

School Construction Task Force:

10/23/2023 – “Homework” assignment responses

The Mission or Purpose of the School Construction Aid Task Force:

- To provide a reliable, consistent, transparent, & equitable funding source/mechanism that supports the renovation or construction of VT public schools.
- High quality, safe, and healthy learning environments for Vermont’s children.
- Fiscally sustainable path to stabilize and grow Vermont’s school age population.
- Continued recognition and use of schools, both active and legacy schools, as anchor institutions in Vermont’s communities. This includes funding devoted to the adaptive reuse of stranded schools.
- Environmental resilience and decarbonization of one of Vermont’s largest single institutional asset classes.
- The outcome of a state construction aid program should be: equitable access to predictable and stable state support for planning, construction and renovation of school buildings in order to address health and safety issues, modernize school buildings and provide high quality learning opportunities in a cost effective manner.
- The main purpose of a state construction aid program is for the state to assist municipalities in funding much-needed improvements to schools. Knowing the state cannot fully fund capital improvements, renovations and rebuilds, by offering some aid the state shows its support of local communities and a commitment to the necessity of a strong and vibrant public school system that is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of its citizenry as well as growing its workforce.
- A secondary purpose of a SCAP is to use the opportunity to centralize a vision for Vermont’s education landscape, especially as it pertains to buildings and grounds, general infrastructure and programming. Based on the vision, needs are prioritized and funds allocated accordingly.
- The outcome is a long-range plan that is clearly articulated, organized, resourced and thoughtfully executed over decades. The plan fuels educational excellence, job growth, vibrant communities, healthy citizens and innovation. It’s an investment in future excellence.
- The purpose/outcome of a state construction aid program should be to:
- Achieve greater equity in Vermont’s public education delivery system by providing, supporting and incentivizing substantial investment in school facilities so that all students and communities benefit from safe and modern learning environments.
- Create a pathway for school districts to utilize/leverage state funding to maintain and construct school facilities. Funding should be tied closely to Act 72 and have mechanisms in place to require yearly savings towards building replacement and the maintenance of existing facilities through a properly utilized and funded Capital Improvement Plan.
- The purpose of the state construction aid program will be to assist and guide school districts in making capital improvement decisions that focus on 21st century learning and community spaces, expanded educational opportunities, and right sized for a changing demographic. That assistance will come in the form of technical expertise from state government and state-funded subsidies toward bond payments for qualifying costs.

Key Priorities (not in order):

- Safety, Code Compliance, & Healthy Schools
 - We need to create atmospheres and standards of learning environments that allows students to maximize their learning experience
 - Once building are safe, up to code (prioritize what codes are important), and healthy, then we can look into making them energy efficient
- Strategic investments that priorities items that could shut down the school or cause catastrophic damage:
 - I.E. Roofs, building envelope, HVAC systems, Electrical
- Energy Efficiency
- Building Cosmetics / Finishes

- Exposure to environmental hazards
- Level of facility depletion.
- Community wealth levels
- Cost efficiency of the project

- Strategic replacement of outdated buildings in a manner that:
 - provides safe, healthy, modern, and energy efficient school facilities,

 - incentivizes school facilities designed to support high academic standards and optimize learning opportunities for students, and

 - achieves efficiency in school size and grade configuration consistent with research based best practices, demographics and Vermont's transportation patterns.

- Design of program should conform with (not conflict with) Vermont's education funding system
- The construction aid program should not support the construction or renovation needs of private schools.
- It think it will be a natural reaction to want to start patching holes and leaks, and we may well need to delve right into the business of emergency repairs. However, I think the job of coming up with key priorities will be linked with the work of formulating a broad vision for education in the state, especially as it pertains to infrastructure and programming.
- Use capital construction funds to improve school infrastructure in ways that promote outcomes consistent with Vermont's policy priorities such as:
 - Prioritizing strategic replacement of antiquated and obsolete school buildings with new school/community buildings in a manner consistent with points b - d below.
- Achieving greater equity and improved outcomes in the education delivery system by providing quality facilities in support of optimization of teaching and learning;
- Achieving greater efficiency, effectiveness and improved outcomes in the education delivery system by optimizing school size, grade configuration and regionalization consistent with research-based best practices and Vermont demographics and transportation patterns;
- Strategically modernizing school facilities in order to improve Vermont's competitive position in business and education reputation and stature and assist in worker and population expansion by attracting families, children, and members of the workforce.
- Capital Construction Funding Policy Should Be Reconciled /Integrated With Education Funding Policy Generally - The funding system for capital construction aid should be developed with an

understanding of/eye toward the education funding system generally to be sure that the goals of capital construction policy are not impeded by the general education policy. For example, under pre-Act 127 education funding policy, there was an “excess spending penalty” applied if costs per pupil exceeded a certain spending threshold. If a state policy goal is to encourage capital investment it would be counterproductive to apply a penalty for doing so. Therefore a logical consideration would be to purposefully continue the policy of exempting capital investment from any penalty provision. Under Act 127, spending and tax rate determinations can trigger other policy apparatus. The point is to make sure that one state policy initiative - capital investment, is harmoniously in sync with another - most responsible spending and appropriate cost containment - and to avoid unintended consequences such as inadvertent negative effects on voter sentiment around capital construction investment.

- School Safety
- Energy Efficiency
- Accessibility
- CTE sites/classrooms
- STEAM
- Early Childhood Education
- Construction needed for Actionable levels of PCB’s

