

AGENCY OF EDUCATION

Barre, Vermont

TEAM: Legal, Data, Finance

ACTION ITEM: Will the State Board of Education approve the use of data currently available, rather than the full complement of data originally identified in the Board's metrics (Summer 2018), for determining FY2020 small schools grants eligible for "academic excellence and operational efficiency?"

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education vote to make FY2020 small schools grants determinations in the category of "academic excellence and operational efficiency" dependent on the data presented to the Board at its June meeting. This action will not impact the Board's metrics for grant eligibility based on "geographic isolation."

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 16 V.S.A. § 4015

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Data to be used for the State Board's determination of eligibility for SY2019-2020 small school grants were to be based on AOE's Annual Snapshot of Academic Proficiency category (the Snapshot). Data for the Snapshot are dependent on the spring census from last school year, SY2018-2019. Spring census data were to be collected using the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). Due to delays, the SLDS was rolled out several months late.

The SLDS was a new method of collecting data and generally required significant personnel (both internal/AOE and field/LEA) to load the data from student information systems, personnel who had never worked closely with the new system for student data. This created errors as some categories of students were not initially included. Additionally, SU and district personnel often created custom files to use for uploading data, introducing more room for human error. The SLDS was not designed to account for custom created files, which generated more errors and the subsequent rejection of many uploaded files.

All of the above created substantial delays in AOE's receipt of data. As of January 2, all SUs have successfully submitted their spring census data. However, 14 of 57 SUs are still reviewing and revising data, meaning they are not complete and finalized. Accordingly, at this time, AOE staff are unable to use the Snapshot data (originally slated for December release) in a timely fashion and no data for SY2017-2018 are available to use for small school grant eligibility purposes.

In addition, even if SY2017-2018 data were available for use, not all of the criteria listed by the State Board could be used at this time. The State Board specified that calculations for the final award determinations would be based on the average of the most recent three years' worth of data. Data for three of the nine criteria are not available for three years:

1. Science SBAC results, grades 5, 8, and 11 – SY2017-2018 was the first year of the science test and was considered a field test. Schools were told by AOE that the results would not be used for any official determinations.
2. Physical education – SY2017-2018 was the first year of the physical education test and was considered a field test. Schools were told by AOE that the results would not be used for any official determinations.
3. English learners making appropriate progress, all grades – not enough years of data were available to make this calculation for the prior two years, SY2016-2017 and SY2015-2016.

As a remedy, the Secretary recommends using the SY2016-2017 data that were used for the worked example presented to the State Board in June. This should allow for the use of six of the nine criteria, excluding the three noted above. Awarding of small school grants for SY2019-2020 will therefore be based on one year of data versus the desired three-year average. If the General Assembly leaves the eligibility and awarding of small school grants as it currently is, the criteria will grow into the three-year average as desired in SY2021-2022.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS: The State Board has communicated its June-approved metrics to the General Assembly, which could act to alter 16 V.S.A. § 4015 if it chooses.

EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS: None.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: Potential loss of small schools grants revenue to three districts, if these districts are not eligible under the Board's metrics for geographic isolation, which are not impacted by this recommended action. A fourth district, Canaan, is not eligible under academic excellence and operational efficiency, but will be eligible under the geographic isolation metrics.

STAFF AVAILABLE: Emily Simmons, General Counsel; Heather Bouchey, Deputy Secretary; Patrick Halliday, ESSA State Report Card lead