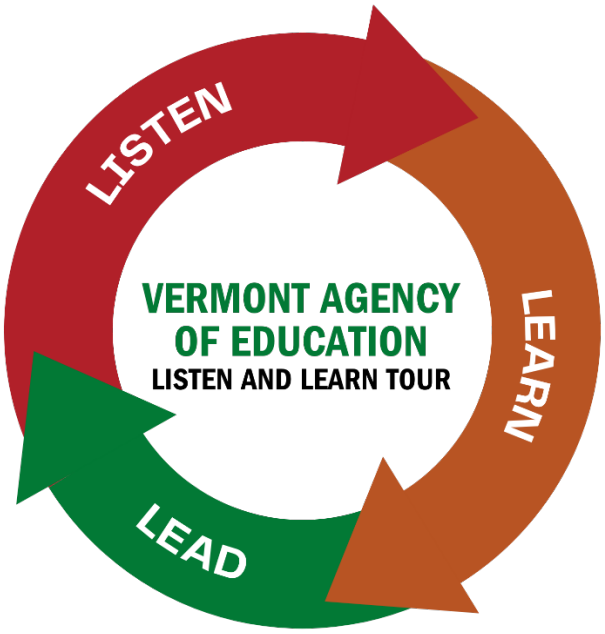
REPORT

VERMONT'S EDUCATION FUNDING SYSTEM: EXPLAINED AND COMPARED TO OTHER STATES



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Prepared by the Vermont Agency of Education

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT OVERSIGHT

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Message from the Office of the Secretary

Dear Vermont Educators, Families, and Community Members,

Throughout the Agency's Listen and Learn Tour, we have received many questions about how Vermont funds schools along with requests for more information. In response, the Agency contracted with New Solutions K12, a national education finance expert with deep expertise in Vermont, to help produce the enclosed report and provide upcoming training and support. The report is the first "topical report" produced through the Listen and Learn Tour and seeks to explain Vermont's education funding system and how it compares to other states.

Vermont has long been a pioneer in educational excellence. As a parent of school-aged children, I know there is a lot about our schools to be proud of. This report seeks to help us understand how we can build upon our successes and where there may be opportunities for growth and change.

While we often hear a readiness to improve our education funding system, we also acknowledge that change can feel daunting. This report is intended to set the stage for discussions around system improvements that will support educational quality, equity, and sustainability. I hope this report will help promote meaningful dialogue on this complex topic at a time when school leaders, community members, and the Commission on the Future of Public Education are reimagining the future.

We are eager to engage with you in this conversation, and to listen and learn from the diverse voices that make Vermont's education system unique. By learning from other states and schools in Vermont, we can ensure a brighter future for all our students at a cost that Vermonters can afford.

The Agency of Education's commitment to educational excellence remains steadfast. Whatever changes come next at the state or national level, we must center our work around what is best for students, ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to learn and thrive in Vermont. Together, we will forge an even stronger foundation for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Zoie W. Saunders, M.Ed.

Interim Secretary of Education

Vermont's Education Funding System Explained

Vermont's education funding system is unique and complex, shaped by efforts to ensure fairness and equal opportunity for all students across the state. While it aims to balance local decision-making with statewide equity, it comes with both benefits and challenges.

This section will answer some key questions about the way schools are funded in Vermont, prioritizing clarity over explaining every detail. It addresses the most commonly asked questions, including:

Question 1: How is the amount of money provided to each school district determined?

Answer: They receive what they request, subject to voter approval.

Here is how it works:

1. School System Creates a Budget

Each school district creates a budget based on what it thinks it needs to meet the needs of its students and pay all its bills. The budget includes all the costs of running their schools—such as teacher and staff salaries, classroom supplies, textbooks, building maintenance, heating, transportation, extracurricular activities and so on. Determining what is needed is first developed by the school district's leadership and then approved or revised by the elected school board.

2. Voter Approval

The proposed budget is presented to the community. Local voters review and approve (or reject) the budget through a school budget vote.

3. **Guaranteed Funding**

Once the budget is approved by the voters, the district is guaranteed to receive that exact amount from the state (excluding other offsetting revenues from federal, state, or local sources).

Example

Let's use a simple example of a fictional school district called Greenfield and focus on the portion of school budgets that the state funds:

1. School leaders work hard to figure out what their students need while keeping taxpayers in mind. They create a budget of $19.8 million.
2. The school board looks at the budget and decides to add $200,000 to avoid cutting staff positions. The school board votes to approve a budget of $20 million.
3. The $20 million budget is presented to the community. Voters say "yes" and approve it.
4. Once the budget is approved, the state will provide $20 million to Greenfield. (This excludes other sources of funding, like federal dollars and grants.)

Question 2: Where does the money in the education fund come from?

Answer: Mostly property taxes.

Funding for Vermont's schools primarily comes from taxes collected by the state, with property taxes being the main source. Here's how that works:

1. **Add up the cost of all the approved budgets and this makes up most of the Education Fund.**

The Education Fund is essentially the total amount of money that needs to be raised each year to fund all the schools in Vermont. **This fund is not a pre-existing pool of money.** Instead, it's the annual sum of all the approved budgets from each school district and supervisory union across the state, and all statewide program costs. Examples of program costs include universal school meals, transportation aid, and small school support, among others. Additional details about statewide program costs and appropriations can be found in the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Education Fund Outlook.

2. Property taxes fund the majority of school budgets

About two-thirds of the Education Fund comes from State property taxes collected from property owners. Property taxes are taxes that people pay based on the value of their homes, buildings, and land.

However, not all of the money from property taxes goes to fund schools, only a portion. This portion is called the education tax. How the education tax rate is determined is a bit complicated; we will cover that in the next section.

3. Other Taxes

The remaining one-third of the Education Fund (the money needed to fund all the approved school budgets) comes from other types of taxes and state revenues. These additional sources help ensure that there's enough money in the Education Fund to fully cover the costs of education and reduce the reliance on property taxes.

Other funding sources include the following:

- **Sales & Use Tax:** 100% of the taxes collected when people buy tangible personal property.
- **Meals & Rooms Tax:** 25% of the taxes from dining out and lodging
- **Lottery Revenues:** 100% of the net proceeds from lottery ticket sales
- **Purchase & Use Tax:** 33% of the taxes from vehicle purchases
- **Energy Taxes:** taxes on wind and solar energy production
- **Medicaid Transfers:** funds transferred from Medicaid for eligible services
- **Short-term rental surcharge:** 100% of the surcharge on stays in short term rentals that are not licensed as lodging establishments

Example 2

Let's imagine Vermont only has four school districts. Greenfield, Silverhill, Redridge, and Blueburg. Each of the school districts created a budget that was approved by their local voters.

- Greenfield's budget was $20 million.
- Silverhill's budget was $10 million.
- Redridge's budget was $15 million.
- Blueburg's budget was $15 million.

If you add up those four budgets you get $60 million.

Therefore, the state needs to collect $60 million this year to put into the Education Fund. The state will first figure out the total amount of funds other than property taxes that are

directed to education like sales taxes, meal taxes, and so on. In this example, they total $20 million. The state then will collect the remaining $40 million from property taxes. The education tax rates set by the state ensure that the remaining $40 million needed comes from property taxes.

Question 3: How is your education tax determined, and why do some people pay more than others?

Answer: There isn't a simple answer. But the main factors are how much your school district spends per student, the value of your property, and some fairness adjustments.

Below we cover in more detail these factors. In summary, if your local school district spends more per student, your home value is higher, or your community has fewer students that need extra support, you'll pay more in taxes. Additionally, low and moderate income households get a reduction in how much they owe. Here's more information on those factors:

1. **How much your local school district spends per student**

   One factor in determining your Education Tax bill is the total education spending of your school district divided by the number of students in your district. This is called per-pupil spending.

   If your community spends more on each student, more funds are needed for your schools, which leads to a higher tax rate for everyone in your community. But keep in mind that when comparing spending to another school district, it's the per-pupil spending that affects the tax rate, not the overall budget size. What really matters is your budget relative to the number of students.

In order to discourage excessively high spending per student, the state imposes a "tax penalty" for district's whose per-pupil spending exceeds a certain level. (The suspension of the excess spending threshold is ending for budget year FY26, which begins on July 1, 2025.)

2. **But, it's "weighted." Not every student is counted as one student.**

   When calculating the per pupil spending, which is a really important figure in determining each community's tax rate, the state does not simply divide spending by the number of students who actually come to school.

They first give “extra weight” to students that need extra support, such as those from low-income families or English language learners. Giving “extra weight” means that those students are counted as if they are more than one student. This is done to reflect the additional costs of educating these students. Students at different grade levels are also given different weights. For example, high school students are counted as more than 1 student, because they also cost more to educate. One district with 1,000 actual students might be treated as if it has 1,100 students, and another district that also has 1,000 actual students but many are living in poverty would be treated as if it had 1,500 students.

If your community has many students that need extra support, your budget will be divided by a number larger than the number of students you actually have. The result is that per-pupil spending will be lower, meaning your tax rate will be lower.

The state changed pupil weights in 2022 via Act 127. These new weights went into effect in FY25 (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025) and are part of school budgets for FY26 (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026).

3. **How much your home and land are worth**

Because this is a property tax, the amount you owe will depend largely on the value of your property. The higher the assessed value of your home and land, the larger your tax bill will be.

4. **But, your home value is adjusted to make sure everyone’s property assessments are fair**

Different towns reappraise property values at different times, so the official assessments are not always reflective of the property’s fair market value. In an attempt to make things fairer, the state adjusts tax rates to account for the differences in levels of appraisals between towns. This adjustment is called the *Common Level of Appraisal (CLA)*. The CLA is calculated annually by the Department of Taxes based on real estate sales data from the past three years.

5. **The Education Property Tax Bill is also adjusted downward to help income eligible taxpayers**

Because property value is not always a good measure of a person’s ability to pay, the state also makes some adjustments based on a household’s income. These adjustments help lower the tax burden for low-and middle-income homeowners. This means that two households with similarly valued homes might pay different amounts if they have different incomes. This adjustment is called the property tax credit (formerly called the income sensitivity program).

6. **Tax rates are set to raise all the money needed to cover the cost of all the approved budgets**

Finally, the state needs to do some math to ensure that the tax rates are set so that they collect the exact amount of money needed to fund all the school district budgets. The key figures to make sure everything adds up correctly are called the Statewide Property Yield, Income Yield, and Nonhomestead tax rate.

Something important to notice: The spending decisions of other communities around the state impact your own community's taxes

Funding and taxing decisions are mostly done at the state level. The education tax is designed to fund all school budgets across the state and the tax is spread across all the taxpayers in the state. This means the decisions made by other voters outside your community impact how much your community pays in taxes. The next question provides more details about our collective approach to funding schools.

Question 4: How is it possible for my tax bill to increase a lot even if my local school district's budget is reduced or barely grew?

Answer: Your Education Tax bill is influenced by the entire state's education budget, not just your local district's budget.

It's understandable to expect your tax bill to decrease when your local school district reduces its budget. It's reasonable to expect that if your school district's budget grows a little, your taxes might grow a little. However, several factors can cause your tax bill to increase even if the local schools decrease their budgets.

1. **Increased Spending Elsewhere**

If other school districts in the state have increased their budgets, the overall amount needed for education funding goes up. Since Vermont pools education funds at the state level, higher spending in other districts can lead to higher statewide tax rates to cover the total statewide cost of education. Everyone in the state helps pay for every child's education.

2. **Property Value Adjustments**

The state adjusts your town's tax rate to reflect current market values of properties. If property values in your town have increased faster than others in the state (even if your official assessment hasn't), your taxes will go up. Changes in this adjustment can raise your tax rate independently of your school's budget.

3. Changes in Student Population and Weighting

If the number of students in your district decreases, the same budget is spread over fewer students, increasing per-pupil spending. Higher per-pupil spending can raise your tax rate even if the total budget decreases or stays the same. Similarly, if the number of students needing extra support (like students living in poverty) decreases, the weighted student count goes down. This can also increase per-pupil spending (assuming no reduction to the budget), and therefore could increase your tax rate.

Advantages of Vermont's Education Funding System

1. Equity Across Districts

The system aims to promote equity by pooling resources in the Education Fund and redistributing them based on need, not local property wealth. This ensures that districts with fewer resources or lower property values have the same ability to raise tax revenues for education as districts with more resources or higher property values. It also makes it possible for schools that serve students with greater needs to have larger budgets even when their communities might not otherwise be able to afford larger budgets.

While equity is a theoretical advantage of the funding system, school districts make spending decisions independently, and do not always choose to spend more, for a variety of reasons. Frequently, low spending districts with a large number of students living in poverty struggle to pass a school budget and then reduce or moderate their already low spending. As a result, they are not achieving the equity envisioned by the funding system.

2. Support for Low Income Families

Vermont reduces the tax burden on low-and middle-income homeowners. This means that people with lower incomes pay taxes based in part on their ability to pay, rather than solely on property values, making the system more equitable.

3. Local Control of School Budgets

Communities retain local control over their school budgets, allowing voters to have a direct say in how much their district spends. This fosters community engagement and ensures that local priorities are reflected in school funding decisions (local control can sometimes be more limited if statewide cost-drivers, like healthcare, fluctuate significantly).

4. Support for Students with Greater Needs

The weighted funding formula is designed to allow districts to spend more on students who require extra services, like those living in poverty. The goal is to ensure that districts facing higher costs to educate certain students receive the support they need.

5. Support for Smaller Schools

Small schools are expensive to operate, and often, their communities have a small taxbase. It would be hard for a small community to fund a small school. Because the costs and funding are spread across the state, small, high-cost schools can continue.

Disadvantages of Vermont's Education Funding System

1. Complexity of the System

The system is very complex, with many factors influencing tax rates and funding distributions, including per-pupil spending, weighted student counts, the statewide property yield, the Property Tax Credit program, and the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA). This complexity makes it difficult for taxpayers to understand how their taxes are calculated and how local school spending impacts them directly.

The connection between local budgets, statewide spending, and individual tax bills is not straightforward, which can reduce trust in the system and discourage public engagement.

2. Few Guardrails to Ensure Consistent Budgeting

There are few guardrails for consistent budgeting across the state. As examples, there is not a minimum reserve required, minimum class size, or base funding amount. While this allows communities to customize funding to meet their local students' needs, it gives voters few metrics for comparing reasonable spending and ensuring financial sustainability and can sometimes result in inequitable funding between communities.

3. Tax Rate Increases Despite Budget Cuts or Frugal Budget

Even when a local district reduces their budgets, individual tax bills can still increase due to statewide factors, such as increases in other districts' spending, changes in student populations, or changes in property values. The disconnect between local spending decisions and tax bills can lead to frustration for taxpayers and conflict with their elected school officials.

4. **Limited Incentive to Make Difficult Budget Decisions and Reduce Spending as Enrollment Declines**

It's always hard to cut a budget. Cuts impact people's lives and services to students. The statewide spreading of education taxes means that if one school board cuts their budget, but others don't, they get little benefit from the hard decision. This removes some of the motivation at the local level to make difficult decisions.

5. **Support for Smaller Schools**

Small schools are expensive to operate, and often, their communities have a small property tax base. It would be hard for a small community to fund a small school. Because the costs and funding are spread across the state, small, high-cost schools can continue. This is seen as an advantage by some and a disadvantage by others.

How Vermont's Education Funding System Compares

All 50 states have different ways of funding education, and all of the formulas are complicated. With that said, 48 other states approach education funding in the "opposite" way that Vermont does. Most states inform each district how much money they will receive, and if they wish to budget more than this amount, the taxpayers in each specific community pay for all or much of the extra spending. (Additional details regarding other states' education funding approaches can be found in figure 1 of the appendix.)

Importantly, Vermont's Constitution includes an Education Clause, which has been interpreted by the Vermont Supreme Court in the Brigham decision as a right for all students to a substantially equal education. Vermont's Education Clause places the responsibility to ensure equal education opportunity on the State.

In the Brigham decision, Vermont's Supreme Court stated, "[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." That same decision also stated that the school funding laws in place at the time failed to provide equity, because communities did not have the same ability to raise property revenues to provide a quality education for students. This put students who lived in school districts with lower property wealth at a disadvantage.

This decision continues to impact Vermont's education funding system to this day and is one of the reasons why Vermont's funding system is so complex.

What has prompted a review of Vermont's education funding system?

Today, Vermont faces intensified challenges, many of which were accelerated by the pandemic shutdown, among them:

- A smaller, poorer, and more diverse student population
- Declining levels of academic achievement
- Rising costs, especially for K-12 schools
- An aging population that is increasingly less well off financially
- An affordable housing shortage and shrinking workforce
- Rising cost of health care and increased complexity of delivering services to shifting demographic
- A growing number of Vermonters who can no longer afford additional increases to their property taxes

Understanding how other states fund schools and address similar challenges could support Vermont's efforts to make system improvements.

Common Ways Other States Fund Education

States vary in terms of how they fund education, so the examples below present common ways that states approach funding education.

1. A state informs each district how much money each will receive.

Unlike in Vermont, where each school system tells the state how much money is needed to fund their approved budget, other states tell each district, "This is how much you will receive from us." For example, Pleasantville Public Schools are told they will receive $9 million next year from the state of New Jersey based on certain assumptions about the cost to provide education to its students.

2. A state calculates, based on a formula, how much each school system should need to provide a reasonable education.

While many states use a funding formula, no two formulas are exactly the same. Most use a formula that has three parts:

1. A certain amount of money for each student
2. An extra amount for some students with extra needs, such as low income, English learner, or special education
3. A wide range of smaller amounts for special purposes such as regional transportation or students with high-cost special education

Each of these formulas are much more complicated than the simple statements above. Ultimately, they are a known, fixed formula to calculate what is a reasonable amount to spend on educating students in the school system.

3. A state also calculates how much of the spending on education should come from the state.

Most states, in the pursuit of equity, provide a bigger share of funding for education to communities that would have a harder time paying for a reasonable education themselves. For example:

- A community without many high-income households and businesses might get 90% of its education spending from the state.
- A community with many high-income families and a strong business base might get only 10% of its education funding from the state.
- A typical middle-class community might get 50% of its education spending from the state.
- In all three examples, the rest of the money comes mostly from local taxpayers and a bit from the federal government. Communities are required to spend the amount of money the state calculated is needed for a reasonable education.

4. School systems work to build a budget within the limits of the money they are going to receive.

School system leaders, aware of how much money they are going to have from all sources, strive to best meet the needs of their students and staff by crafting a spending plan in line with the money they will receive.

When costs rise faster than any change to the state's funding formula, this often mandates cuts to spending and staffing. In times of declining enrollment, school systems experience a reduction in education spending as funds received decrease with decreased enrollment.

5. A state typically sets a floor, not a ceiling on school spending. Local taxpayers can vote to spend more, if they want.

After reviewing the amount of money they will receive from the state and other sources along with the budgets proposed by the school system leaders, some school boards can decide that more money is needed. They can ask taxpayers to increase their taxes, typically their property taxes, to allow for a bigger budget.

If the taxpayers approve the tax increase, it is only the taxpayers in the communities served by the school district that pay the higher tax. Other taxpayers in the state are not impacted by decisions in other communities.

Vermont's Approach to Funding Equity

Like many states, Vermont relies heavily on state property taxes to pay for its elementary and secondary schools. Vermont has worked to fund its schools in a way that tries to ensure that students who likely need the most support can still receive that support even if they live in communities with relatively low property values. However, Vermont's approach to funding equity has three components that make it different:

1. Pooling of costs: Education costs are pooled statewide so that the costs in one town are paid by property taxes collected from many other towns through a funding formula.

As a result, property taxes can go up in some towns whose school spending goes down, and down in other towns even as local spending goes up.

2. Taxpayer credits: About two thirds of homeowners receive a credit on their property tax and are thus partially shielded from increased education spending. While some states have modest reductions in property taxes for some taxpayers, the extent of Vermont's tax reductions is much greater than elsewhere. The scale and framework of the Property Tax Credit program make it virtually impossible for those who receive a credit to tie their budget vote to their tax bill.

3. No caps: There are no state or local spending caps that can serve as external brakes on school spending. In nearly all other states, education spending minimums are set by the state. If a school system wants to spend more, they must get approval from their voters and only the voters living in the communities served by that school system pay the higher taxes. In most other states, each community independently sets its level of education spending, caps on spending and related taxes, subject to a minimum set by the state and the approval of the voters in the community.

As a result, local communities in Vermont have a lot of independence in how much to spend but less control over how much it will cost local taxpayers.

Vermont's System of School Governance

As in all states, local school boards in Vermont set policy. They hire/fire the superintendent and set the budget. But consequential differences exist. Details regarding the specific number of board members per local school board can be found in figure 2 of the appendix.

1. More and Bigger School Boards.

Vermont's school boards are generally larger than many other places across the country. Some Supervisory Unions have more than one school board, which is a very rare structure elsewhere in the country.

- The number of members on a unified school district board ranges from 3-19 members, with an average of seven members
- Some Supervisory Unions can have between two to seven school boards, depending on the number of school districts in their region, with between 10-78 total school board members.
- On average, Supervisory Unions have one board member for approximately every 75 students

The existence of many relatively small school districts in Vermont contributes to this difference. Unified school districts aim to ensure that each town is represented proportionally resulting in larger boards.

It is not unusual for a superintendent of a supervisory union to serve four or more different school boards: one for the regional middle/high school and one for each of the towns served by that middle/high school.

To help put this in a national context, many states have no (or almost no) supervisory unions, and many school districts have just five or seven school board members. A superintendent having to work with nine school board members is considered a very large number in most states.

Vermont's pattern of more and larger boards involved in setting budgets and policies for each district's schools makes it more challenging to develop consensus around plans to manage spending and coordinate programs.

2. Questions About Practicality of Managing Larger School Systems

In some states a typical sized district has 3,000 - 5,000 students, and a large district has 25,000 or more students. While it can be difficult to manage districts with hundreds of schools, some of the highest achieving school systems in the country have 10,000 students or even 50,000 students, a single school board, reasonable spending, and very high achievement.

Having worked with over 300 school districts in 30 states, New Solutions K12 has seen firsthand that nearly all school systems with 3,000 to 5,000 students do not consider themselves too large to handle, but just the opposite.

In Vermont there are only three unified school districts with more than 3,000 students (Essex Westford School District, Burlington School District, Champlain Valley School District) and they exist in more populated parts of the state.

3. Election of School Board Members

The organizational structure of school boards contributes to another relatively unusual feature of school governance in Vermont. Many school board members in Vermont are elected by residents of a single town rather than "at large" across all the towns where the board oversees schools. This is intended to ensure proportionate representation from each town. Most school boards elsewhere in the country have systemwide elections.

While all school board members are expected to consider the needs of the entire SU and all the schools, it's human nature to hear from and respond to the community members that elected each board member. This can lead to less of a systemwide perspective and more of a town specific focus.

Taken together, these characteristics of K-12 education governance in Vermont mean that school districts and supervisory unions are more often administered as a "system of schools" each with a high degree of autonomy for everything from schedule to course offerings. The alternative in most other states is a "school system" that aligns policies, practices, programs, and people to maximize benefits for all students and manage spending.

Implications of Governance Differences

In Vermont, responding effectively to the needs and wants of each school board requires time and effort from the superintendent and their staff. It is also challenging to reach agreement on common policies, programs, and practices across grade levels and schools that can help ensure efficient, effective use of resources.

For example, approaches to reading and how to support struggling readers may vary greatly across elementary schools and impact the middle school that receives students from multiple, different elementary schools. Additionally, sharing staff may be impossible because of differences in scheduling, which can raise costs.

Taken as a whole, Vermont's system of governance means that it is especially challenging to moderate spending, increase achievement, and to ensure equity for all students.

Teaching and Learning Best Practices

Over the last 20 years there has been an explosion of educational research that has mapped "what works" to raise student outcomes. There is also a growing number of examples of school systems that are "cost effective" meaning they achieve higher than average levels of student outcomes at lower than average per pupil spending.

Best practice research has shown that there are ways to close achievement gaps and use cost-effective practices in small and rural districts. Many innovative strategies started in small and rural districts. These practices include shared and part-time staff, staff wearing multiple hats, teachers taking on leadership roles for extra compensation while remaining a teacher, principals of small schools having other responsibilities, regionalized services, and shared special education programs.

Though these strategies exist in Vermont, there is great variability in implementation, which makes it hard for the state to fully realize the benefits of these best practices.

1. Limited Comparative Analysis to Other States

Most states establish clear benchmarks that help local leaders compare performance and spending and work toward a common goal. Paying more attention to benchmarks would enable Vermont school board members and educators to see how their spending practices and student learning outcomes compare to other schools, districts, and states.

In the absence of state benchmarks, school boards do not necessarily know when their district is comparatively high spending or low spending. As a state, Vermont has the fifth highest total expenditures per pupil and expenditures have increased over time.

School size is often used to describe differences among schools and districts in Vermont. However, small schools and districts are actually the norm in the state. In fact, Vermont has the fourth smallest school size on average nationally. Vermont is also a comparative outlier in terms of class sizes and staffing ratios. Vermont schools have more teachers per 100 pupils and staff per 100 pupils than any other state nationally[1].

[1] Vermont State Education Profile, 8/2024

2. Vermont's Small Class Size

Nationally, Vermont tends to have some of the smallest class sizes, on average[2]. There is substantial evidence that students in other districts and states can and do thrive in classes considerably larger than the typical Vermont class. Very high levels of student success are achieved with average classes of 24 at the elementary level, and 28 at the secondary level[3]. The quality and effectiveness of teachers has a far greater impact on student outcomes than class size.

In Vermont smaller-than-typical class size is the outcome of many deliberate decisions, not just the result of small school size.

3. Many Classroom Teachers, But at Lower Pay

There are consequences of Vermont's small class sizes. On a per student basis, there are a lot of classroom teachers in Vermont. Much of the funding in Vermont goes to sustaining this comparably large number of classroom teachers rather than compensating them at levels comparable to many other states. While the state has one of the highest-in-the-nation per pupil spending, this does not translate into highest-in-the-nation teacher compensation. As of the 2022-2023 school year, teachers in Vermont earn $66,536 on average, which is slightly below the national average[4].

Most states have fewer classroom teachers but pay them at higher wages. As teacher shortages have grown more acute, some higher performing districts are intentionally increasing class size to fund increases in teacher compensation. For example, moving from Vermont's current average of 10.7 students per teacher[5] to 12 students per teacher would fund a roughly 8-10% salary increase.

As of the 2023-2024 school year, there were 795 provisional and emergency licenses issued to teachers by districts in the state, an 84% increase since the 2016-2017 school year. Increasing the student to teacher ratio would avoid having to issue as many

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[2] National Center for Education Statistics

[3] Research indicates that for students living in poverty, having class sizes in K-3 at 17 students is generally considered beneficial, as smaller class sizes in the early grades can significantly improve academic achievement, particularly for disadvantaged students, allowing for more individualized attention and better support from teachers. Source: American Federation of Teachers

[4] National Education Association

[5] https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/WorkGroups/House%20Education/Future%20of%20Public%20Education/W~Anne%20Bordonaro~Class%20Size%20Policy%20Research~3-14-2024.pdf

provisional or emergency licenses and increase the likelihood of students receiving instruction from a certified and experienced teacher.

4. Fewer Specialized Teachers

In addition, small class sizes in relatively small districts make it hard to provide students with essential specialized services for needs such as reading and math intervention, English language, counseling, or behavior support. Many states have seen a larger increase in these specialized teacher roles and many of the highest performing schools lean into larger classes supported by specialized teachers.

5. Reliance on Paraprofessionals

Vermont school districts typically employ more paraprofessionals per student than schools across the nation. The state has consistently led the country in paraprofessional-to-student ratios with 15-20 paraprofessionals per 1,000 students[6]. Vermont districts generally hire paraprofessionals to provide a range of support in the classroom. More recently, districts have been hiring paraprofessionals to help support and manage student behaviors.

Vermont staffing trends suggest that leaders and teachers see the addition of paraprofessionals in the classroom as essential, despite the state's comparatively small class sizes. Paraprofessionals supporting general education students are virtually unheard of in any other state, with a small exception for some part-time support in certain kindergarten classrooms.

Reliance on special education paraprofessionals may be seen a result of other education teachers and specialists that are spread too thin. In many high performing school systems, there are no paraprofessionals for students with mild-to-moderate academic disabilities and students with severe special needs are shared across paraprofessionals.

The above average staffing of paraprofessionals, including through one-on-one services and in small group settings, may have unintended consequences. Potential impacts include limiting students' interactions with highly skilled classroom educators and less interaction with their student peers.

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[6] National Council on Teacher Quality

6.Vermont's Tendency to Favor Full Time Staff in a Single School

Like many other rural states, most of Vermont's districts and schools are very small, making it difficult to achieve the economies of scale of larger schools in larger districts. But in Vermont, this challenge is compounded because many districts tend to treat their small schools as if they were medium size schools or even large schools when it comes to staffing. In some instances this may be a result of rurality or ability to attract and retain staff.

For example, most of Vermont's smallest elementary schools (fewer than 150 children) have full time principals rather than sharing a principal with another school or having the principal take on two jobs such as part-time principal and part-time counselor or art teacher, for example. This results in higher staffing costs. Similarly, Vermont has comparatively fewer part-time or shared teachers and specialists.

The typical practice in Vermont is to "round up" to whole numbers when deciding how many administrators, teachers, specialists, and support staff are needed in a school or district. Merging small school districts through either unified school districts or supervisory unions has been an important step in creating a practical mechanism for sharing staff among schools and has helped to both rein in costs and expand services for students. That said, the persistence of a mindset that sees sharing staff as undesirable and impractical has limited the benefits of district consolidation.

In some states small schools and small districts have perfected the practice of sharing staff. In some schools that are geographically close, this means sharing staff for part of the day or every other day. In other small schools that are geographically far apart, this means sharing staff in 4-6 week increments.

Most of these practices were developed and fine-tuned in small districts and schools to be feasible for staff and avoid staff burnout. Pioneered in small school settings, these practices have since expanded to larger schools and districts as well.

The Role of Tuitioning

Tuitioning is another unique feature of Vermont's education system. A student who lives in a town with no public primary or secondary schools is provided educational options in another school through the process of "tuitioning." When a student is "tuitioned" to another school or district, the sending town pays the receiving school or district an amount called the "average announced tuition" which is calculated annually by the Vermont Agency of Education.

A student whose school district pays tuition can go to a public or approved independent school, in or outside of Vermont. As of FY24, of Vermont's 119 school districts, 15 pay tuition for all K-12 students and 95 pay tuition for all high school students. (Note: There are many exclusions, exceptions, and nuances to how tuitioning works that go beyond the scope of the details in this report. Additional details can be found here.)

1. Cost of Tuitioning

The cost of tuitioning is calculated every school year and is determined by the Vermont Agency of Education. The school district pays the "average announced tuition", and the student's family is responsible for paying the difference, if any, between tuition charged by a school and the average announced tuition. There are several exceptions in which district-paid tuition may exceed the average announced tuition rate. These exceptions are for area career technical centers, schools designated as meeting Education Quality Standards, and in cases where the school district's electorate votes to pay a higher amount for tuition. In 2023-2024 the average announced tuition was $16,756 at the elementary level and $18,266 for 7th-12th grade schools.

2. Benefits of Tuitioning

Tuitioning originated to provide education in rural areas of the state where it would be costly to build new schools and maintain a very small school. Today, several geographic areas are still sparse, and do not have a public school in their town or immediate area, so tuitioning fills a gap and provides choice to families.

3. Challenges of Tuitioning

Districts have to pay tuitioning costs for students that attend school out of district. This is a portion of funding over which districts have little or no control. Some districts experience enrollment shifts between grade levels as a result of tuitioning, which can make it challenging for schools to staff precisely to student enrollment.

4. Tuitioning Out of State

Families who live in a district that does not operate a school, can use tuitioning to subsidize private schooling, including at private schools out of state. Approximately 1% of students in FY23 attended non-special education related private or independent schools out of state.

Building Budgets in Vermont

It is not just how money is spent that is different in Vermont; how budgets are built is also different.

1. Building Budgets Starts and Ends Early

Vermont state law requires districts to start and end the budgeting process much earlier than in many states. That means that district leaders and Boards in Vermont are building budgets with very incomplete information about the three most critical ingredients of a budget:

- Student enrollment by grade and school
- Student need (especially for special education services)
- Staff employment plans

For example, when a principal and district leader are making budget plans in October for the following September (11 months ahead), they have limited knowledge about how many third grade students to expect in a school next year, which current second grade students may need specialized services, and whether the third grade teacher intends to retire or not. Those are critical variables—yet in October or even in February when most Boards have to prepare for Town Meeting Day, these variables still entail a lot of estimation.

Given how early budgets are built and finalized in Vermont, it is harder to make staffing reduction and adjustments in the face of still unknown enrollment changes. It is also harder to take advantage of voluntary staff departures and resignations to make staff reductions and adjustments without having to lay people off.

2. Earlier Budgeting Process Relies on Incomplete Spending Data

The guesswork caused by timelines is often compounded by the absence of precise prior or current year spending data. The spending data is not precise because the current school year has just begun in October and is less than two thirds over when Town Meeting Day happens. It is also imprecise because most districts are still working on consolidating multiple prior budget systems and budget charts of accounts from the multiple districts that make up the unified district and/or supervisory union. That means identifying accurately what each district is actually spending on the same service can be hard. Without a detailed and accurate picture of past and current spending, it is extremely challenging to build a budget for the future.

3. “Go it Alone” Mentality

In some states small schools and small school systems band together because they are too small to thrive on their own. For example, in rural parts of Wyoming, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, New York and Texas, more than half of special education

services are provided by special education collaboratives (which are also known as Educational Service Centers, BOCES, or other names). These are agencies funded by the state and/or districts often functioning like a small school district to serve students with specialized needs. They are *not* for-profit companies or for-profit schools.

In Vermont the first such collaborative was recently formed by a group of concerned superintendents. Others include The Virtual Learning Cooperative and the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative. The state also recently passed a bill to allow for the creation of boards of cooperative education services (BOCES). Overall, Vermont school districts have tended towards independence and self-reliance more than collective or shared services.

Statewide Education Programs

Vermont funds a set of statewide education programs for the benefit of public schools across the state. These statewide programs are funded "off the top" of the Education Fund and are not managed by local school district budget decisions. Programs have changed over time, with the largest investments in recent years going toward special education, pensions, PCB remediation, transportation aid, and universal school meals. For more details, reference the Education Fund Outlook.

Vermont's Similarities to Other States

In many ways the Vermont education context is much like the context in other states. As in Vermont, most school board members everywhere are deeply connected to and loyal to their communities. Like Vermont, many other states are seeing declining school-age populations. Most are seeing more children whose first language is not English. All are seeing more of their children living in poverty. All are struggling with the impacts on their students of learning loss from prolonged school closures. All are seeing more children with behavioral and emotional needs. All are struggling to continue to have a positive impact on student learning without adding to taxpayers' costs.

Like others across the country, Vermonters have long held out hope that population increase would bring an increase to student enrollment. Communities with very small schools tend to be more attractive to individuals without school-age children than to those with school-age children. The latter often worry about the impacts of small peer groups on their children and—especially at the high school level—limited academic, vocational, enrichment, and extracurricular activities.

Schools are central to many towns' identities and sense of community. They evoke intense loyalty when threatened. As in many other states, too, it is assumed that closing small schools will save lots of money. In practice, that is not always the case. While closing a school may generate one time cost savings, addressing the cost pressures will likely require systemic and structural changes in the ways that many Vermont schools are organized and staffed.

Future Considerations

This report serves as a reference for future planning and a starting point for further learning, setting the stage for meaningful improvements in our education system.

As we look to the future, several considerations emerge as potential pathways for Vermont's education system. It will be critical to take a holistic approach as the state considers next steps. Given the complexity of the challenges, no one change can be considered in isolation.

Revising the statewide funding formula is one consideration that could help Vermont better align resources with educational goals. This report outlines several elements of the current funding formula, including the timeline, that are counter to the goals of strategic budgeting, academic improvement, and predictability of education taxes. A new or amended funding formula could position the state to build upon what Vermonters value most about the education system, and discard features of the funding system that may not work as intended or create confusion and frustration. Any formula adjustments would involve assumptions about how to deliver a quality education, accounting for different student needs, geography, the complexity of the education ecosystem, and other factors. These considerations coupled with clear budgeting parameters would be a crucial step towards enhancing transparency and predictability in Vermont's education funding system.

Vermont could also explore ways to organize and structure districts to promote more equitable learning opportunities for students across the state. This approach seeks to create scale so that all students receive a well-rounded education and have access to specialized educators, rich program offerings, and a wide range of electives. These decisions must keep in mind the impacts on communities and balance a preference for smaller elementary schools with the desire for more comprehensive program offerings at the middle and high school levels.

Recognizing that educators are the heart of the education system, it is vital to support schools and districts in aligning their personnel with student enrollment and needs, especially given the workforce shortage. The report offers several considerations,

related to administration, sharing staff, class size, and reinvesting in higher teacher salaries. By focusing on proven strategies and keeping students at the center of decision making, Vermont could explore changes that optimize resources in ways that elevate academic performance, improve teacher recruitment and retention, and ensure consistent education offerings statewide.

These considerations are not forgone conclusions but rather starting points as we work to shape an education system that is equitable, efficient, and responsive to the diverse and changing needs of Vermont's students from cradle to career.

Vermont's dedication to education, coupled with the resourcefulness and resilience of Vermonters, will provide a strong foundation for future growth and innovation. By leveraging its strengths, Vermont can address challenges and seize opportunities to ensure a world-class public education system that Vermonters can afford.

Appendix

Figure 1: Funding Formula Approach by State As of 2018

Funding Formulas	States
Foundation Formulas (33)	AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, MN, MT, MO, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NY, ND, NE, NV, OH, OK, OR, RI, SC, TX, UT, WA
Position Allocation Systems (8)	AL, DE, ID, NC, SD, TN, WA, WV
Hybrid Systems (3)	GA, ME, VA
State Operates as a Single District (2)	DC, HI
State Specific Systems (5)	MA, MI, VT, WI, WY

A 2018 *Nevada School Finance Study* by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Education Commission of the States, and Picus Odden and Associates defines all the funding formulas as follows:

Foundation Formulas (33 states) – A foundation formula begins with a per-pupil funding amount that is theoretically sufficient to educate a general education student to state standards (also known as the "foundation" or "base" funding amount). Many states choose to supply districts with additional funding for high-need student populations through the use of an additional 14 weights in the funding formula. For example, if a state determines that it would cost districts 20 percent more to educate an ELL student, the formula would provide these students with an additional weight of 0.2.

Position Allocation Systems (8 states) – This type of system is sometimes known as the "position allocation" or "teacher allocation" system because it guarantees that school districts and charter schools have a certain number of teaching positions. This type of formula determines the number of teachers and other educational staff that schools are entitled to based on their enrollment. States then provide some form of operational funding for maintenance, technology, and utility costs based either on a per-pupil amount or a teaching position amount. Under these types of systems, school districts are often locked into how they can expend their funding based on the state formula.

Hybrid Systems (3 states) - Three states (Georgia, Maine, and Virginia) have funding systems that contain elements of both foundation formulas and position allocation systems. For example, Georgia makes use of a foundation-type formula that determines the foundation amount based on a type of resource allocation system. The state determines the per-student foundation amount by calculating the minimum cost of

providing one teaching position for every 23 students in a school district. An amount is then added to this base funding level that includes the cost for teacher specialists, counselors, operational costs, additional teaching days, indirect costs, staff time development, and media room costs. Compared to funding using a resource allocation system, districts have much greater freedom in how they expend state funds.

State Specific Systems (5 states) - Several states have funding systems that do not fit neatly into any specific category. Massachusetts and Wyoming have systems that provide funding to districts that varies based on certain education inputs. It is similar to the foundation method in that students with different education needs receive different amounts of funding. However, this type of system is based on educational inputs and does not utilize a single base or foundation amount. Michigan uses a system where the state controls almost all of the education funding decisions. Districts are required to send most of their local property tax collections to the state. These local tax dollars are combined with state funds and then distributed back to districts. This leaves most funding-level decisions up to state policymakers. Vermont's system allows districts a great deal of flexibility to determine their own funding levels.

Please note that since this report was completed in 2018 states may have changed their approach to education funding.

Figure 2: Number of Schools, Number of Boards, Total Board Members, and Operating Grades by SU

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
Addison Central SD	9	Addison Central School District	K-12 operated (o)	13	Bridport, Cornwall, Middlebury, Ripton, Salisbury, Shoreham, Weybridge
Addison Northwest SD	3	Addison Northwest School District	K-12 o	12	Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, Vergennes, Waltham
Barre SU	3	Barre Unified Union School District	K-12 o	9	Barre City, Barre Town
Bennington Rutland SU	6	Mettawee School District	K-6 o / 7-12 tuitioned (t)	5	Pawlet, Rupert
		Taconic & Green Regional School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	13	Danby, Dorset, Landgrove, Londonderry, Manchester, Mt Tabor, Peru, Sunderland, Weston
		Winhall School District	K-12 t	3	Winhall
Burlington SD	9	Burlington School District	K-12 o	12	Burlington
Caledonia Central SU	7	Cabot School District	K-12 o	5	Cabot
		Caledonia Coop UUSD	K-8 o / 9-12 t	9	Barnet, Walden, Waterford
		Danville School District	K-12 o	5	Danville
		Peacham	K-6 o / 7-12 t	5	Peacham
		Twinfield Union School District	K-12 o	6	Marshfield, Plainfield

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
Central Vermont SU	6	Echo Valley Community School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	6	Orange, Washington
		Paine Mountain School District	K-12 o	9	Northfield, Williamstown
Champlain Valley SD	5	Champlain Valley School District	K-12 o	12	Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shelburne, St George, Williston
Colchester SD	5	Colchester School District	K-12 o	5	Colchester
Essex North SU	1	Canaan School District	K-12 o	5	Canaan
		NEK Choice School District	K-12 t	11	Bloomfield, Brunswick, East Haven, Granby, Guildhall, Kirby, Lemington, Maidstone, Norton, Victory
		Averill	K-12 t	0	Averill
		Avery's Gore	K-12 t	0	Avery's Gore
		Ferdinand	K-12 t	0	Ferdinand
		Lewis	K-12 t	0	Lewis
		Warner's Grant	K-12 t	0	Warner's Grant
		Warren's Gore	K-12 t	0	Warren's Gore
Essex Westford SD	9	Essex Westford Educational Community Unified Union School District	K-12 o	10	Essex Town, Essex Junction, Westford

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
Franklin Northeast SU	8	Enosburgh-Richford Unified Union School District	K-12 o	6	Enosburgh, Richford
		Northern Mountain Valley Unified Union School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	8	Bakersfield, Berkshire, Montgomery, Sheldon
Franklin West SU	4	Fairfax School District	K-12 o	5	Fairfax
		Fletcher School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	5	Fletcher
		Georgia School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	Georgia
Grand Isle SU	4	Alburgh School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	Alburgh
		Champlain Islands Unified Union School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	5	Grand Isle, Isle la Motte, North Hero
		South Hero School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	South Hero
Greater Rutland County SU	8	Ira School District	K-12 t	3	Ira
		Quarry Valley Unified Union School District	K-12 o	10	Poultney, Proctor, West Rutland
		Rutland Town School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	Rutland Town
		Wells Springs Unified Union School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	7	Middletown Springs, Wells
Hartford SD	5	Hartford School District	K-12 o	5	Hartford, Quechee, White River Junction, Wilder
Harwood UUSD	7	Harwood Unified Union School District	K-12 o	14	Duxbury, Fayston, Moretown, Waitsfield, Warren, Waterbury

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
Kingdom East SD	7	Kingdom East Unified Union School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	15	Burke, Concord, Lunenburg, Lyndon, Newark, Sheffield, Sutton, Wheelock
Lamoille North SU	7	Lamoille North *Modified* Unified Union School District	K-12 o (7-12 o for Cambridge)	19	Belvidere, Cambridge, Eden, Hyde Park, Johnson, Waterville
		Cambridge School District	K-6 o	5	Cambridge
Lamoille South SU	7	Elmore Morristown Unified Union School District	K-12 o	5	Elmore, Morristown
		Stowe	K-12 o	5	Stowe
Maple Run SD	4	Maple Run Unified School District	K-12 o	10	Fairfield, St Albans City, St Albans Town
Mill River UUSD	5	Mill River Unified Union School District	K-12 o	11	Clarendon, Shrewsbury, Tinmouth, Wallingford
Milton SD	3	Milton School District	K-12 o	5	Milton
Missisquoi Valley SD	4	Missisquoi Valley School District	PK-12 o	9	Franklin, Highgate, Swanton
Montpelier Roxbury SD	4	Montpelier Roxbury School District	K-12 o	9	Montpelier, Roxbury
Mt Abraham USD	6	Mount Abraham Unified School District	K-12 o	13	Bristol, Monkton, New Haven, Starksboro
Mt Mansfield UUSD	8	Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District	K-12 o	15	Bolton, Huntington, Jericho, Richmond, Underhill
		Buel's Gore	K-12 t	0	Buel's Gore

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
North Country SU	11	Brighton School District	K-8 o	5	Brighton
		Charleston School District	K-8 o	3	Charleston
		Coventry School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	Coventry
		Derby School District	K-6 o	5	Derby
		Holland School District	K-12 t	3	Holland
		Jay School District	K-6 JOINT o	3	Jay
		Lowell School District	K-8 o	3	Lowell
		Morgan School District	K-6 t	3	Morgan
		Newport City School District	K-6 o	5	Newport City
		Newport Town School District	K-6 o	5	Newport Town
		Troy School District	K-8 o	5	Troy
		Westfield School District	K-6 JOINT o	3	Westfield
Orange East SU	6	Blue Mtn Union School District	K-12 o	10	Groton, Ryegate (Wells River)
		Oxbow Unified Union School District	K-12 o	6	Bradford, Newbury
		Thetford School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	5	Thetford
		Waits River Valley Union School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	6	Corinth, Topsham

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
Orange Southwest SD	4	Orange Southwest Unified Union School District	K-12 o	8	Braintree, Brookfield, Randolph
Orleans Central SU	7	Lake Region Union Elementary-Middle School District	K-8 o	14	Albany, Barton, Brownington, Glover, Irasburg, Westmore (Orleans)
		Lake Region Union High School District	9-12 o	11	Albany, Barton, Brownington, Glover, Irasburg, Westmore (Orleans)
Orleans Southwest SU	6	Craftsbury School District	K-12 o	5	Craftsbury
		Hazen Union High School District	7-12 o	8	Greensboro, Hardwick, Woodbury
		Mountain View Union Elementary School District	K-6 o	10	Greensboro, Hardwick, Stannard, Woodbury
		Stannard School District	7-12 t	3	Stannard
		Wolcott School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	5	Wolcott
Rivendell Interstate SD	2	Rivendell Interstate School District	K-12 o	11	Fairlee, Vershire, West Fairlee (Orford NH)
Rutland City SD	5	Rutland City School District	K-12 o	11	Rutland City
Rutland Northeast SU	5	Barstow Unified Union School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	Chittenden, Mendon
		Otter Valley Unified Union School District	K-12 o	13	Brandon, Goshen, Leicester, Pittsford, Sudbury, Whiting

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
SAU 70	1	Dresden Interstate School District	7-12 o	5	Norwich (Hanover, NH)
Slate Valley UUSD	5	Slate Valley Unified Union School District	K-12 o	18	Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, Hubbardton, Orwell, West Haven
South Burlington SD	5	South Burlington School District	K-12 o	5	South Burlington
Southwest Vermont SU	10	Arlington School District	K-12 o	5	Arlington
		Mt Anthony Union High School District	6-12 o	11	Bennington, Pownal, Shaftsbury, Woodford (North Bennington)
		North Bennington ID	K-6 t	5	(North Bennington)
		Sandgate School District	K-12 t	3	Sandgate
		Southwest VT Union Elementary School District	K-6 o	9	Bennington, Pownal, Shaftsbury, Woodford
Springfield SD	4	Springfield School District	K-12 o	5	Springfield
St Johnsbury SD	1	St Johnsbury School District	K-8 0 / 9-12 t	5	St Johnsbury
Two Rivers SU	5	Green Mountain Unified Union School District	K-12 o	11	Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester
		Ludlow-Mt Holly Unified Union School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	8	Ludlow, Mount Holly
Washington Central SU	6	Washington Central Unified Union School District	K-12 o	15	Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, Worcester

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
White River Valley SU	10	First Branch Unified School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	6	Chelsea, Tunbridge
		Granville-Hancock Unified District	K-12 t	6	Granville, Hancock
		Rochester-Stockbridge Unified District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	6	Rochester, Stockbridge
		Sharon School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	3	Sharon
		Strafford School District	K-8 o / 9-12	5	Strafford
		White River Unified District	K-12 o	6	Bethel, Royalton
Windham Central SU	8	Marlboro School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	3	Marlboro
		River Valleys Unified School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	6	Dover, Wardsboro
		Stratton School District	K-12 t	5	Stratton
		West River *Modified* Unified Union School District	K-12 o	12	Brookline, Jamaica, Newfane, Townshend, Windham
		Windham School District	K-6 o	3	Windham
Windham Northeast SU	6	Bellows Falls Union High School District	9-12 o	10	Athens, Grafton, Rockingham, Westminster
		Rockingham School District	K-8 o	5	Rockingham
		Windham Northeast Union Elementary School District	K-6 o / 7-8 t	5	Athens, Grafton, Westminster

SU	Number of Schools	School District(s)	K-12 Grades Operated or Tuitioned[i]	Board Member Count[ii]	Town(s) Served
Windham Southeast SU	9	Vernon School District	K-6 o / 7-12 t	5	Vernon
		Windham Southeast School District	K-12 o	5	Brattleboro, Dummerston, Guilford, Putney
Windham Southwest SU	5	Searsburg School District	K-12 t	5	Searsburg
		Stamford School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	Stamford
		Halifax	k-8 o/ 9-12 t	3	Halifax
		Readsboro	k-7 o / 8-12 o	3	Readsboro
		Twin Valley Unified Union School District	K-12 o	7	Whitingham, Wilmington
Windsor Central SU	6	Pittsfield School District	K-12 t	0	Pittsfield
		Windsor Central UUSD	K-12 o	0	Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, Woodstock
Windsor Southeast SU	4	Hartland School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	Hartland
		Mt Ascutney School District	K-12 o	6	West Windsor, Windsor
		Weathersfield School District	K-8 o / 9-12 t	5	Weathersfield
Winooski SD	3	Winooski School District	PK-12 o	5	Winooski

[i] Grades tuitioned means the school district has elected to provide education to its resident students in the grade(s) indicated by paying tuition for the students to attend a public school or approved independent school selected by the student and their family. Grades operated means the school district has elected to provide education to its resident students in the grade(s) indicated by operating a public school for the grade(s).

[ii] [ii] All board count information was shared by the Vermont School Boards Association on October 5, 2024