

# From the Board Room

A newsletter for members of the Vermont School Boards Association, 2 Prospect Street, Suite #4, Montpelier VT 05602  
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*Articles printed represent diverse points of view and may be controversial in nature. It is the belief of the Association that the democratic process functions best through discussions which challenge and stimulate thinking on the part of the reader. Therefore, materials published present the ideas/beliefs of those who write them and are not necessarily the views or policies of the VSBA unless so stated. This newsletter is distributed at no charge to all members of the Association. Contact the Association by calling 802-223-3580.*

## Legislature Considers Changes to Education Laws in Several Areas

by David Cyprian, VSBA/VSA/VPA Legislative Analyst

Friday, March 14 was "cross-over" day at the State House, meaning that (with exceptions always possible) beginning the following week, only bills that have passed out of at least one committee can be considered by the General Assembly. This requirement creates a flurry of activity leading up to cross-over, as legislators and committees work to meet the deadline. This year, several potentially major changes to education law and policy were approved by either the House or Senate Education Committee prior to cross-over. Here is a status-review of some of the potentially significant bills still being considered as of the end of the day on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

### House Repeals Two Vote Requirement; Favors Strengthened Excess Spending Threshold

When the Miscellaneous Education Amendments bill (H.864), developed by the House Education Committee, came up for a vote on the House floor on February 28, an amendment was introduced to repeal the "two-vote" requirement enacted last year as part of Act 82. A second amendment was introduced to support the repeal but also to lower the excess spending threshold from 125% to 123% in FY10 and FY11, and to 120% for FY12 and beyond. The House easily passed the second amendment and the repeal was approved by the House on a vote of 99 to 38.

The House acted to repeal the "two-vote" requirement after hearing from school board members, school officials and others about how the requirement would be misleading to voters and disrespectful towards the work of school boards, among other concerns. Given a strict choice between the excess spending thresh-

old and the "two-vote" requirement, the former is a more equitable, predictable and preferable device for cost containment. Full repeal of "two-vote" has a long road to travel. The Governor has not disguised his displeasure, calling the House action to undo last year's law "shameful," and has promised to veto the bill should it get to his desk. The House vote was strong enough to make override of a veto by that body at least possible.

H.864 is now in the Senate. Last year, the "two-vote" scheme had significant support in the Senate, where it passed with 23 Senators supporting it, four opposing, and three absent. Nevertheless, at least some Senators have been listening to their constituents and might yet be persuaded to consider an alternative to the Act 82 two-vote provision. Within a few weeks, we should know a great deal more about the Senate's willingness to re-think the rhetoric that surrounded Act 82 from the outset.

### Senate Committee Approves Dramatic Overhaul of State-Level Education System

Frustrated by what they describe as a "lack of leadership and accountability," the Senate Education Committee, by a 3-1-1 vote, has proposed sweeping and dramatic changes to the state-level education governance structure in Vermont. Currently, the Governor appoints members to the State Board of Education for six-year terms, and the State Board is charged with the responsibility of hiring the Commissioner. A bill passed out of the Senate committee on March 14<sup>th</sup>, would eliminate the State Board altogether, "elevate" the Department of Educa-

(LAWS continued on page 12...)

# VSBA Directors Profile Series

## Deep Sea Division

Pop quiz time: Have you ever gone swimming in the ocean? Did you do any underwater diving? OK, how about diving not to see a colorful fish or a coral reef, but to lay concrete for industrial development? VSBA 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Ken Fredette has – he’s been professionally diving for years as a commercial builder and jack of all underwater-trades. For example, he participated in the underwater repair effort that occurred in April 2005 when a pipe burst in the New North End of Burlington, causing millions of gallons of sew-

carries air, communication systems, and even hot water to keep the diver warm for his two- to four-hour shift down below.

During this period Ken married his wife of 25 years, Kate, and once the couple had their first child, Ken decided it was best for him to give up his subtropical employment and settle down in Vermont full time. During most of the late 1980s and 90s, Ken worked as a technician for Sears and then for a commercial appliance company. Eventually the diving bug bit him again, and Ken has resumed commercial diving in recent years, although he now works for M & K Diving, a North Clarendon based company that dives primarily in the New England area.

Ken and Kate raised their three children in their Wallingford home. Their daughters both graduated from Mill River High School and attended the University of Vermont. Their son is currently a student at Mill River. The Fredettes enjoy frequent hiking and camping, and Ken is able to take a hunting trip or two each year. They have attended SolarFest, hosted in nearby Tinmouth, Vermont, every year since its founding in 1995. SolarFest is a unique blend of a music and renewable energy festival.

Ken was appointed to his local Wallingford school board in 1998, not long after he had publicly lauded the work of the board at Town Meeting. He was re-elected several times since, serving as the board chair for six years before stepping down this month to focus on his other board responsibilities. Ken says the toughest part of being a board member is the hiring and firing of staff members – both processes can be agonizing. He also recognizes that there is a lot of misinformation about property taxes and school budgets out there and believes it is very important to educate the public on what cost drivers are really factoring into their tax bills. He must be doing something right; this month Wallingford voters

overwhelmingly approved their school budget despite the fact that the district had to enter the excess spending threshold penalty box for the first time.

Ken has also chaired the Rutland South Supervisory Union board for several years, and that experience helped to shape his views on school consolidation. During his time at RSSU, an effort got underway that would have consolidated the three town schools and union high school into a single district. Ultimately, by a vote of the electorate last year, the effort to consolidate failed. Ken doesn’t believe the reasons why are that complicated; Shrewsbury taxpayers would have seen increased education tax bills, and all the towns were worried about losing their community school. He told *From the Board Room* that unless a consolidation plan includes a mechanism to stabilize tax rates, and allows for individual towns to decide whether or not to close their school, that consolidation will never work in the minds local voters.

Keep an eye out for this thoughtful VSBA leader in the hills and campgrounds around Wallingford and Rutland, or at the bottom of a lake near you. 🚌



Ken Fredette  
VSBA 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

age to flow into the Winooski River. Ken was born in Rutland, the son of Kenneth Fredette Sr., an employee of the Howe Scale Company and later the city school district. His mother Carolyn worked many years for Moore Business Forms. Ken has two older sisters who, like him, continue to live in the Rutland area. He attended local public schools, earning good marks, and his was the second class to graduate the Rutland Town Elementary School, which was brand new at the time.

Several years after graduation from Rutland High School, Ken learned the diving trade by attending the Commercial Diving Center outside Los Angeles, California in 1981. Afterward, Ken took diving jobs for several years on offshore oil rigs and other projects in the Gulf of Mexico. Diving for Ken means donning a sophisticated wetsuit with an “umbilical cord” back to the surface that

### Reminders Has your board...

- ◆ Appointed a GRN (Government Relations Network) representative and reported the name to the VSBA? (Email required)
- ◆ Implemented the 2007 Legislative requirement to include gender identity in the district Harassment policy? If not, please see the model policy on the VSBA website.

# What Schools Can Do To Protect Their Students From Online Bullying

By Tim Peterson

One typical school day, the high school principal receives a visit from an angry parent. It seems the parent's son has been the object of a practical joke and is refusing to come to school until something is done.

When the principal asks what the problem is, she is directed to go to a Web site that she recognizes as one that students regularly use for chat. Once on the site, the parent directs the principal to a short video and asks her to play it.

What the principal sees is a video of this parent's son acting as if he were in a Star Wars movie scene. Stifling a laugh, the principal says that she will investigate and get back to the parent as soon as possible.

Once the parent has left, the principal looks at the video once more. It is obviously footage taken at school on the stage; the student in the video is a member of the AV club and is known for helping to videotape school events. The parent had said that the video is now "all over the Web" and is causing his son untold mental anguish. So the principal does an Internet search and finds that there are over 5,750,000 hits!

How should she respond? What responsibility and liability, if any, does the school have? How could this have been prevented?

## Real-life Cyberbullying

This scenario, while based on a real case, is rapidly becoming an issue that is facing nearly every school official today. After all, we are living in a digitally connected age where children are natives and we adults are the immigrants.

The real life "star" of this video, was the target of worldwide mockery when a private video he made of himself practicing his "lightsaber" moves was uploaded to the Net by his friends at school.

He was teased so much about the video, that he dropped out of school and finished the semester at a local children's psychiatric ward. His parents filed suit against the families of his four classmates for damages of \$160,000. According to the suit, he "will be under psychiatric care for an indefinite amount of time."

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case of misuse of the power of the Internet. A seventh grade boy in New York made a video of himself singing a song to a girl he liked, who promptly posted it all over the Internet.

In another case, a sophomore girl in New York was asked not to come back to school this fall after she wrote a racist comment in an instant message to a friend about a boy who jilted her. The comment ignited a controversy within the school that spring.

All of this bullying took place within the confines of what used to be a safe haven for children: their own homes. Parents of these children don't know what to do or how to help their sons and daughters. When they turn to schools for help, there is often little that can be done.

What can a school do? One's first instinct may be that this is really a case of Free Speech. As one delves into the case law of the First Amendment, one must look at one of the primary tests as determined by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* in 1969: was there any substantial disruption of educational activities caused by the speech?

(See editor's note at end of article.)

What, if any, authority do schools have about such cases? More questions are now raised about the nature of the infraction. Was school owned equipment used in either producing or distributing the video, image or text? If so, then the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is the document to look at.

By both state and federal mandates, school districts must have an AUP. Contained within that document should be language about both the unacceptable use of school equipment and a statement about harassing or unacceptable behavior while

*BULLYING continued on page 5...*



## Vermont Internet Safety Summit: How To Keep The Internet Safe For Our Kids! April 14, 2008 \*\*\* Statehouse, Montpelier



9:30am - 3:00pm

Topics include: Internet Social Networking, Putting a Face on Victimization, Vermont School Crisis Presentation

For more information contact:

Aimee B. Stearns, U.S. Attorney's Office \*\*\* 802-951-6725 \*\*\* [aimee.stearns@usdoj.gov](mailto:aimee.stearns@usdoj.gov)

using the school's equipment. If the bullying students did use school equipment and the district can prove that the student has been made aware of the AUP, then that is all the principal would need to act upon. This then becomes like any other discipline case.

If school equipment is not being used, can the school do anything? This issue now can be treated as any other bullying case - just take the technology out of the picture and it becomes like cases schools have addressed before. Since the school acts in loco parentis (in place of parents), the school has responsibility before, during and after school until a child gets home. This means that the school is responsible for children and can act to protect them.

Undoubtedly, the best type of protection from bullying is not having it occur at all. A good, strong anti-bullying curriculum will go a long way to alleviating this problem.

### Tracking the Cyberbully

There are many disconcerting concepts involved in this type of harassment. First and foremost is the anonymity of the bully. Technology allows the bully to be a safe distance from the victim and seldom allows a victim to strike back.

No longer does the bully have to be physically large in order to intimidate. With the ability of students to create and abandon new instant messenger, e-mail and chat room accounts, it is nearly impossible to track individual actions.

Oftentimes, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have the legal mechanisms in place to prosecute users who break the rules but there is little time to do this difficult work. ISPs also find it difficult to draw the line between rude behavior and harassing behavior. In addition, ISPs have a higher burden of proof, as this is a First Amendment issue.

Another issue that is continuing to confront society is the presence of cell phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs) with cameras built in. There are a huge number of is-

# 1 in 3

According to a report released this summer by the PEW Internet and American Life Project, **32 percent of teenage Internet users say they have been threatened or potentially placed in harm's way by an online activity.**

These dangers include: receiving threatening messages, having their private e-mails or text messages forwarded without their permission, having an embarrassing picture posted without their permission or having rumors about them spread online.

Boys and girls from ages 12-17 were questioned for the study. Out of all the age groups, it was found that girls ages 15-17 were at the highest risk to experience online bullying. The study claims that 41 percent of girls ages 15-17 experienced some form of cyberbullying or were in a situation in which personal information was forwarded or sent to unknown parties.

According to the report, the least likely age group to experience some form of cyberbullying was boys ages 12-14 with 22 percent.

The most common form of online harassment was the posting or forwarding of a private e-mail. Of those teens surveyed, 15 percent said this had happened to them. The least common form of online bullying was the posting of an embarrassing picture online without the person's permission. Only 6 percent of those surveyed said they had experienced this form of online bullying.

This report also includes testimony from teens about why they bullied someone online. The report can be viewed online at [pewinternet.org/PPF/r/216/report\\_display.asp](http://pewinternet.org/PPF/r/216/report_display.asp).

sues with these pieces of technology. As camera phones become increasingly affordable, embarrassing photographs of students continue to find their way on the Internet.

Finally, children do not know or understand the implications of pressing the send button. How many times have adults sent an e-mail, only to realize that they sent it to the wrong person?

Once the send button is pushed, there is no way for the message, picture or video to be retracted. In the age of large file-sharing services, an inappropriate message or image can find its way into thousands of inboxes within seconds. There is no time for reflection once the send button is hit!

Ultimately, this issue goes back to teaching children what is acceptable and what is not.

Unfortunately, mistakes that were made and seen by only a few people are now potentially being seen by millions. Schools need to view inappropriate behavior - not technology - as the problem.

*Editor's Note: This article was reprinted from the Wisconsin Association of School Board's January newsletter. Tim Peterson is the director of instruction at the Portage, Wisconsin Community School District. He holds a doctorate in educational leadership from Edgewood College. 🚗*

### MORE READING:

*"District Regulation of Student Speech" (September 2002); "Discipline of Students for Content of Personal Web Sites" (May 2000) and "Control of Curriculum Curtails Rights of Speech" (March 1996).*

# PROOF POSITIVE

By Peter Herman, VSBA President

In the last issue of *From the Boardroom* I wrote about the “legends and fantasies” that are afflicted on public education by those who have found it convenient to use public schools and school boards as whipping boys (and girls) to serve their own political and ideological ends. My analysis was based on solid evidence gathered from a variety of sources, including the Legislative Joint Fiscal Office (JFO), the State Department of Education, and State Department of Taxes data. Since then, the independent Public Assets Institute has put it all together in a consolidated report that definitively says what school board members and other educational leaders have known and reported for some time – that the current education finance system is doing what it was intended to do, namely reducing the spending disparities among Vermont towns and shifting resources toward those least able to pay. Specifically the report, entitled [School Budget Voters Are Minding Their Own Purse Strings](#), verifies that:

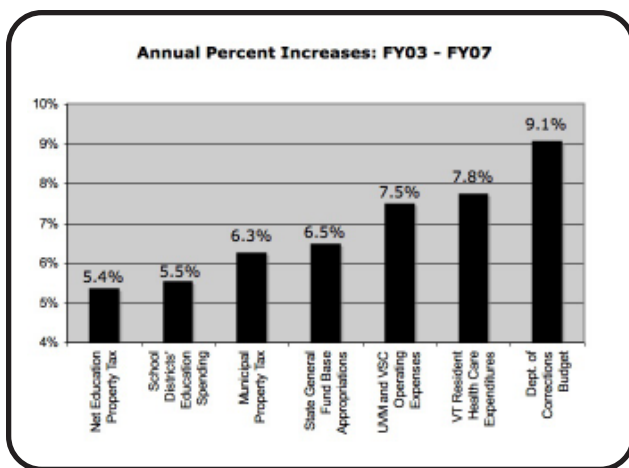
1. Getting more money from the Ed Fund than other towns does not correlate with increased spending. Local voters evidently do not think that getting more state money is some sort of free ride – they pay careful attention to how much is spent, regardless of the source.
2. Acts 60 and 68 are working as they were intended to, with much

less disparity between property wealthy districts and those districts with much less wealth.

3. The constant repetition that the world has changed and that increases in spending in one town impact every other town in the state is a gross, misleading exaggeration. The facts are that increased spending falls almost entirely on the individual town with minimal effect on the rest of the state.

If you haven't yet read the report, I encourage you check it out at the Public Assets webpage at [www.publicassets.org](http://www.publicassets.org) (click on Reports).

Besides the PAI report, other evidence of cost control in education is emerging. A powerful graphic prepared by the VSBA, along with the Vermont Superintendents Association and the JFO, shows that of the major public expenditures in Vermont, **school costs have increased the least over the past four years** – less than overall state general fund spending, less than municipal budgets, less than healthcare, less than the state Corrections budgets, and of course, far, far less than fuel oil. So whatever the contributors to the problems of “affordability” that Vermont might have, school costs are the least of them. This graphic was spotted hanging above the door to House Speaker Gaye Symington's state-house office recently, and we have reprinted it here.



Of course it is incumbent on school boards and other education leaders to operate schools as efficiently as possible while working to achieve outcomes that serve all Vermonters, particularly our chil-

dren. And I believe that we are doing that pretty well. Can school costs be lowered or at least can the rate of increase be slowed? The answer is yes, in two ways. First, there are certainly further efficiencies that can be realized without doing great damage to school programs and results, but most of these will yield relatively small amounts of money. (They do not, by the way, include closing small schools or getting rid of local school boards through consolidation). The second way, which *will* result in large reductions in school costs, might be accomplished by:

1. Increasing class size in our elementary schools to something over 30 kids per class instead of the current, much praised level of something near 20.
2. Determining that some kids just can't learn and cutting them out of the education system. This of course flies in the face of state and federal law as well as research that demonstrates that all kids can benefit from a good education
3. Cutting teacher salaries so that our best qualified educators will take other jobs that pay a living wage. An equivalent measure would be to drastically reduce or eliminate public support for health insurance, effectively a salary cut.
4. Eliminating fluff courses like foreign languages, music, art, and advanced math
5. Cutting out positions like guidance counselors, nurses, and librarians that are criticized by those who say “We didn't have a librarian when I was in school”.

But you get the picture. Small schools, too many administrators, inattention by school boards, or uncaring voters do not drive school costs. They are driven by the things that make Vermont schools among the very best in the country – good teachers, strong programs, relatively small classes, local concern for our kids. These not only are things that we can afford, these are things that we **must** afford. 🚌

# VSBA Around Vermont

By: Winton Goodrich, VSBA Associate Director

## Governance Initiatives

The Windsor Northwest SU Board is exploring options for convening a governance study. The SU Board is looking at the impact of declining enrollment and increasing costs for Rochester, Pittsfield, Granville, Hancock, and Bethel. As a result of a meeting with the VSBA, the Pittsfield Board warned a Town Meeting vote, which was passed on March 4<sup>th</sup>, to research governance change options for both the elementary and high school. One of the possible outcomes of the study would be to end school choice and create a formal governance relationship with an area school district.

The VSBA staff continues to facilitate a phase I governance study with the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union. The Twin Valley School Board has created a Facilities Committee that has developed three building utilization options for Whitingham and Wilmington. The Committee has opened the door to the Halifax Board to consider including their students in the study. An architect is currently computing building costs which will enable the Committee and Board to further refine options for voters. One of the options would close the Twin Valley High School building in Wilmington and move all high school students for the two towns to Whitingham. If voters support this action, the Twin Valley Joint Contract School would receive 50% state aid, due to consolidation of school buildings. Facilities consolidation is not included in the legislative moratorium on state aid.

The VSBA has contracted with Laura Soares to facilitate a governance study with Underhill, Underhill I.D., and Jericho School Districts.

The VSBA has contracted with Holden Waterman to facilitate a governance study with the Hartford and Hartland School Districts. Hartland is a K-8 district that has high school choice. They are considering developing a high school governance re-

lationship with Hartford, which is a K-12 district. The complication here is Hartland is currently one of the member districts in the Windsor Southeast SU. The three options that are being researched are the creation of a:

- ◆ Joint contract district;
- ◆ Union school district; or
- ◆ Unified union school district.

The governance study officially started on March 13<sup>th</sup>.

The VSBA staff provided governance options for the Norton School Board which included giving up school choice and creating formal elementary or high school governance structures with:

- ◆ Canaan;
- ◆ North Country Union High School; and/or
- ◆ Island Pond Elementary.

The Norton Board is interested in acquiring more control over cost per pupil and transportation expenses. The Board also wants a greater voice in governance decision making at the school(s) where their students attend.

The VSBA staff worked with the Grafton Elementary Board to explore governance options for seceding from the Bellows Falls Union High School District.

## Policy Governance

Laura Soares is facilitating a Policy Governance implementation process with the Hartford School District.

Laura Soares and Robin Scheu facilitated a "policy blitz" with the Randolph Union High School in late February. The District is well on their way to fully implementing Policy Governance.

Other districts that are at varied stages of Policy Governance consideration are Woodstock Union and Lamoille Union High Schools, Bethel, and Essex Town School Districts.

## Superintendent Searches

The VSBA completed superintendent searches in Southwest Vermont and Washington West Supervisory Unions. Neither SU was able to attract a permanent superintendent. The SVSU hired George Carpenter, current Assis-

tant Superintendent for Special Services, to serve an interim role next year. Washington West is interviewing two interim candidates, with the finalist also to serve an interim role. Franklin Central Supervisory Union has an offer for a permanent superintendent on the table.

The Barre SU has hired John Bacon, current superintendent in Caledonia Central, to lead their Supervisory Union, starting July 1<sup>st</sup>.

The VSBA has contracted with the Rutland Southwest SU Board to lead their search, which began on March 10<sup>th</sup>.

The Caledonia Central SU is facilitating their search process internally.

Rivendell and Winooski Districts have chosen to do some internal restructuring and will not undertake search processes this year. 🚌

## Charting the Course

*Helping youth with disabilities move successfully to work, college and adult life.*

**Killington Grand Hotel**  
**June 4, 2008**  
**8:00am - 3:30pm**

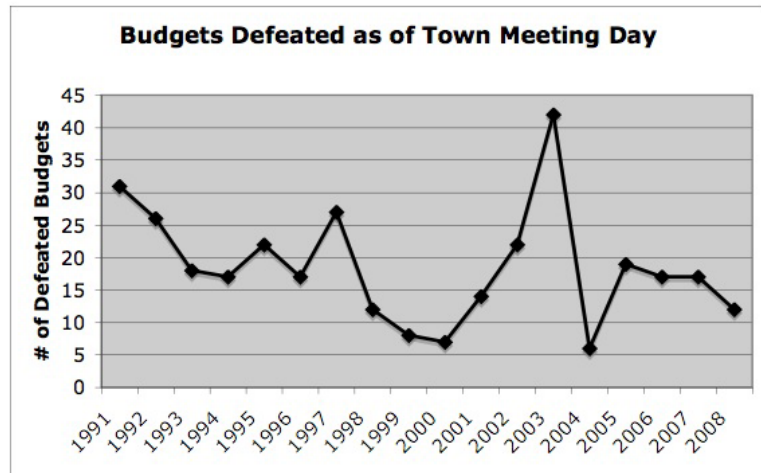
Join parents, policy makers, youth, professionals and educators at this daylong conference, featuring Keynote speaker Scott Chesney, well-known motivational speaker and individual with a disability.

*Co-presented by Vermont Parent Information Center and Parent to Parent of Vermont. For more information visit [www.vtpic.com](http://www.vtpic.com).*

# School Budget Vote Results Town Meeting 2008

## A Summary from the Vermont Superintendents Association

Each spring, Anne Montgomery at the Superintendents Association strives to accurately and quickly collect tallies on which school budgets get defeated and which pass. Thanks to her efforts, we present to you the budget vote results from this year. As of Town Meeting Day, **the electorate approved 95% of the budgets proposed and defeated 12.** 251 school budgets for school year 2007-08 have been voted on and 239 passed. For the second year in a row, Vermont voters approved school budgets totaling less than 4.5% in spending increases. Last year, the increase was 4.1%. This year's increase cannot yet be calculated exactly, because some towns have yet to vote. 🚌



**Defeated Budgets, as of Town Meeting Day 2008**

Alburgh*	Kirby°	Rutland Town*
Brighton	Milton*	Sutton
East Haven*	Morgan	Springfield*
Hancock	Richford*	Victory°

\* Vote by Australian Ballot  
° Tuition-only District

## School Management Resource Center

by Joe Zimmerman, Vermont School Board Insurance Trust Director

VSBIT Corner

**On April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> VSBIT will hold its 11th Annual Spring Conference.** The conference will cover issues concerning both Human Resource and Physical Plant Management. The conference will be held at the Stoweflake Resort and Conference Center. Contact the VSBIT office (223-5040) if you need more information. Highlights of the Conference agenda follow:

### AIA OWNER/ARCHITECT AND OWNER/CONTRACTOR

- Upcoming dramatic changes to the AIA Contracts regarding owner/architect and owner/contractor will be explained.

### CLERK OF THE WORKS' DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Panel members will share their experience and the knowledge they have learned from projects they participated in. The Vermont School Construction Planning Guide, Appendix H will be used as a reference.

### AVOID WRONGFUL TERMINATION AND RETALIATION LAWSUITS

- Problem avoidance and poor communication lead to the three scourges of labor relations: improper performance evaluation, due process denial, and wrongful termination.

### SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN SCHOOLS

- School administrators, teachers and staff want to keep students safe from predators in their midst, but simply don't know how to identify the behaviors that indicate sexual misconduct is occurring.

### HUMAN RESOURCE JEOPARDY

- Attendees will participate in a HR related game, fashioned after the popular television show. 🚌

# School Board Professional Development DVDs Now Available!

Is your board concerned about passing the school budget? Are you a new school board chair? Do you need clarification on roles and responsibilities for officials in the school district? How does your board do when it comes time to evaluate the superintendent? We can help!

The VSBA has been producing and recording DVDs of professional development workshops and several are now available to order. Most of the workshops were held in the last year, so the information is current. The DVDs are organized into chapters, so you and your board can skip right to the information you need. **These DVDs are great cost- and time-effective resources to assure that your board functions at a high level for just \$20.**



January 2008  
 Chapter 1: Key Assumptions  
 Chapter 2: Education Funding  
 Chapter 3: Cost Drivers  
 Chapter 4: New in FY09  
 Chapter 5: Data  
 Chapter 6: Special Education  
 Chapter 7: Income Sensitivity  
 Chapter 8: The Presentation



December 2007  
 Chapter 1: What are Hearings?  
 Chapter 2: Due Process  
 Chapter 3: Preparing  
 Chapter 4: Mechanics  
 Chapter 5: Roles  
 Chapter 6: Evidence & Testimony  
 Chapter 7: Executive Session  
 Chapter 8: Conflict of Interest  
 Chapter 9: The Role of Policy



October 2007  
 Chapter 1: School Organization  
 Chapter 2: Cost Drivers  
 Chapter 3: Analyzing Data  
 Chapter 4: Act 68  
 Chapter 5: Per Pupil Spending  
 Chapter 6: Equalized Pupils  
 Chapter 7: Anticipated Enrollment  
 Chapter 8: Excess Spending Threshold  
 Chapter 9: Property Tax

## Superintendent Evaluation

November 2007  
 Chapter 1: Workshop Introduction  
 Chapter 2: Panel Introduction  
 Chapter 3: An Effective Evaluation Process  
 Chapter 4: Objective Evaluations  
 Chapter 5: Evaluation Stakeholders  
 Chapter 6: The Success of the Superintendent  
 Chapter 7: The Evaluation Template  
 Chapter 8: Collecting the Input  
 Chapter 9: The Job Description

May 2007  
 Chapter #1: Board Packet  
 Chapter #2: Meeting Types  
 Chapter #3: Code of Conduct  
 Chapter #4: Effective Meetings  
 Chapter #5: Communication  
 Chapter #6: Complaints  
 Chapter #7: Assumptions, Goals & Action Plans  
 Chapter #8: Self Assessment  
 Chapter #9: The Law  
 Chapter #10: Media Relations  
 Chapter #11: Policy Governance  
 Chapter #12: Educ. Philosophy & Resources

## Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships

May 2008  
 Will be available in June 2008

## BOARD OPERATIONS

March 2008  
 Will be available in March 2008



Chapter #1: Review of Part I  
 Chapter #2: Agency Fees  
 Chapter #3: HRA & Insurance  
 Chapter #4: Hot Topics  
 Chapter #5: Bargaining Techniques  
 Chapter #6: Collaborative vs. Traditional  
 Chapter #7: Regional Negotiations

Chapter #8: Confidentiality  
 Chapter #9: Impasse Procedures  
 (Fact Finders, Mediators, Strikes)  
 Chapter #10: Teacher Retirement  
 Chapter #11: Salary Schedules  
 Chapter #12: Lower Income Teachers  
 Chapter #13: "Cost" of a Teacher

To order: 800-244-8722 or [www.vtvsba.org](http://www.vtvsba.org)

# Do You Have a Resolution VSBA Should Consider?

The success that VSBA realizes in the Legislature is due to the participation of our membership throughout the year. It begins in the spring and summer with the collection of legislative resolutions drawn from member districts.

The cycle will begin anew with this call for 2008 resolutions. This is a process that helps the VSBA represent board members throughout the state in an effective manner.

Each proposed resolution is received and reviewed by the VSBA Resolutions Committee, which is comprised of school board members from throughout the state. The committee makes recommendations to the VSBA Board of Directors, which review the Committee's work and can add its own proposals to the final slate of resolutions and position to be sent to the VSBA Annual meeting. The

Annual meeting then uses a "one district, one vote" format to finalize VSBA's legislative agenda.


Setting our legislative agenda is a thoughtful, deliberate process. It is an inclusive process which creates a strong legislative force for the needs of Vermont school children. This call for resolutions is the beginning of the road to the Annual Meeting, which will be at the Lake Morey Resort on October 30 & 31, 2008. **The deadline for submitting resolutions is August 15!**

Resolution proposals must be submitted by member boards.

Resolutions are statements of intended and desired actions on items of current needs or problems. Resolutions are in effect for one legislative term and may be submitted on any topic of statewide concern for school board members.

Try to be as clear and concise as possible with the wording of your resolution so the intent, as well as the requested action, is understandable. Include a rationale (or history) with your resolution. If your board would like help in drafting a proposal, please contact the VSBA staff. We are eager to get a wide array of perspectives, and we stand willing to help your board get the issues of importance to you on VSBA's agenda. Don't hesitate to call us.

Continuing Resolutions are statements of policy and purpose and, once adopted, remain in effect until amended or repealed.

A complete listing of VSBA's Continuing Resolutions and legislative resolutions are available on the VSBA website ([www.vtvsba.org](http://www.vtvsba.org)). If you need a hard copy please call the VSBA office at 800-244-8722. 

## DVD Home Schooling for Board Members

*The Vermont School Boards Association has been producing DVDs from a variety of board development workshops for the past three years. School board members have requested more than 150 DVDs throughout this time period. It affords board members an opportunity to learn essential school information, meeting mechanics, and effective board operations without leaving their home. Board members also utilize the DVDs for whole board learning, as is the case with the Island Pond School Board article below.*

The Brighton School Board members have started meeting in order to enhance their knowledge of the functioning of a school board. We have been focusing on how to better understand the budget by viewing two DVDs that the VSBA has provided for us. To date we have seen the DVDs on *School Finance* and *Passing the School Budget*. The full board, along with the principal of the school, has met twice for "movie night." I would highly recommend any Vermont school board, with new members, to request copies of the DVDs that are available from the VSBA. They are clear, concise, and

easy to follow along. I really enjoyed seeing board members ask questions from other parts of the state. The other DVDs that are available include: 3R's, Collective Bargaining, School Board Chairs, and Conducting Board Hearings. I would like to thank the VSBA for taking the time to put together effective board development tools and providing us with the opportunity to learn more about these important board topics.

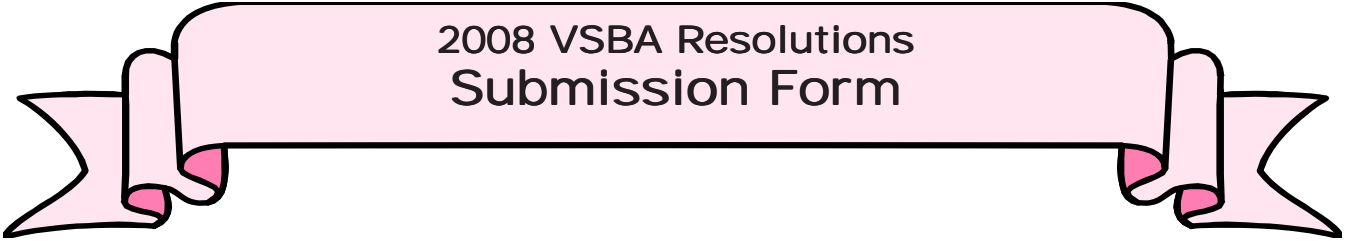
Charla Nadeau, Chair  
Brighton School Board (Island Pond)



### VSBA Newsletter is Online!

Do you want to access the latest news from the Vermont School Boards Association? Our online presence is growing! This very newsletter is available on the net in a user-friendly format, and it is usually available before the physical newsletter reaches your mailbox. We also post our legislative bulletins to get the latest news from the Statehouse, and you can pose questions to board members around the State in "Member to Member." The website also has model board policies on a wide range of topics, contract negotiation data, and more.

[www.vtvsba.org](http://www.vtvsba.org)



# 2008 VSBA Resolutions Submission Form

VSBA Resolutions are the Association's official positions on important educational issues and are adopted by the membership for each biennium. These positions guide your Association Board of Directors and staff as they represent you in Montpelier and at the federal level. Resolutions adopted in October 2008 will remain in effect through the 2009 Legislative biennium but may be amended during the 2009 VSBA annual conference. The 2008 annual meeting will be on **October 30 & 31 at the Lake Morey Resort**. Please check the current resolutions at [www.vtvsba.org](http://www.vtvsba.org). If your board (not individual members) has additional suggestions for resolutions, please submit them for consideration by the Resolution Committee no later than **August 15, 2008**.

Resolutions may cover any topic of significant statewide or national concern. They address desired legislative or governmental initiatives. Please be concise and clear so the intent, as well as the requested action is understandable. It is the "Resolved" portion (or action requested) that is voted on, not the "Whereas" rationale, which should be used only to explain your board's position.

We encourage you to submit resolutions for consideration. Please remember that member school boards must approve a resolution for submission.

SPONSORING SCHOOL BOARD: \_\_\_\_\_

TOPIC OF CONCERN: \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please explain why the action you are requesting should take place)

\_\_\_\_\_

AND WHEREAS: \_\_\_\_\_  
(further explanation if necessary)

\_\_\_\_\_

BE IT RESOLVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
(explain what action you desire)

\_\_\_\_\_

*NOTE: Resolutions may also be submitted from the floor at the business meeting, provided they are "in writing with sufficient copies for voting delegates. A majority of the voting delegates present must approve a motion to allow the resolution to be introduced for discussion." [VSBA Bylaws]*

Your resolution(s) must be received at VSBA  
by 5:00 p.m. August 15, 2008:  
Vermont School Boards Association  
2 Prospect St., Suite #4, Montpelier VT 05602  
Fax to: 802-223-0098 or Email: [klamb@vtvsba.org](mailto:klamb@vtvsba.org)

# Everyone Can Be Great, Because Everyone Can Serve

by Cheryl W Ryan, Education Management Consultant

"We want learning that can be applied immediately!" "We need projects that make a real difference and can be implemented without cost!" "We need methodology that translates from classroom to community seamlessly!" "We would like our community to be more involved in our school!"

Have any of these statements been heard in your school district? If so, perhaps you've considered service learning as a new way to motivate and empower your students. "Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, and that observation captures the essence and power of service learning.

Service learning is an effective framework and methodology for curriculum delivery. It engages students, parents, volunteers and the community. The benefits are well-documented and proven to increase

students' social and intellectual capacities. Some advantages include:

- positive impact on student outcomes and achievement;
- increased awareness of, and concern for, others;
- extension of the classroom into the community;
- increased cross-disciplinary interaction;
- increased investment and interaction from community members toward schools;
- increased opportunities for inquiry-based learning in real-life situations.


Some districts have implemented service learning programs involving substantial coursework as preparation for and a follow-up to the actual

service learning experience itself. In others, the service learning opportunity is self-contained. The service learning may consist of one extended period of time, such as a five-day work program, or of short periods of time over a longer period, such as four hours each week for one semester, or even begin and end the same day. Service learning instills concepts of character and citizenship through acts of social responsibility.

Service learning diplomas or certificates are offered in some districts as part of high school curricula. In Chicago, for example, students can earn a certificate after completing 40 hours of service between the ninth and 12th grades. Additionally, they are required to participate in planning their projects and write a reflection paper following completion of the service. The key words used in Chicago's service learning program are preparation, action and completion.

Teachers, administrators and students involved with service learning believe that long-term outcomes include increased leadership skills, greater career awareness and meaningful character development. Service learning could appeal to high-achieving students who are capable multi-taskers, as well as those for whom the traditional classroom structure is less comfortable.

Internet and library resources abound for those wanting to learn more about the possibilities associated with service learning. Consider [www.servicelearning.cps.k12.il.us](http://www.servicelearning.cps.k12.il.us) or [www.learningindeed.org](http://www.learningindeed.org) to get started.

*Editor's Note: This article was reprinted from the Ohio School Boards Associations' February newsletter.* 

## SAVE THE DATE!

Southern Vermont AHEC and the 30+5 Program present a

### Healthy Weight Summit

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Newsbank Conference Center,  
Chester, Vermont

- Learn what's working around the state to make school lunches healthier and kids more active!
- Bring back ideas and hope for your district to combat obesity in school age children!

Workshops will include an update on the 30+5 program; panel presentation from Vermont FEED and Farm to School activities; the Dept of Health's Resource Guides and Wellness Committees; and a legislative panel providing an update on legislation or pending legislation affecting school lunches and healthy communities.

Registration information and agenda coming soon!

\* Who should attend: school and health care professionals who care about and want to see changes in school food programs; school nurses; members of school organizations, teachers, school administrators, and food service personnel.\*

For more information visit [www.southernvermontahec.org](http://www.southernvermontahec.org)

tion to a cabinet-level agency, and empower the Governor to appoint a Secretary of Education. The Secretary would be a member of the Governor's cabinet and be responsible for all the duties of the former State Board and Commissioner.

The VSBA has a long-standing Resolution supporting the current method of State Board and Commissioner appointment. The Resolution is based on recognition that education is a unique governmental activity. Local and state governments share responsibility for the delivery of educational services. The State Board of Education was created in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to allow the state to play its role without being subjected to partisan political influences. Moving toward the Senate Committee's model would almost certainly politicize education at a time when partisanship is a driving force in Montpelier. Nevertheless, there is a strong contingent of policy makers who reject this logic. Some legislators question the utility of the State Board, claiming that it is "out of touch with reality," others are convinced that a direct appointment will curb education costs and others believe that the Commissioner and State Board are removed from direct accountability to voters.

There is a real possibility that this change will be enacted this year. The Senate Committee considered passing legislation that would have required a study of various educational leadership models before making this move, but ultimately decided to stick with the initial bill. The Governor is said to be strongly in favor of direct appointment. The reorganization bill will next be considered by the full Senate.

### **Statewide or Regional Calendars?**

Another provision of the miscellaneous bill discussed above (see "House Repeals "Two-vote" Requirement") would repeal the statewide calendar mandate enacted last year in favor of strengthening the regional calendar system that has been in place for many years. H.864 would require technical center directors and superintendents within a technical service region to agree to

a uniform calendar prior April 1<sup>st</sup> each year. The bill would give the Commissioner of Education authority to enforce regional calendars by withholding state aid. This amounts to a clarification of the existing regional calendar process. It requires superintendents and tech center directors to agree on a calendar for each region, and makes clearer that, once agreed upon by the administrators, school boards do not have the authority to make changes.

On the afternoon of cross-over Friday, the Senate Education Committee approved a regional calendar stand-alone bill that incorporates the provisions in H.864, but also requires that any countable school day must have a majority of students in each grade from 1 to 12 present for at least five and one-half hours. In so doing, the Senate Committee has expressed its agreement to a return to the regional calendar system and at the same time kept alive its belief that the General Assembly should mandate hours of attendance. If the Senate approves the bill passed out by its Education Committee, the calendar issue will be positioned for negotiations between the House and the Senate.

### **Allergy & Asthma Medication**

The House Education Committee has passed H.748, a bill that would authorize students to carry and administer their own life-saving medications under certain conditions. Annually, parents must provide the school with written authorization, and a written order from the child's physician that approves and authorizes the student to self-medicate. Only "life-saving" allergy and asthma medicines are covered by this bill. The bill does not include a definition of "life-saving," leaving that determination up to each child's physician. School nurses would be required to cooperate with the parents of affected children to develop plan of actions when possession and/or self-administration of medication by students is necessary. The parent would be required to release, in writing, the school from liability from any injuries resulting from the self-medication, except in the case of gross negligence or intentional misconduct on the part of a school employee. H.748 will now be considered by the full House of

Representatives.

### **High School Completion**

The Senate Education committee has passed a bill (S.348) that would increase the age of compulsory school attendance from 16 to 18. Under S.348, a "Personal Education Plan" would be developed by the school's educational support team for any student deemed at any age to be at risk of dropping out sometime in the future. The school would be then be required to offer an expanded network of alternative education programs and choices to the student. The bill also contains a mandatory process for students between the age of 16 and 18 to complete before being allowed to leave school prior to graduation. The process includes requests for "waivers" from administrators and, in some cases, school boards. Leaving school without a waiver would constitute truancy.

The Senate bill contains no funding to support its many process and programmatic requirements. As boards struggle to stay below the excess spending threshold, and away from the "two-vote" requirement, programs like these with new, mandated costs increase the likelihood that the budget process will include more "Hobson's" choices, requiring taking from one worthy or necessary function and giving to another. As of March 14<sup>th</sup>, S.348 was scheduled for review by the Senate Appropriations Committee, which is charged with identifying its cost implications.

### **For More Information...**

Bills that would change the Pre-school approval process, the requirements for hiring architects and engineers for school construction projects and remove tuition from the calculations leading to the application of excess spending and two-vote penalties were also approved by committees just prior to the cross-over deadline. If you would like more information on any of these issues, or to stay up to date on the latest happenings in the legislature, sign up for the VSBA Government Relations Network by visiting [www.vtvsba.org](http://www.vtvsba.org). Scroll down the middle of the page and click on the green GRN registration form. To view past issues of our legislative reports and bulletins, click on the "Legislative" folder of our website. 🚌

# SUCCESS IN VERMONT SCHOOLS 2007-08

*A snapshot of public education in Vermont from the VSA, VPA and VSBA*

## High Performing Schools

*Education Week's* Quality Counts 2008 determined that **Vermont schools performed 4<sup>th</sup> best in the nation in achievement and achievement gains.** The determination was made using 13 indicators, including NAEP scores, graduation rate, and recent improvement in achievement.

## Educator Staffing

**69.6% of Vermont public school employees are educators or instructional staff, fourth-highest in the country.** Nationwide, just 62.2% of school employees are educators or instructional staff.

## 2007 Vermont NAEP Results

2007 NAEP scores ("The Nation's Report Card") show high achievement results for Vermont students. Only Massachusetts has a higher rate of reading proficiency among 4<sup>th</sup> graders, and **no state has a statistically significant higher rate of reading proficiency among 8<sup>th</sup> graders than Vermont.** Math scores were similarly strong. Only two states have a higher rate of proficiency among 4<sup>th</sup> graders, and just one state rates better than Vermont among 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

## Highly Qualified Teachers

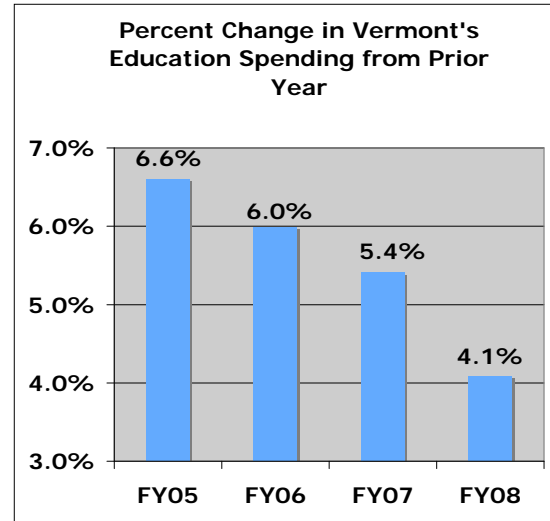
**90% of Vermont teachers in core academic classes are "Highly Qualified,"** a federal designation indicating that an educator is suitably educated, trained and competent. In addition, Vermont is one of five states where **100% of teachers receive High Quality Professional Development annually.**

## Music and the Arts

**Three Vermont schools have won Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education "National School of Distinction" awards since 2001,** and six more have earned state-level recognition. Fourteen Vermont music students have been awarded full scholarships to study at the National Symphony Orchestra Summer Institute since 2000.

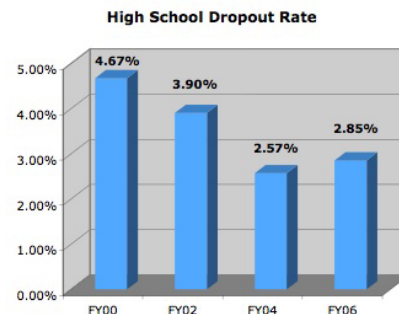
## Education Cost Growth Slowing

School leaders and voters are working together to control costs. **95% of school budgets passed on the first vote in 2008,** approving budget increases of less than 4.5% for the second consecutive year.



## High School Completion

Vermont schools have made impressive strides in retaining and graduating their students. **In the 1990s, Vermont decreased the number of students who do not complete high school by 66%.** By the year 2000, Vermont had the highest high school completion rate in the nation at 88.2%!<sup>1</sup> Since then, the percentage of students who drop out each year has remained low:



<sup>1</sup> *One-Third of a Nation*, Paul E. Barton, Educational Testing Service

# SUCCESS IN VERMONT SCHOOLS 2007-08

## *A snapshot of public education in Vermont from the VSA, VPA and VSBA*

### Vermont is the “Smartest State”

“For the second consecutive year, Vermont holds on to the top of Morgan Quitno Press’s education rankings as the nation’s Smartest State. Vermont has earned this distinction by demonstrating a strong commitment to students and teachers, an emphasis on excellence in the classroom and support for efficient public schools.”<sup>1</sup>

### Opportunity for Success

Quality Counts 2007 ranks the states on a “Chance-for-Success Index” that tracks the life-long benefits of residents’ educational experience. It includes some traditional indicators such as residents’ NAEP scores combined with adult educational attainment, annual income, and availability of reliable employment. **It determined that Vermont youth have the 5<sup>th</sup> best chance for success in the nation.**

### NECAP Leadership

Vermont has developed and implemented a common educational assessment tool in collaboration with New Hampshire and Rhode Island for grades 3-8. 2007 was the third year of testing, and the results confirm Vermont’s commitment to education. 70% of Vermont students were found to be proficient or better in reading, and 63% were proficient or better in math.

### Youth Risk Behavior Declines

A biannual survey administered to Vermont high school students determined that:

#### Youth Risk Behavior Declines

A biannual survey administered to Vermont high school students determined that:

<b>Cigarette smoking is down</b>	
1999: 36%	<b>2007: 16%</b>
<b>Alcohol consumption is down</b>	
1999: 46%	<b>2007: 39%</b>
<b>Marijuana use is down</b>	
1997: 32%	<b>2007: 21%</b>

Sources: American Legislative Exchange Council’s Report Card on American Education (2003), College Board, Editorial Projects in Education’s Quality Counts 2007, Education Vital Signs 2007, Morgan Quitno Press, US Dept. of Education, Vermont Alliance for Arts Education, Vermont Dept. of Education, Vermont Dept. of Health, Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust, Vermont Superintendents Association

<sup>1</sup> Morgan Quitno Press, 2006, an independent private research and publishing company

### Employee Wellness

**More than 3000 Vermont school employees participated in reducing health insurance costs** by partaking in the Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust “PATH to Wellness” pilot program this year. PATH is opening up to all schools in the summer of 2008.

### Renewable Energy and Efficiency

**Vermont schools lead the nation in the use of renewable fuels.** 35 schools use biomass heating systems, serving over half the students in the State. The VSA’s School Energy Management Program works directly with schools and helps them convert to renewable fuels and improve efficiency. **This program saves local schools more than one million dollars a year in energy costs.**

### More Early Readers

Vermont 2<sup>nd</sup> graders are reading at their highest level ever. The State Developmental Reading Assessment shows that:

%The number of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders below the standard has been cut in half since 1999.

**%85% of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders are meeting or exceeding the reading standard in 2007,** up from 73% in 1999.

### AP Achievement

Advanced Placement allows high school students to prepare for college by taking college-level courses and earning college credit. **Vermont students taking AP exams scored a mean of 3.14 in 2007, 5% better than the national mean.** Vermont students’ achievement is even more pronounced in some subjects:

AP Subject	VT Mean	US Mean
Calculus (BC)	3.91	3.70
Comp. Sci. (A)	3.40	2.83
Econ. (Macro)	4.00	2.75
Econ. (Micro)	3.69	2.98
World History	3.66	2.71

*A publication of the VT Superintendents Association, the VT Principals Association, and the VT School Boards Association*

#### Contact:

Vermont School Boards Association  
2 Prospect St., Suite 4, Montpelier, VT 05602  
(802) 223-3580

## Governance Options and Enrollment Projection

**April 16, 2008 - 15 Vermont Interactive Television Sites**

**6:30 pm to 8:30pm**

**Cost: \$35.00/Supervisory Union**

**Registration Deadline: April 9**

Find out why and how other districts/supervisory unions are studying governance change options. Learn more about projecting future student enrollment trends.



## Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships

4/3/08 - Wallingford Elementary

4/14/08 - Lyndon State University

4/17/08 - Green Mtn UHS

5/10/08 - Colchester Hampton Inn

5/24/08 - VSBA Office - Montpelier

5/27/08 VIT

**Cost: \$35.00/participant** (price includes a VSBA Resource Directory)

These 6 annual spring workshops discuss the basics of school board roles and responsibilities. It is presented for novice and experienced school board members alike. Bring the whole team to a venue near you. They are presented at different locations, time frames and dates. The workshop times range from 2 hours to 6. Please see the website for specific times. A light meal is included with the exception of the VIT on May 27. The 6 hours classes also include breakfast.

## The School Board Chairperson

**May 5, 2008 - 15 Vermont Interactive Television Sites**

**6:30 pm to 8:30pm**

**Cost: \$35.00/Supervisory Union**

The board chair role is critical to the effectiveness of the board and the overall leadership team. The board chair must be well organized, run crisp meetings, develop a strong collaborative relationship with the superintendent, and be able to read the pulse of the school and community. If you're a new board chair or just want to increase your board leadership skills, then plan to participate in the upcoming Board Chair workshop.

**Register: [www.vtvsba.org](http://www.vtvsba.org). or 800-244-8722**



*Mark Your Calendar*

### State Board of Education

#### Meetings

For more information call Carol King at 802-828-5101 or email [carol.c.king@state.vt.us](mailto:carol.c.king@state.vt.us)

◆ **4/15/08** - The meeting will take place at the Mill River Union High School in Clarendon from 9:00-4:00.

◆ **5/20/08** - The meeting will take place at the Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester from 9:00-4:00.

*2008 VSA/VSBA  
Annual  
Conference  
October 30 & 31  
Lake Morey Resort*