

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the House and Senate Education Committees
CC: Sponsors of H.793 and H.794
FROM: State Board of Education
SUBJECT: In reference to H.793 and H.794
DATE: March 21, 2018

The State Board of Education shares the General Assembly's interest in promoting knowledge of civics and ethnic studies. However, we do not support the adoption of H.793 or H.794 as initially proposed.

Both bills are major departures from statute and long-established procedures for determining local curriculum, graduation requirements, and flexible pathways.

- The proposals would create new and separate entities to set educational standards. Under current law, adopting educational standards is the sole responsibility of the State Board of Education. Divided authority leads to poor administration. Fragmenting the responsibility of adopting standards will compromise clear and consistent policy and practice at the state and local levels (16 V.S.A. § 165 and 16 V.S.A. § 164(9)).
- The proposals would impose curriculum and graduation requirements from Montpelier on the local districts. Curriculum is the province of supervisory unions (16 V.S.A. § 261a). Currently, these local requirements must be based on the standards adopted by the State Board of Education. This tradition of local control is highly valued and should only be changed if there is a complete system change.
- The proposal to require the citizenship test fundamentally conflicts with the Legislature's own directives in Act 77, the law which establishes flexible pathways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Accordingly, the Board of Education encourages the General Assembly to amend H.793 and H.794 to reflect Vermont's long-standing processes and protocols for making educational policy, as described above.

In any case, the State Board of Education will continue its commitment to equity and civic responsibility. The Board will review the work of other states on bias in the national standards and determine next steps as part of revising our Strategic Plan. We will also continue to monitor the roll-out of the new "*C3 Framework: College Career, and Civic Life*" social studies standards adopted in November of 2017.