



State of Vermont
Vermont Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

July 7, 2011

Dear Driver Education Teachers:

I have been trying for the past two years to convince the Legislature to make a minor change to the approval process for Driver Education programs.

As a result of over 20% in staff reductions, I have been forced to review how the Department of Education (DOE) functions. One decision I've reached is to ask the Legislature to amend 16 V.S.A. § 1045 so that the DOE is no longer required to approve local driver education programs from our office, but rather, that superintendents have the responsibility of approving those programs. There seems to have been some misinformation provided to the field about my intent. My intent is to preserve the status quo around driver education programs in all other respects, keeping them part of high school offerings as they are at the present, but having the approval of those programs handled in a different way – on a more local level.

Below are some of the points I have been consistently making regarding driver education:

- * Continue to require that schools offer driver education as part of the Student Driver Education and Training Program, as currently required by 16 V.S.A. § 1045;
- * Continue to require that driver education teachers be licensed through the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE);
- * Continue to provide the driver education program grants to schools as currently funded (\$450,706)
- * Remove the statutory program approval requirement from the Department's responsibility (the DOE does not approve curriculum in any other content area);
- * Program approval, and meeting the minimum DOE/SBE requirements of 30 hours of classroom time and six hours of driving time (for a student to receive his/her course completion card), will become the responsibility of the local superintendent;
- * Courses offered at the school can be either credit bearing or non-credit bearing.
- * Districts register their own vehicles (unless they are using state plates, in which case they will continue to go through Tammy Pregent at DOE);
- * Districts insure their own vehicles, unless they go through the Risk Management Division of the State of Vermont's BGS (other programs are not subsidized in this manner); and
- * Yellow course completion cards showing students have completed and passed an approved driver education program will be provided by the local schools by downloading the forms from a secure section of the DOE's website.

Additionally, Act 58 of 2011 requires the DOE to study this issue and ask for input from specific groups. On July 25, 2011, I am convening a meeting which will include Mark Hamilton, President of the Vermont Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (VDTSEA), to make recommendations to next year's legislators about how to organize this program in the future.

I hope this information clarifies my position and how I would like to proceed in the future. Thank you, and have a wonderful summer.

Sincerely,

Armando Vilaseca
Commissioner of Education

CC: Superintendents, Principals