation and initiatives.

D. UNIVERSAL MEALS *[updated 2025]*

VSBA supports Universal School Meals in Vermont schools.

E. YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH *[consolidated 2024]*

In support of efforts to meet Vermont's Agency of Education's Education Quality Standards, the VSBA urges the General Assembly and Congress to champion the health and well-being of Vermont's youth. Legislation must be enacted to ensure adequate funding for all mental health support services and programs. Further, the VSBA advocates for an approach that supports and protects youth mental health through meaningful collaboration among the Agency of Education and Department of Mental Health, schools, Designated Agencies, and other community partners.

F. FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS *[2023]*

The VSBA supports a ban on the sale of flavored cigarettes, flavored e cigarettes and flavored substances that contain nicotine or are otherwise intended for use in an e-cigarette.

G. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE *[2024]*

The VSBA advocates for legislation that would require the Agency of Education, in consultation with the Agency of Digital Services, Division of Artificial Intelligence, to take all needed actions necessary for the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence in Vermont schools. This may include: model policies, Guidelines for Use, and a Code of Ethics.

H. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS *[updated 2024]*

The Vermont School Board Association proposes the following language be added to 3 V.S.A. § 2702:

§ 2702. Secretary of Education

(a) With the advice and consent of the Senate, the Governor shall appoint a Secretary of Education from among no fewer than three candidates proposed by the State Board of Education. The Secretary shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

(b) The Secretary shall report directly to the Governor and shall be a member of the Governor's Cabinet.

(c) At the time of appointment, the Secretary holds an advanced degree in education, public administration, or a related field. Shall have held a position of teacher, professor, educational administrator, or equivalent position. The Secretary shall have expertise in public education management and policy and demonstrated leadership and management abilities, including knowledge of public educational policy and practice, and a familiarity with school governance structures.

I. VAPING ON SCHOOL GROUNDS *[2025] **

The VSBA will petition the Governor and General Assembly to instruct the Agency of Education to reconvene the Advisory Council on Wellness and Comprehensive Health to review the current state of the use of electronic vaping products among Vermont students, investigate ways to curb the increased use in middle and high school students, and take decisive action to address this increase by identifying resources for cessation programs, counseling support, and preventative education.

J. SUPPORTING THE VALUE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF SMALL COMMUNITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS *[2025]*

The Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA) advocates for policies and resources that recognize the unique value and contributions that community primary elementary schools provide to the communities they serve. They are a cornerstone of their communities and create identity and connection that is mutually essential, providing educational, cultural and economic vitality for Vermont communities.

K. ADEQUATE RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR ESSA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DESIGNATIONS *[2026]*

Be it resolved that the Vermont School Boards Association (SBA) advocate that the Agency of Education (AOE) provide sufficient, timely, and predictable resources and technical assistance proportional to the level of support required in relation to any school improvement designations made under Vermont's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability system; and, be it further Resolved that the VSBA encourage the General Assembly and the Governor to recognize that designations which impose increased AOE oversight and local obligation without corresponding financial and technical support constitute burdensome unfunded mandates that impede the directed improvements.

L. AGENCY OF EDUCATION DATA ACCURACY IN FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY DESIGNATIONS *[2026]*

Be it resolved that the Vermont School Boards Association calls on the Agency of Education (AOE) to

1. ensure the accuracy of all data used in federal accountability identifications before designations are issued,
2. extend the data review window to at least thirty (30) days to provide districts a meaningful and sufficient opportunity to verify accountability data, and

3. establish a transparent and user-friendly process for both submitting correct data to the AOE and for the AOE to communicate to affected districts when it discovers a data or coding error after designations have been released.