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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, State Board of Education Item I  
FROM: Donna Russo-Savage  
SUBJECT: Small School Support Grants; Criteria under 16 V.S.A. § 4015  
**ITEM I**; State Board of Education Agenda  
DATE: October 10, 2016

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The statutory criteria under which the State awards Small School Support Grants will change on July 1, 2019 for grants available in FY20 and after. A school district that operates at least one school with an average grade size of 20 or fewer students<sup>1</sup> will be eligible for a Small School Support Grant if the State Board of Education determines it is eligible under either of two, alternative criteria:

### Alternative #1

- a) There are EITHER
  - i) Lengthy driving times
  - OR
  - ii) Inhospitable travel routes
- b) To the nearest school with capacity to enroll the students

### Alternative #2

- a) The school demonstrates BOTH
  - i) Academic excellence
  - AND
  - ii) Operational efficiency
- b) Based upon “consideration” of each of the following:
  - i) The school's “measurable success in providing a variety of high-quality educational opportunities” that meet or exceed EQS
  - ii) The percentage of students from economically deprived backgrounds and their “measurable success in achieving positive outcomes”
  - iii) The school's high student-to-staff ratios
  - iv) The district's participation in a merger study and submission of a merger report to the State Board

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<sup>1</sup> If a school district that consolidates its governance structure under one of the three incentivized phases of merger received a Small School Support Grant two years prior to merger, then the Small School Support Grant is transformed into a perpetual, annual Merger Support Grant. This memo and the amendments to 16 V.S.A. § 4015 do not apply to these merging districts.

The State Board must “adopt and publish metrics” by which it will decide whether to award Small School Support Grants under the new eligibility criteria. The metrics must be published by July 1, 2108.<sup>2</sup>

At your 2016 annual retreat, you discussed the requirement to develop these “metrics” and your intention to develop them before the July 1, 2018 deadline.

At your June 21, 2016 meeting, you approved the following motion:

1. To develop and adopt *rules* regarding the “metrics” by which the State Board of Education will make determinations whether to award small school grants ...; and
2. To request the Secretary of Education to prepare and present a draft of the rules to the State Board for its consideration at its regularly scheduled meeting in *October, 2016* and, in particular the nature of the criteria and considerations by which the State Board will be able to determine that a district has demonstrated eligibility for a Small School Grant pursuant to the criteria ... that will be effective on July 1, 2019.

\* \* \*

The Agency finds that it needs more direction from you before it is able to proceed with your June 21 request. Your October 18, 2016 agenda includes time for this discussion.

Attached is a table that you may wish to use when thinking about the “nature of the criteria and considerations” you expect the metrics to include.

Also attached is the 2011 report required by the Legislature regarding basing eligibility upon geographic necessity, which might be interesting to review.

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<sup>2</sup> Act 46 of 2015, Sec. 21.