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Public Input Drives Every Student Succeeds Act Conference

BARRE – A new law that will shape the future of education in Vermont (the Every Student Succeeds Act) was discussed by more than 150 parents and community members who attended a conference at the Jay Peak Resort, Aug. 10-11, 2016.

ESSA is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and signed into law by President Obama on Dec. 15, 2015. The law was designed to address structural inequities in education funding for marginalized students.

Public comment by educators, communities, parents and students across the country will weigh heavily on how the law is implemented.

“The conference was well attended, and in the past few months we’ve had input from more than 1,000 Vermonters from every corner of the state,” said Agency of Education Secretary Rebecca Holcombe. “Holding the conference in the Northeast Kingdom was important as we work to narrow the achievement and opportunity gaps for all students, including those in more isolated, rural areas.”

The conference was another opportunity for the AOE to bridge the goals of federal policy with the reality of Vermont’s schools and communities, said Deputy Secretary Amy Fowler. Input from educators and community members at the retreat will help the Agency of Education to reflect the priorities and values of Vermonters in the final Plan document.

Vermont’s top priority for federal ESSA dollars is to close the achievement gap for low income and other marginalized students by thinking about students individually, adapting the curriculum to their personalized needs and addressing inequities in opportunities to learn.

The law is designed to ensure opportunity for every child in the country; strengthen the nation economically; and expand support for schools, teachers, and principals, as well as accountability for the progress of all students.

“I’ve been working in D.C. a little bit with Secretary King and I’m learning what a great place we are in Vermont. We are way ahead in our schedule,” said Susan Koch, conference participant and 2016 Vermont Teacher of the Year.

ESSA is aligned with Vermont’s Education Quality Standards adopted in 2014 by the State Board of Education to ensure continuous improvement in student performance, instruction and leadership.

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