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MEMORANDUM

TO: Education Field
FROM: Vermont State Board of Education
SUBJECT: ESSA – Federal Funding
DATE: September 2016

We have shared with you our grave concerns with some of the assumptions and logic of the federal accountability law known as ESSA. However, we are not planning on giving-up the federal funding unless we are unable to shape an accountability plan that is supportive of Vermont goals while meeting federal review. These funds represent taxes paid by Vermonters along with others across the nation. We have been clear that the federal government has not lived up to their funding obligations.

Our ESSA plan must align with Education Quality Standards and current state equity and quality initiatives. The indicators the federal government prefers are based more on statistical criteria and do not capture the full breadth and depth of what is necessary for high quality, equitable education that are established in our Education Quality Standards.

We have asked the Agency of Education to design and determine if a single comprehensive accountability plan can comprehensively address the breadth of Education Quality Standards. If the federal government rejects that plan, we can then determine our next steps to resolve any conflict or determine if Vermont is best served by having a federal accountability plan that parallels a state accountability plan.

Among others, a pivotal point is that ESSA requires the five percent of schools with the lowest scores be identified for Comprehensive Support. This support brings with it substantial federal resources to supplement local funds and improve educational outcomes for our youth. Because the Board is committed to equity and continuous improvement, we support a State Plan which ensures that those scarce federal dollars are awarded to and targeted within our schools who serve students with the greatest needs.

It is our objective to effectively focus resources on schools that need support, in proportion to need.