

**The State Board of Education:  
Vermont's independent overseer and advocate for pK-12 education.**

Act 98, the law that created the Agency of Education seven years ago, was about much more than simply putting education under the control of the Governor. In framing Act 98, the General Assembly clearly wanted the Board to strengthen its work to "*establish and advance education policy for the state of Vermont*". And in recent years the General Assembly has relied upon the unique capabilities of the State Board, designating the Board to facilitate controversial educational issues, e.g. to evaluate, modify, and adopt a State Plan for district consolidation under Act 46; to propose metrics for Small Schools Grants; and, most recently in Act 173, to adopt new rules to guide major reforms of special education funding and practice.

Despite the General Assembly's clear intent that the State Board remain an independent, non-partisan overseer and advocate for quality education in Vermont -- and despite the Legislature's directive that "*the board shall be supported by adequate staff, who shall report to the board*" -- neither the Administration nor the Legislature have provided the resources necessary to enable the Board to deliver on the General Assembly's expectations. The Board has been left to depend upon the Agency of Education for funding and for staff support. And even though the Board no longer has *any* authority over the Agency, the Board's agenda is still largely shaped by the Agency and dominated by administrative monitoring of Agency programs and activities -- little of which responds to the General Assembly's expectations of the Board.

The State Board of Education believes that now is the time to engage with the House and Senate Committees on Education to empower the Board to build on its history as Vermont's independent overseer and advocate for pK-12 education. With the guidance and support of the General Assembly we intend to create a State Board that peers beyond the educational horizon, foresees where education must be headed in the next decades, and provides the Legislative and Executive branches the independent information and strategic overview they need to enact and implement coherent and sustainable policy for the future of education in our 'brave little state'.