

# Commission on the Future of Vermont Public Education

## Guiding Principles

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[Act 183](#) convenes the Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont. “The Commission shall study the provision of education in Vermont and make recommendations for a statewide vision for Vermont’s public education system to ensure that all students are afforded substantially equal educational opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and stable education system. The Commission shall also make recommendations for the strategic policy changes necessary to make Vermont’s educational vision a reality for all Vermont students.”.

The Commission believes that it is important to identify a set of overarching principles and common understandings that guide its decision making. While all decisions will be thoroughly vetted and affirmed by the Commission, it is instructive for the Commission to clearly articulate the basis for its decisions and communicate that to the public.

### **The Commission Recognizes State Responsibility for Education in Vermont**

In the State vs. Brigham 166 Vt. 164 (1997), the Vermont Supreme Court held that the State has a constitutional obligation to provide public education, and while “[t]he state may delegate to local towns and cities the authority to finance and administer the schools within their borders; it cannot, however, abdicate the basic responsibility for education by passing it on to local governments, which are themselves creations of the state.” The Commission acknowledges the tension that exists between this responsibility and authority, and Vermont’s tradition of local decision making, and will continue to explore the balance between the two.

### **Equity**

The Commission is committed to decision making that centers equity for Vermont students. While there is a recognition that operationalizing the term “equity” is a complex and varied task, the Commission is committed to the following core understandings of equity:

- Equity does not mean equal/same.
- Solutions with an equity focus must be differentiated by need
- Equity must be considered both in terms of inputs (access) and outputs (outcomes).

### **Quality**

All publicly funded Vermont students must be afforded high quality educational opportunities that are equitable, inclusive, anti-racist, culturally responsive, and anti-discriminatory, as defined in Vermont State Board of Education Rules. The Commission acknowledges that the SBE rules focus primarily on inputs and that school accountability and student outcomes are critical.

### **Sustainability & Affordability**

The Commission understands that public education in Vermont must be sustainable and affordable for Vermont taxpayers, so that the commitment to Equity and Quality can be sustained over time. This requires a comprehensive look at the education finance system, including both how education dollars are raised and how we spend those funds.