

GREEN MOUNTAIN IMPERATIVE

A Breakthrough Summit on Public Education

The State of Vermont Public Education

Rebecca Holcombe,
Secretary of Education

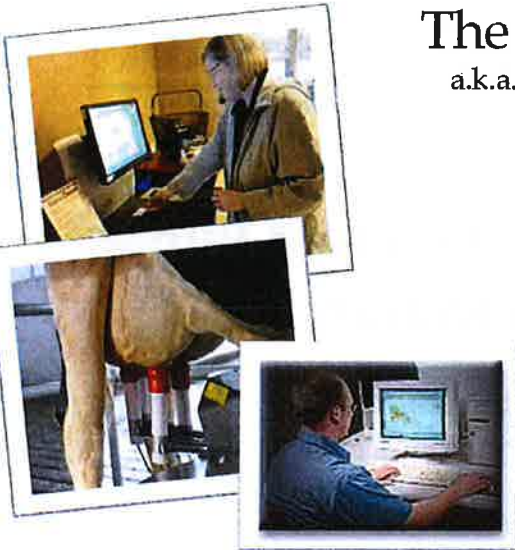
November 2014



Our Goals

- To ensure all children develop the skills they need to thrive in both their career and civic life.
- To provide this education in the most effective, efficient and accountable way.
- To reduce inequity of outcomes across the state.






The New Basic Skills


a.k.a. what computers can't do [yet]

- ☐ Solve unstructured problems
- ☐ Work with new information and reason from evidence
- ☐ Complete non-routine tasks
- ☐ Communicate and persuade
- ☐ Collaborate on complex tasks
- ☐ Exercise judgment



Education Quality Standards

- Focus on **proficiency** (not seat time) and demonstration of mastery as the means for determining progress and graduation
- Emphasis on **personalization and purpose**
- **Alignment** of curriculum/coherence K-12 within an SU
- Systems to **support continuous professional growth and learning** of educators



Education Quality Standards

Students must demonstrate learning in:

- ✓ literacy
- ✓ mathematical content and practices
- ✓ scientific inquiry and content knowledge
- ✓ global citizenship
- ✓ physical education and health education
- ✓ artistic expression
- ✓ transferable skills



Challenge:

How to put complex ideas into practice, at scale and across diverse contexts, in the absence of systems and in a climate of scarce resources?



What does this look like?

iLab at Winooski School District

<i>Project-based</i>	Require a final product, paper, and presentation
<i>Proficiency required</i>	Only give grades of A, B, or Incomplete. You have to do good learning to get credit.
<i>Content in service of skills</i>	Develop executive functioning (ability to manage and plan own work and learning), transferable skills needed to complete the project (critical thinking, planning, communication.)
<i>Student-directed and purposeful</i>	Apply to participate, initiative belongs to the students, engagement high, builds on students' strengths and passions, challenges students to plan and operate intentionally.
<i>Focus on growth and innovation</i>	Experimentation and risk taking encouraged



Education is no longer just grades K-12

**Act 77 –
provides HS
students with
college credits to
encourage post
secondary success.**



Indicator	Low	High
Class of 2012 post secondary enrollment (includes students from historical academies)	36.7%	77.3%



Education is no longer just grades K-12



Act 166 –
universal access
to PreK for
children ages 3
and 4.

Probability a VT child will be kindergarten ready by years of preK

Children in Poverty		Children <u>not</u> in Poverty	
Years of PK	Probability	Years of PK	Probability
0	30%	0	58%
1	35%	1	58%
2	53%	2	70%



Accomplishment of Performance Goals: School Quality Reviews

- The Agency of Education will monitor SU/SDs' support and improvement of member schools **for the purpose of providing guidance and support**
- SU/SDs responsible for furthering improvement in schools:
 - Academic accomplishment
 - Social and emotional learning
 - Professional supports for learning
 - School culture and climate
 - Fiscal stability



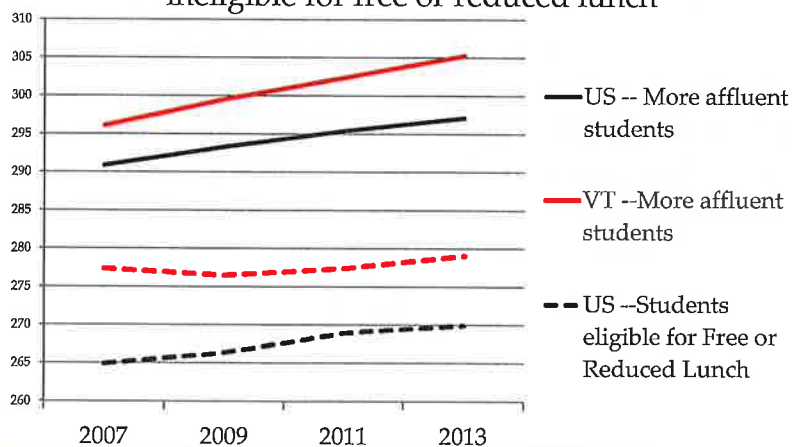
Our Challenge:

We must ensure our **system**
delivers this in an **equitable**
and **affordable** way.

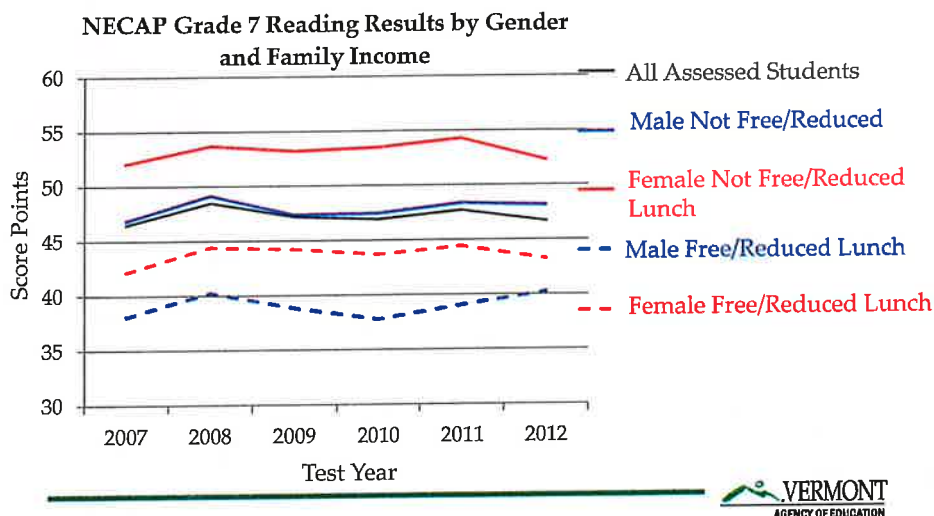


How are Vermont students doing?

NAEP 8th grade math scores for students eligible and ineligible for free or reduced lunch



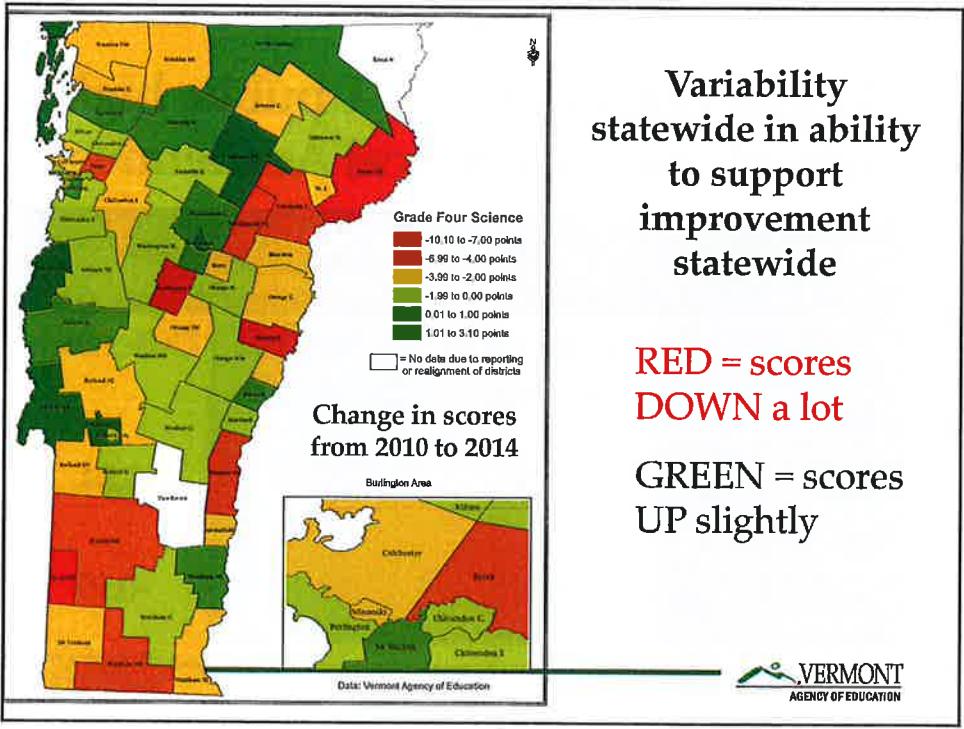
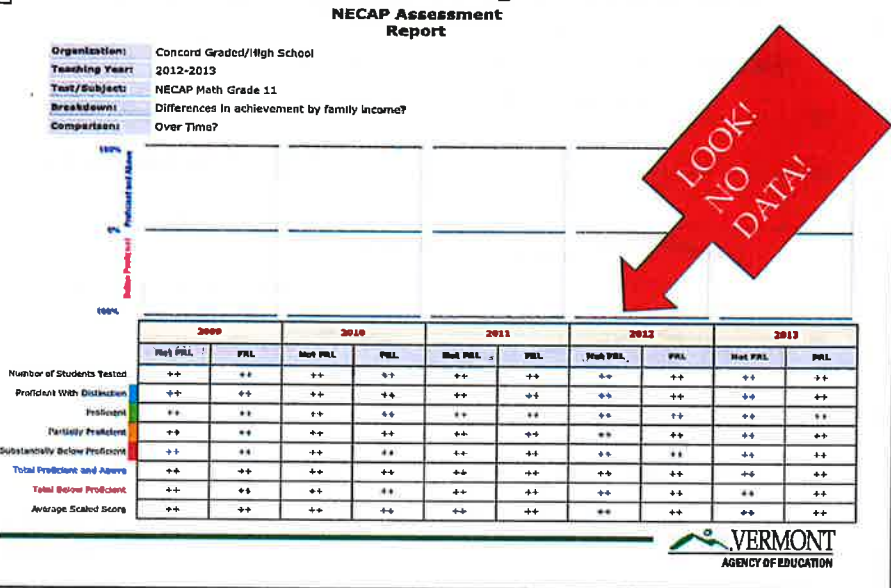
NECAP Reading Scores: Interaction of Poverty and Gender

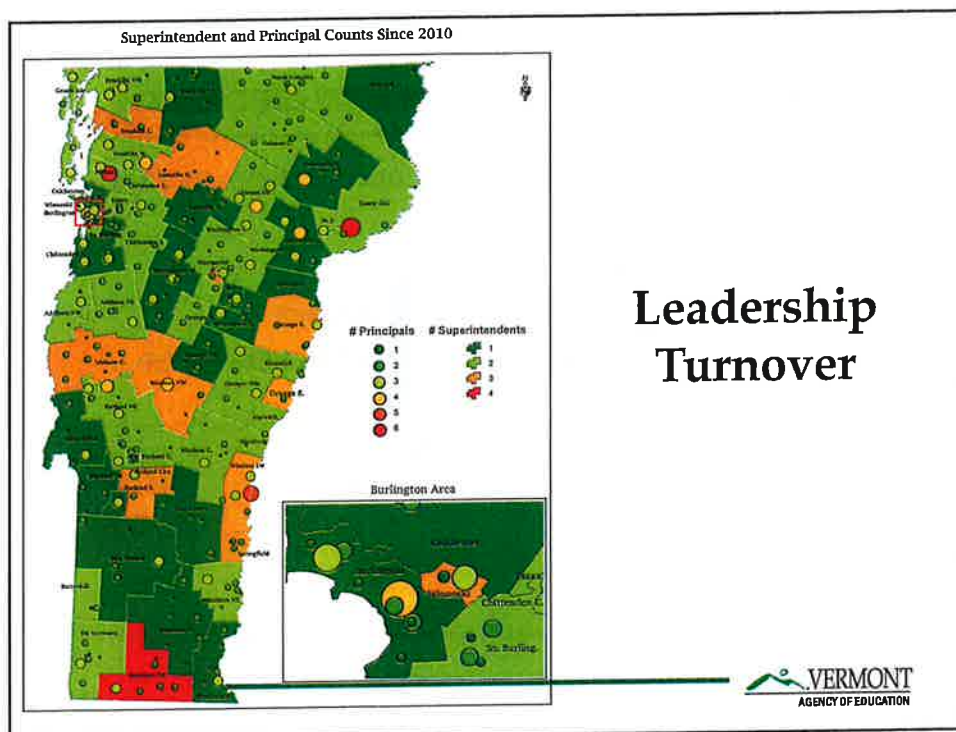


Similar outcomes in VT public high schools and Historical Academies

Test	Average Scale Score 11 th Grade Assessments, 2014		
	Public High Schools	Historical Academies	Difference
NECAP Reading	46.80	45.96	0.84
NECAP Math	35.10	36.07	-0.97

Many small schools and their SUs currently get limited (if any) school performance data

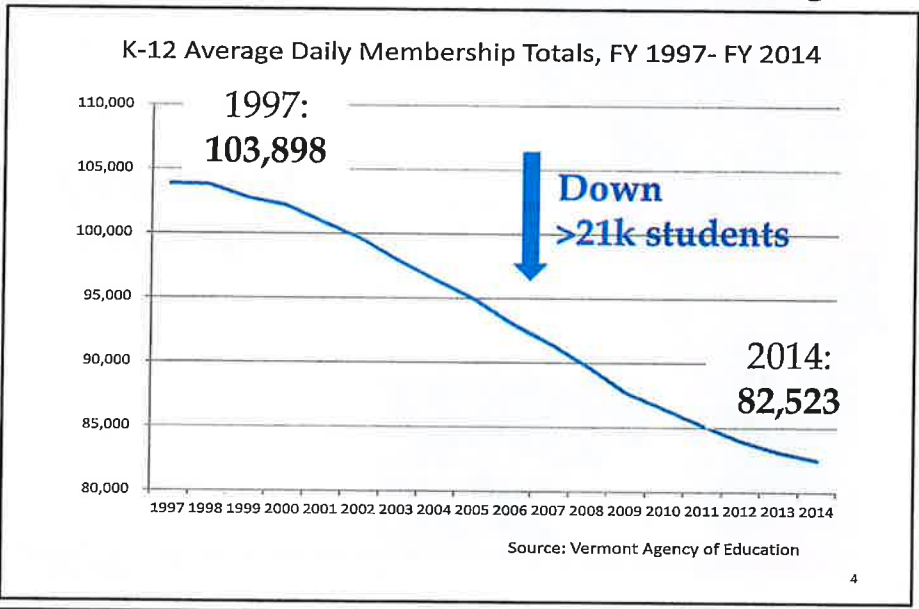




Why is everyone talking
about declining
enrollments?

...And what does that have
to do with my taxes?

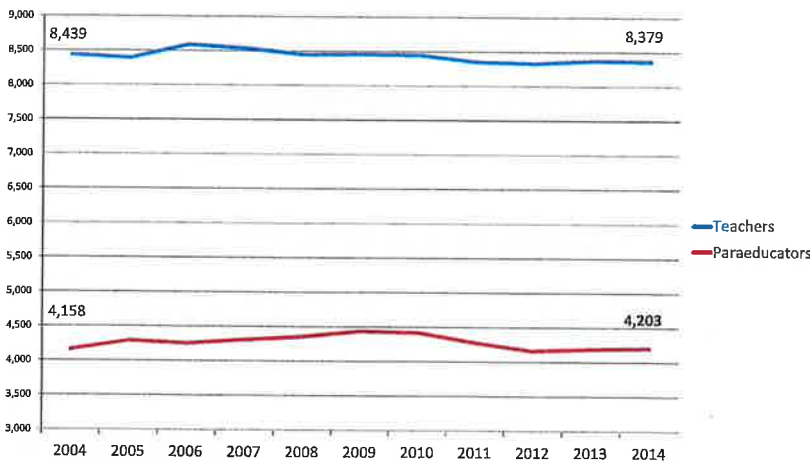
Our student numbers are declining



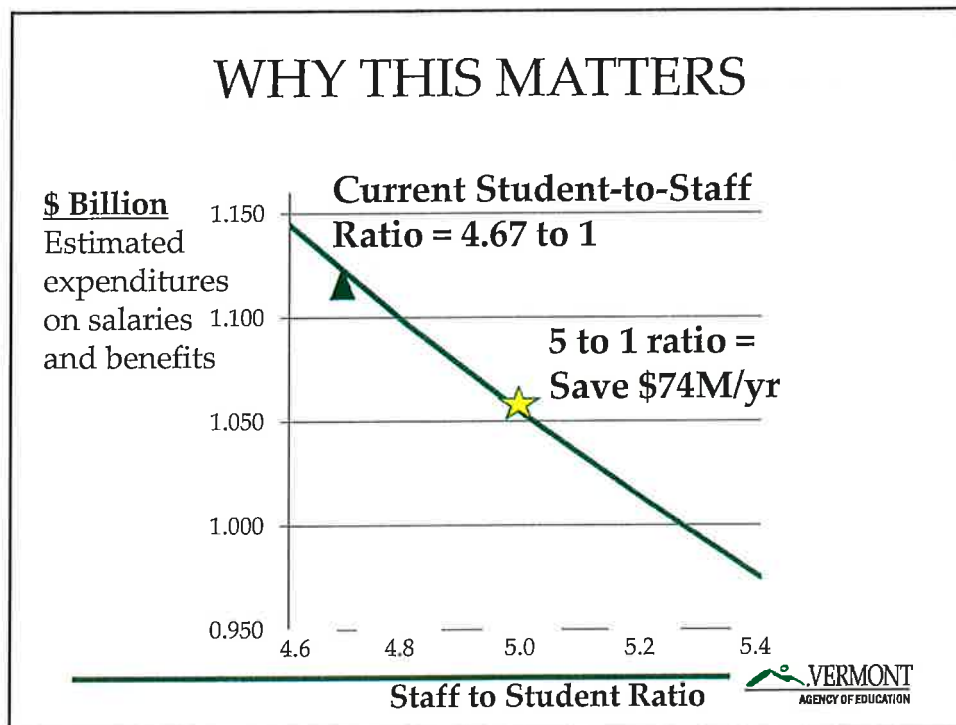
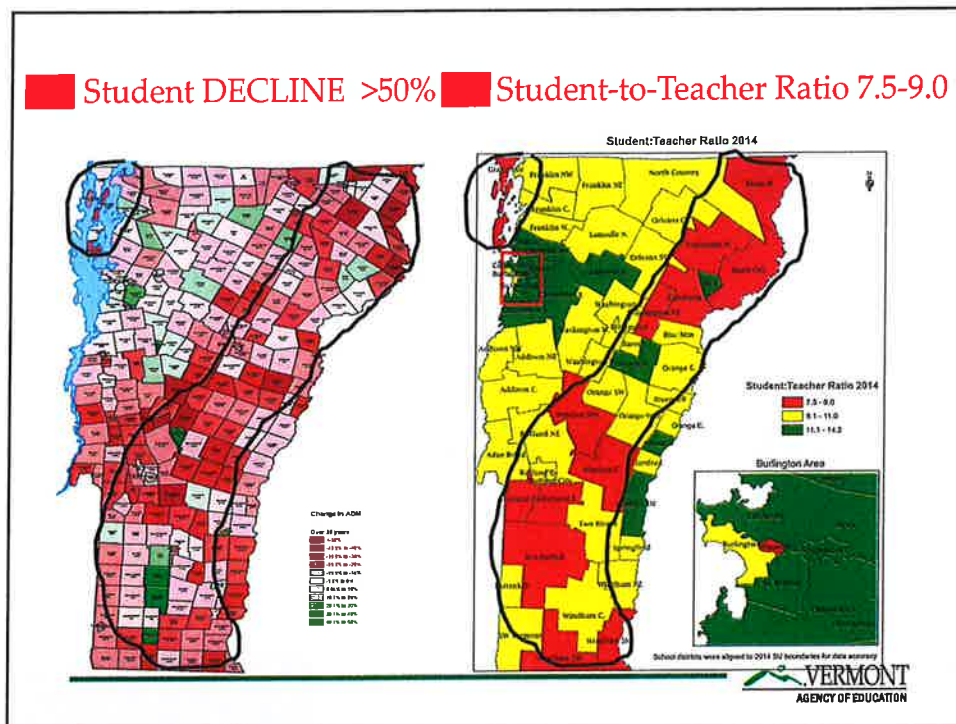
Meanwhile...

teachers and paraeducators has NOT declined

Public School FTE Teachers and Paraeducators:
FY 2004 – FY 2014



Source: Vermont Agency of Education



Why are our property taxes so high?


(a.k.a. We *all* have issues.)



Freedom and Unity

- Voters decide whether to operate schools or not.
- If operating:
 - Voters decide how to structure the school(s)
 - Voters decide on the local budget
 - Boards provide oversight for multimillion dollar systems.
- Small units assume responsibility for all the same legal obligations as large units.




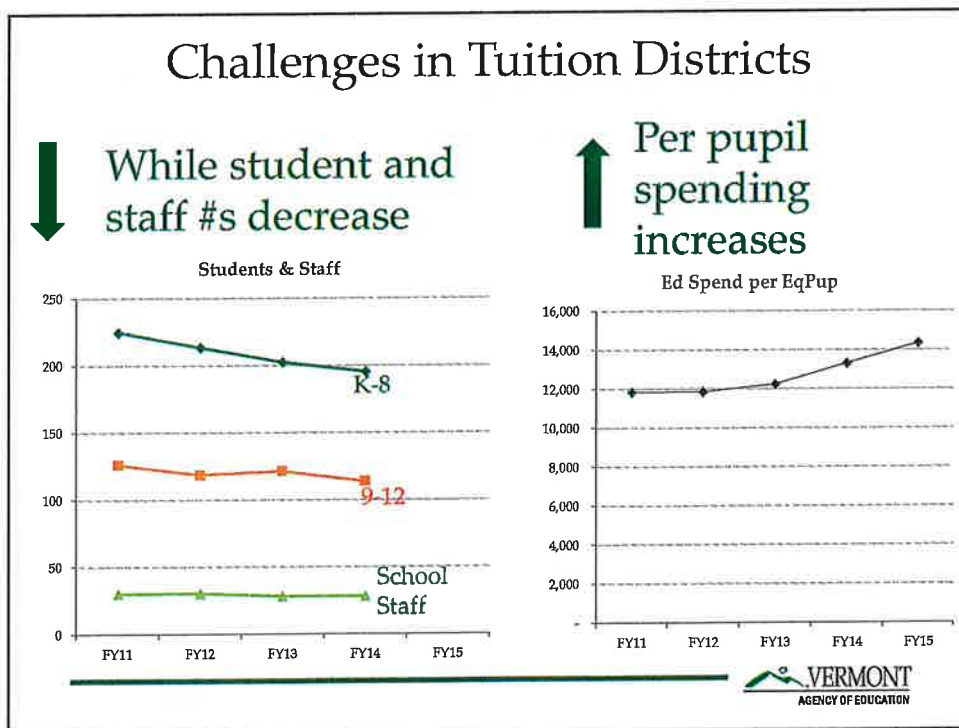


Freedom and Unity

Vermont

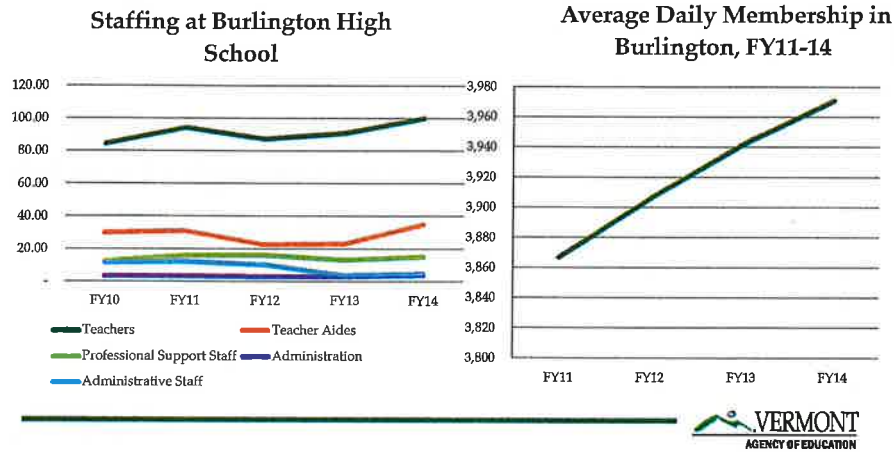
The Ed Fund has to
raise enough statewide
to pay for all the
budgets voted on locally.





New instructional needs = Costs UP

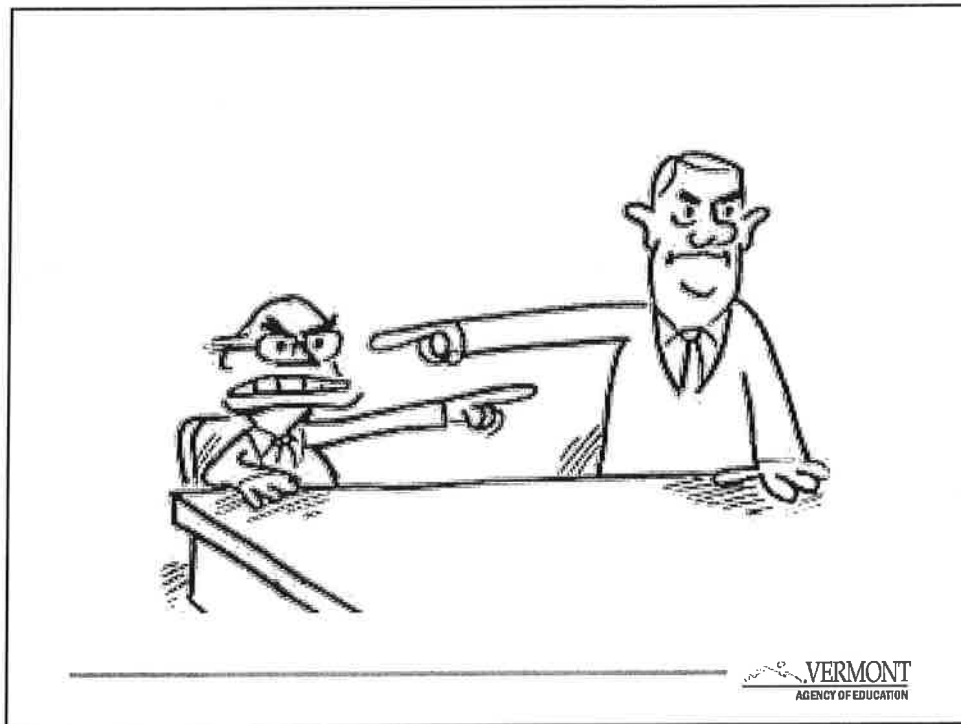
Burlington students speak 40 languages and there are increasing numbers of them



Even districts that privatize are seeing increases in tax rates



FY13 = last year of public school operation



Does size matter?
(Learning)

Scale affects the breadth of opportunities you can provide onsite for the same per pupil expenditure.

**Science at
School A
(300 Students)**



Earth Science
Biology
Biology—Other
Chemistry
Physics
AP Physics B
AP Environmental Science
Technical Science
Life and Physical Sciences—
Proficiency Development
Life and Physical Sciences—
Independent Study



**Science at
School B
(80 Students)**



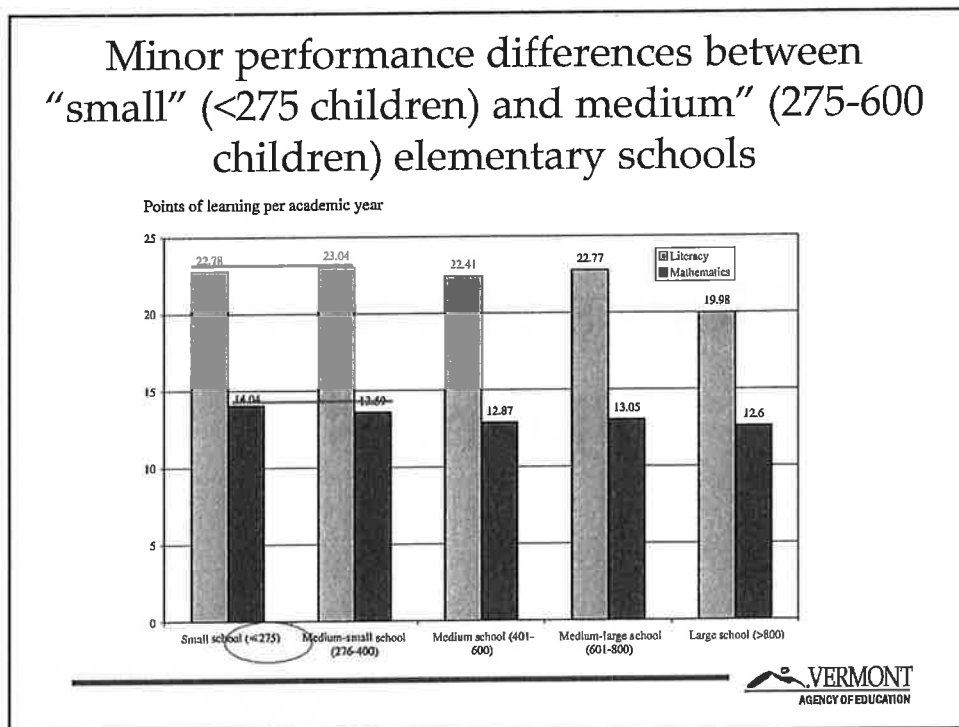
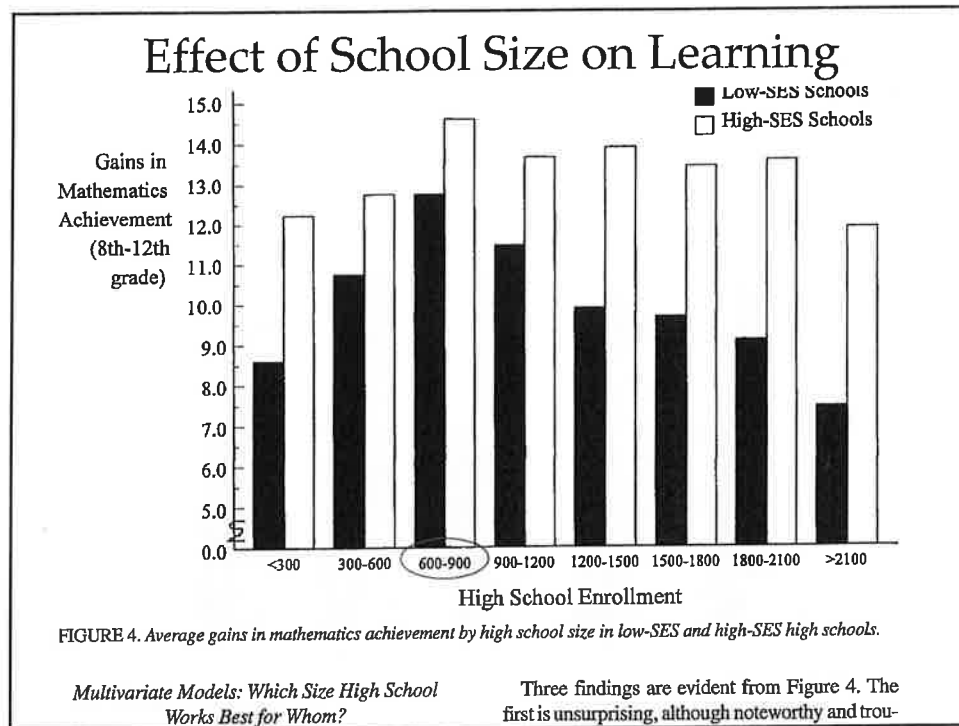
Biology
Physical Science
Forensics



National empirical studies: Effects of School Size

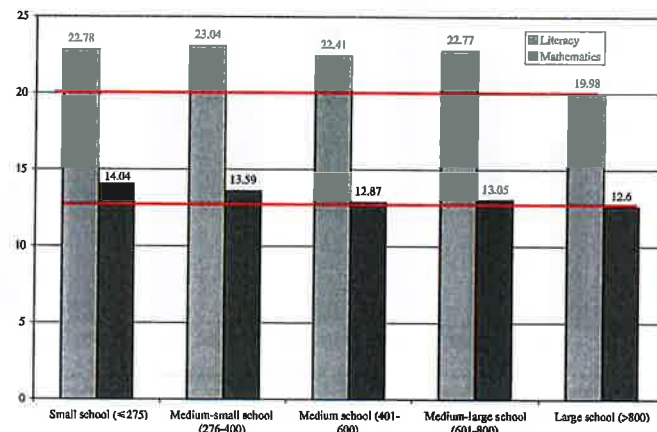
"The policy-relevant question may not be whether *small* contexts are more beneficial for student learning than *large* contexts, but whether *medium-size* environments are preferable to large environments, at least in relation to class size." (Ready and Lee, 2007)





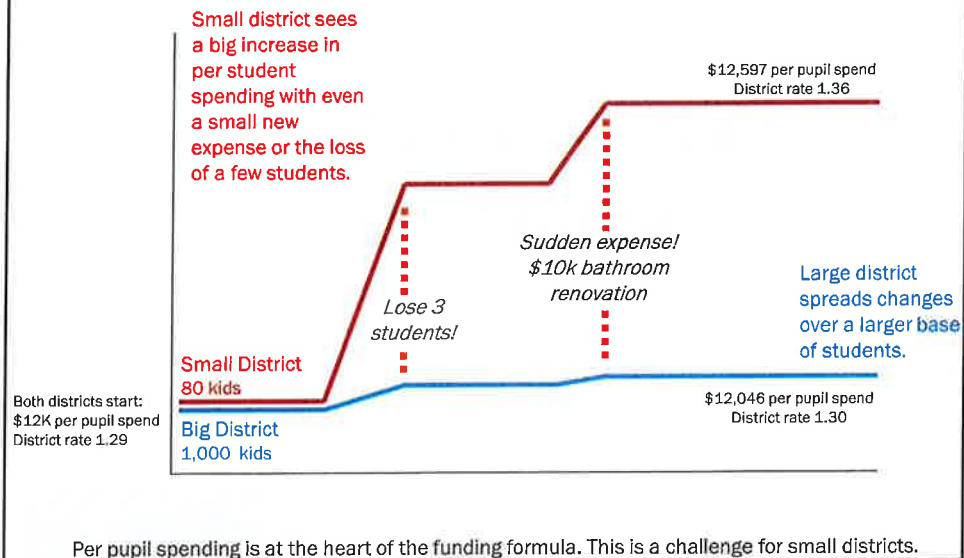
Notable performance differences between
“large” (>800 children) and “medium” (275-600
children) elementary schools

Points of learning per academic year



Does size matter?
(Finances)

SCALE matters



NY experience: merging can yield substantial cost savings for very small districts

Two districts,
300 pupils each
= **31%** cost savings



Two districts,
1500 pupils each
= **14%** cost savings



Duncombe and Yinger (2007)

Do we even have a
Vermont “system”?

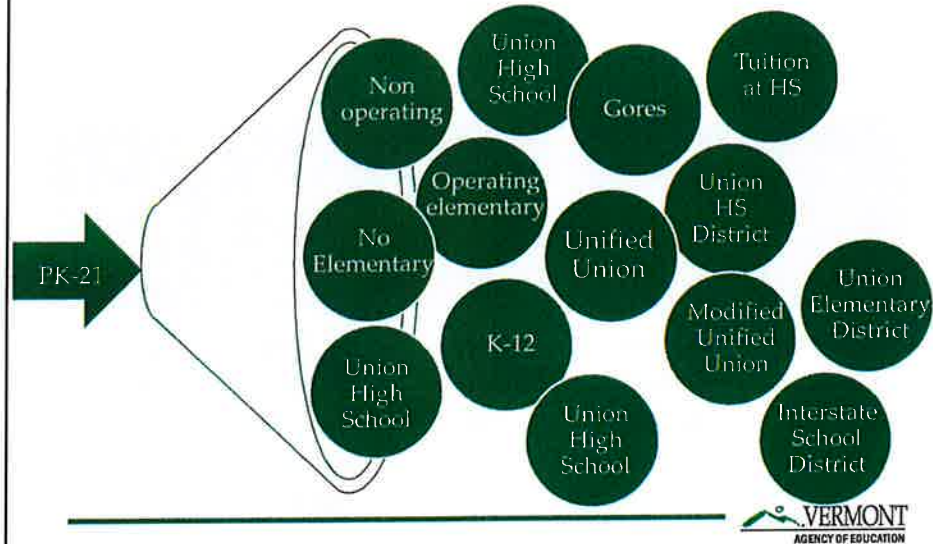


94% of all failure is the result of the
system, not people.

W. Edwards Deming



13 Current Forms of School Governance

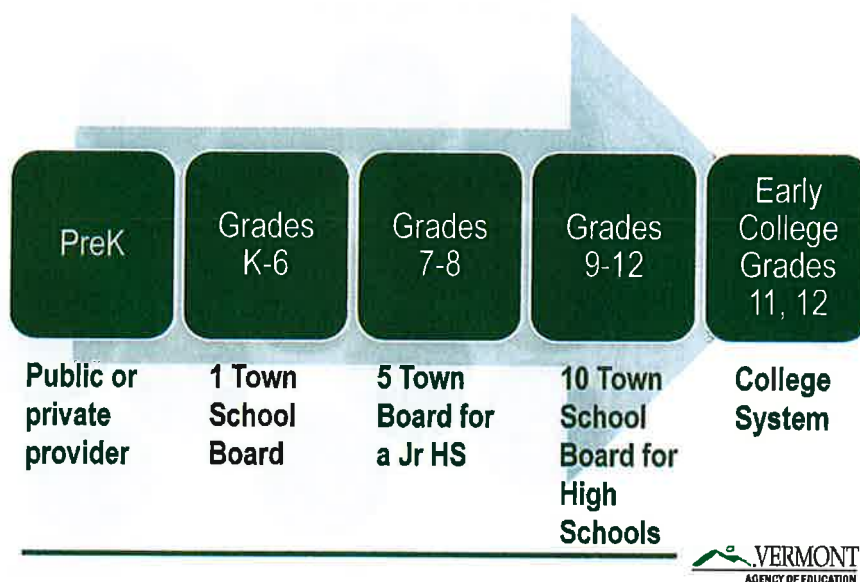


Jay, Morgan, Holland, Derby, Newport City, Troy, Newport Town, Westfield, Lowell, Charlestown, Brighton

Jay, Morgan, Holland, Derby, Newport City,

One home often belongs to multiple districts.

Incoherence of Governance?



Think about the job of the superintendent in this Supervisory Union:

Governance Structure

School districts within the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union are governed by 11 school boards:

- Danby - a town school district governed by a 3-person board for resident students in grades 7-12
- Dorset - a town school district governed by a 5-person board for resident students in grades K-12, operates The Dorset School (K-8)
- Manchester - a town school district governed by a 5-person board for resident students in grades K-12, operates the Manchester-Elementary Middle School (preK-8)
- Mountain Towns Regional Education District - a RED governed by an 8-person board for resident students in grades PreK-12 for the towns of Langrove, Londonderry, Peru, and Weston, operates the Flood Brook School (K-8)
- Mt. Tabor - a town school district governed by a 3-person board for resident students in grades 7-12
- Pawlet - a town school district governed by a 3-person board for resident students in grades 7-12
- Rupert - a town school district governed by a 3-person board for resident students in grades 7-12
- Sunderland - a town school district governed by a 5-person board for resident students in grades K-12, operates the Sunderland Elementary School (K-6)
- Union District #23 - a union school district composed of the Danby and Mt. Tabor town school districts for resident pupils in grades K-6, operates the Currier Memorial School (K-6)
- Union District #47 - a union school district composed of the Pawlet and Rupert town school districts for resident pupils in grades K-6, operates the Mettawee Community School (K-6)
- Winhall - a town school district governed by a 3-person board for resident students in grades K-12.

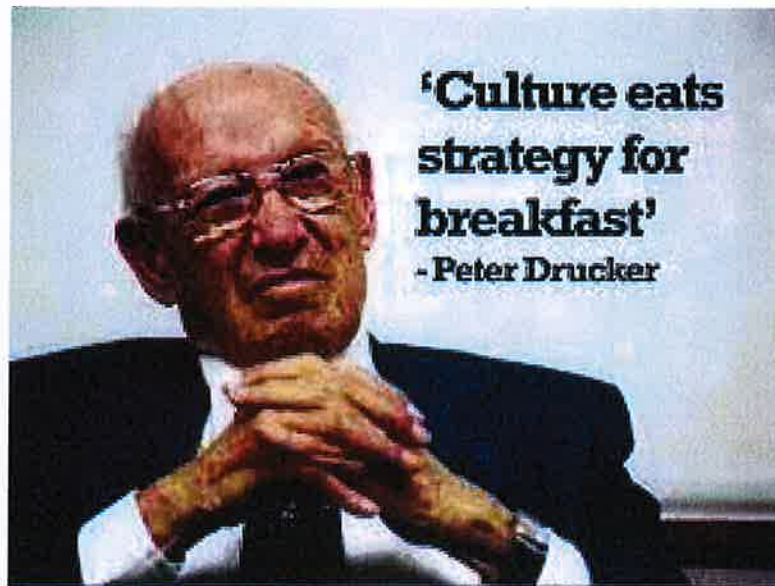
These districts belong to the Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union which is governed by a 21-person board: each of the above districts that operates a school sends 3 representatives to the supervisory union board and the other boards each have one representative.

From BRSU Website





So if we could save money, simplify governance, get better performance data and invest in closing opportunity gaps, why don't we?



Vermonters want a voice in their schools
and in the education of our children.
School identity is linked to community
identity.

How do we preserve VOICE in the context
of the acute pressures our schools face?



**Breakthroughs can and will happen here.
Our children deserve nothing less.**

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Let's get to work.



#GMImperative



