

The Green Mountain Imperative: A Message to Participants

In my role as the Secretary of Education for the State of Vermont, I ask you to join me in the call to action currently underway in our education system. While much of the discourse regarding our education system is focused on how funds are raised through the statewide property tax, we want to explore how those funds are spent through the lens of equity and opportunity for our students and our state.

You have been asked to participate in a statewide breakthrough summit on public education called the Green Mountain Imperative. This group of individuals is heavily invested in Vermont education. Along with the Vermont Business Roundtable, Building Bright Futures, the Vermont School Boards Association, Vermont Superintendents Association, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, the State Board of Education and Speaker of the House Shap Smith, I implore all Vermonters to take a critical look at our current system to see how we can ensure quality at a price we can all afford.

The summit is designed to engage Vermonters from all aspects of the system to explore innovative solutions aimed at four key initiatives: Equity, Quality, Efficiency and Systems Capacity.

Specifically, identifying:

- the educational opportunities to which we want every child to access;
- how Vermont's public education system is currently serving the children and taxpayers of Vermont;
- how to improve our systems to deliver educational opportunities in the most equitable and affordable way; and
- how to harness the commitment of our communities to better serve all Vermont's children.

To fully understand the reality of the situation we currently find ourselves in, I suggest you view the [Situational Analysis](#) by the Vermont School Boards Association. I joined meetings with school board members across the state, adding my analysis of the current situation we are in. The facts seem grim: our student enrollment continues to decline, and our education spending continues to increase. In districts experiencing declining enrollments, each March voters are faced with the challenge of either cutting spending



or seeing tax rates go up. School boards spend their time discussing what programs to trim, not how to improve outcomes for students.

We are delivering a 21st century education in a system designed for an agrarian society over 100 years old. Therefore, I ask: If we were to design an education delivery system from scratch, would we design it this way?

What opportunities are there for us to re-task the resources we have to ensure we can afford the high quality education our students deserve?

What elements of our current system are working well and must be protected? What are we all willing to put on the discussion table for the future of our students?

As a state and across communities, we need to work together to create school systems in all regions that are able to provide equitable services, address quality, and is one that taxpayers can support.

During this summit, we will work together following a strengths-based, solution-seeking approach to change known as Appreciative Inquiry. Through that lens, we will examine what we want to preserve, what we want to consider that is innovative and necessary, and how we get from where we are to where we want to be, in a manner that is in service to the collective good.

As members of the interested public here in Vermont, you are aware of the usual rhetoric and immobility that can often hinder change. Therefore, all invited participants to the summit must sign a pledge to commit to the goal of providing a high-quality education for every Vermont student, using the best monetary and personnel resources in that system. They must pledge to cooperate and collaborate, in respect of different perspectives and building on strengths, and to commit to achieving a breakthrough in public education.

Following the summit, a report and recommendations will be shared publicly. We hope it will inform lawmakers, school boards, educators, administrators, parents, voters, businesses and all Vermonters, and will provide us a pathway forward to the goal: keeping the promise to Vermont's children, in an efficient and effective system, in a manner that is sustainable and supported by us all.

Thank you for your work on this critical endeavor.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Holcombe
Secretary of Education

