

2020-2021 VSBA Board Resolutions Report

According to the VSBA Bylaws, resolutions are "positions taken by the Association on issues of importance to Vermont school boards. They may include recommendations for action by the VSBA, local school boards, the Legislature, the Executive Branch...or other decision-making bodies." Resolutions are guidance for staff and the VSBA board when they are working in the public policy arena or developing programs and services for our members. Resolutions are not legislation.

The VSBA Resolutions Committee and the VSBA Board make a recommendation to "Pass", "Do Not Pass" or "Take No Position" on any resolution submitted by a member school district board. All resolutions submitted by member boards will be submitted to the membership at our Annual Meeting, regardless of the recommendation of the Committee or the VSBA board. After careful consideration of resolutions submitted by member boards, the VSBA Resolutions Committee developed the following Resolutions Report and presented it to the VSBA board at the August board meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

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2020-2021 Resolutions Submitted to

The Vermont School Boards Association

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Resolution Proposal #1: Burlington SD
Section I, Subsection O – School Board Officers

WHEREAS: School board officers are representatives of the board;

AND WHEREAS: Vermont statutes in Title 16 refer to electing school board officers annually;

AND WHEREAS: Vermont statutes in Title 16 do not explicitly allow for changes to board officers in the year after they are elected;

BE IT RESOLVED: The VSBA propose and promote to the Vermont legislature to update Title 16 to allow for school boards to remove and replace board officers after they are elected, via a fair and judicious process.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: PASS

Resolution Proposal #2: Bennington-Rutland SU
Section II, Subsection Q – Broadband Access for Education

WHEREAS: Equity of opportunity must always remain a key goal for the education we offer for all of our students and families; and technology has become increasingly important as a tool used to provide educational opportunities to our students;

AND WHEREAS: The current COVID-19 pandemic has required our schools to adjust to a method of teaching that is heavily reliant on distance learning and this shift to distance learning has made clear that inequities exist in our communities in terms of access to reasonable or acceptable broadband services sufficient to support true distance learning;

AND WHEREAS: Some students and families lack any access to acceptable broadband services, and other students and families may lack the financial capacity to afford acceptable broadband services even where they may be available;

AND WHEREAS: It has become abundantly clear that this inequity of access to acceptable broadband service for some students and families has exacerbated the already existing inequities that we have been striving to eliminate in terms of educational opportunity for all of our students and families;

BE IT RESOLVED: That providing universal access to high speed broadband services for every student and family in Vermont must be a goal of the highest order for the government of the State of Vermont. And, where access to such broadband services is available but cannot be reasonably afforded by families with students in our schools, that some form of financial support should be made available to those families (although not as an additional unfunded cost to the school districts) to ensure that the students in those families have the high speed broadband service necessary to support their education.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: PASS

Resolution Proposal #3: Mount Mansfield UUSD

Section II, Subsection R – Hold harmless student education during a State of Emergency

WHEREAS: The economic conditions and resulting loss of anticipated revenue during a state of emergency, for example as related to Vermont’s “Stay home, Stay Safe” response to the COVID-19 pandemic will place significant pressure on lawmakers to cut educational funding and educational programs;

AND WHEREAS: Operating our schools in a safe manner during a state of emergency places increased demand on our resources.

BE IT RESOLVED: Vermont’s PK-12 students should be held harmless from reductions to the education funds available to school districts. Vermont’s school districts should be given the necessary resources to operate their schools in a safe manner during a declared state of emergency in Vermont.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: PASS

Resolution Proposal #4: Mount Mansfield UUSD

Section I, Subsection P – Governance of Career & Technical Education (CTE) Schools

WHEREAS: All of our school districts have an interest in providing career and technical education programs to their students, however, the majority of districts in Vermont who are “sending school districts” lack the direct control and governance of those schools to adequately influence their direction.

BE IT RESOLVED: A study should be conducted to better understand the variety of CTE governing models and budgeting structures that exist across the State. The study would recommend changes to enable all school districts, regardless of hosting a CTE or not, to have shared representative governance over the operation and budgeting of the CTE schools in their region.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: DO NOT PASS

Resolution Proposal #5: Mount Mansfield UUSD
(a) Section I, Subsection Q – Effective and efficient board work

5.(a)

WHEREAS: State statutes and regulations limit what school boards can delegate to their superintendents, making board work not as streamlined as it could otherwise be.

BE IT RESOLVED: State statutes and regulations should be reviewed and amended to provide school districts with greater flexibility to delegate responsibilities to their superintendents.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: DO NOT PASS

5.(b)

WHEREAS: State statute (17 V.S.A. § 2680) requires that a floor vote be held at a district meeting in order to make a decision by Australian ballot, essentially two votes to make one decision;

AND WHEREAS: Merged districts are considerably larger in footprint making it more difficult, and potentially divisive, to select a single location to conduct a floor vote;

AND WHEREAS: Many district voters are unable to participate in district meetings due to location, time constraints, or health concerns and are more likely to participate by Australian ballot either at a polling location or by absentee ballot.

BE IT RESOLVED: State statute (17 V.S.A. § 2680) should be amended to provide school districts with the option to engage voters directly with Australian ballot questions without first conducting a district meeting in order to make a decision by Australian ballot.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: PASS

Resolution Proposal #6: Blue Mountain Union SD
Section II, Subsection S – Emotional Wellness of Students

WHEREAS: Schools in Vermont underwent rapid change in March 2020 due to Covid-19. Research shows that children and adolescents are experiencing mental distress due to the disruptions of the closure of schools, activities, and maintaining social and physical distancing. The overall social-emotional impact on children is unclear, but it seems districts and schools need to prepare for the impact of increased trauma once at-school learning reopens in some capacity this fall. Implementing programs in place that allow for the integration of social- emotional learning and trauma-informed practices could help in mitigating behavioral issues. The extended summer slide that is occurring during Covid-19 is not only affecting learning development but exacerbating already present emotional challenges. If left unaddressed, the psychological impact on children and adolescents can have exacerbating effects.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, at least 20 percent of students between the ages of 12 and 18 report emotional or physical bullying at school. Research shows that bullying can have adverse long-term health outcomes for both victims and perpetrators, including depression, anxiety and physical, behavioral and emotional problems. One of the potential benefits of remote learning has been relief for those struggling from social aggression. Schools have an opportunity, to create meaningful change in their cultures by investing in mental health services, empathy development, diversity and inclusion programs, and emotional wellness activities. For these reasons and more, providing increased state funding for in-school mental health services and programs for all students is imperative.

BE IT RESOLVED: The VSBA urges the General Assembly to expand funding support to local schools to increase the availability of mental health counseling, emotional wellness, and psychological supports to students as VT schools return to class during the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. These efforts will further support schools meeting Vermont’s Agency of Education’s Education Quality Standards, specifically Healthy and Safe Schools through the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model’s domains 4 and 7.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: PASS

Resolution Proposal #7: VSBA Resolutions Committee

Section III, Subsection K – Equity and Anti-racism

WHEREAS: We are deeply saddened and outraged by the recent killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor and violence against black people. The subsequent protests have shined a spotlight on the harmful effects of racism and inequality. Furthermore, the public response has highlighted the racial trauma that our black students, families, staff, and communities have not only endured for centuries but continue to face today;

AND WHEREAS: We must recognize that racism and hate have no place in our organizations, schools and society. We must understand that racism is systemic, and it is unconsciously and consciously rooted into our institutions, policies, and practices. Consequently, we acknowledge that we must look at policies and practices through an anti-racist and equity lens to address traces of racism and inequity that still exist;

AND WHEREAS: We must better educate ourselves and seek to educate the community on the historical and current impact of racism and discrimination on our organization, society and communities, as well as understand our role in perpetuating such inequity. Through continuous professional development and opportunities for honest dialogue and listening sessions, we hope to build partnerships focused on overcoming racism and other barriers. By doing so, we can create opportunities to ensure that each person has the tools and supports needed to thrive;

AND WHEREAS: We must advocate to advance civil rights and cultivate an anti-racist organizational climate necessary to meet the needs of ALL of our staff and community members, no matter their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language ability, disability, and other identities, deserve to feel safe, to feel seen, and to feel affirmed;

AND WHEREAS: We must recognize that public education in general, and public education in Vermont, is not immune to systemic oppression and racism and that as leaders of Vermont's education system, we have a duty to recognize and address our biases and engage in necessary conversations about Vermont schools' complicity in systemic racism. We have a duty to prepare our staff and communities to confront injustice, participate in civil discourse, and participate in the ongoing effort to truly realize liberty and justice for all.

BE IT RESOLVED: The VSBA should demonstrate and promote the unequivocal, collective responsibility for equitable and inclusive education environments by recognizing, responding, and speaking out against injustice and racial inequity. In support of this goal, the VSBA commits to the following:

1. promote and support implicit bias training for all faculty and staff in Vermont public schools, including athletic and co-curricular personnel, and officials across the state (see H.714 of 2020); and
2. promote professional learning for school leaders and school board members that include but not be limited to: Equity Literacy, Curriculum Audits, Review Protocols for Examining Bias in School Policies and Procedures, Culturally Responsive Instruction and School Culture, Student Leadership and Voice, and Examining Power and Privilege in Schools.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: PASS

Resolution Proposal #8: CHAMPLAIN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Section III, Subsection L - School Stabilization: Student Mobility and Resilience

WHEREAS: 16 V.S.A. § 1075 defines a Vermont student’s legal residence and responsibility and payment of education;

AND WHEREAS: in any given year a number of high school students change legal residence to a different district;

AND WHEREAS: 16 VSA § 822a provides mechanisms for public high school choice but does not allow a receiving school to guarantee placement for a current student whose legal residence should change, nor can the district count that student in their average daily membership (ADM) even if accepted through school choice lottery;

AND WHEREAS: studies have shown that by allowing for a student to retain placement even though a student changes residence, school stability policies can help a student avoid social, emotional, and cultural costs associated with a move to a new school;

AND WHEREAS: further educational and psychological research related to resilience identify school-based relationships, such as with peers and teachers, as an influential protective factor that helps mitigate potentially negative effects incurred through disruptions in placement continuity.

BE IT RESOLVED: For those entering or currently enrolled high school students whose fixed, permanent legal residence changes to a different fixed, permanent legal residence and who wish to remain in their current district, the General Assembly should provide an

additional mechanism beyond 16 V.S.A § 822 to allow for students to complete their secondary education within the district where they were registered during any year in Grades 8-11. This mechanism should provide a process by which the current district retains the student in their ADM count, versus transferring the ADM to the new district of legal residence. Nothing in this mechanism shall apply to students eligible for homeless status, who are protected under law.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: PASS

Resolution Proposal #9: OTTER VALLEY USD & ESSEX-WESTFORD SD
*Section II, Subsection T - Federal and State Funding Obligations,
Educational Equity, Funding Adequacy, Unfunded Mandates*

WHEREAS, the nation, states and local governments have undergone the enormous, human, institutional and financial costs and pressures of the coronavirus; and

WHEREAS, in times of peril there is a moral and human imperative for all levels of government to assist individuals and society in meeting fundamental human needs; and

WHEREAS, recent events reaffirm the broad historical purposes of education in building and sustaining a democracy which necessarily expands our work to enhancing the public good beyond strictly pedagogical purposes; and

WHEREAS, this public good requires the re-affirmation of equity for all groups and individuals that comprise our commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, various levels of government have provided trillions of dollars to assist businesses and other organizations; and

WHEREAS, PreK-12 public schools must continue and expand assistance to children and adults in traditional and non-traditional ways; and

WHEREAS, citizens have adopted their budgets in almost all towns and face unforeseen dramatic increases in expenses; and

WHEREAS, the health and economic effects of the coronavirus are expected to persist for some time,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the school boards of Vermont request the state and federal governments provide the financial resources promised in pre-existing laws as well as provide for new burdens placed on public schools by the pandemic and beyond, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the state and federal governments must provide this financial support in a manner that ensures our children receive the necessary academic, physical and emotional resources, not by privileges and advantages for some but by the opportunities we generously bestow upon all.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: PASS