

Statement on VT-NEA Proposal for Forming a Statewide Planning Commission on Reopening Schools

Dan French, Secretary of Education

July 10, 2020

VT-NEA has made the request that I form a Statewide Planning Commission to guide the reopening of schools. I asked VT-NEA President Don Tinney to send me a specific proposal that described the composition, purpose and responsibilities for such a commission so that I could better understand the request and also get feedback from other education stakeholder groups.

Based on a review of that proposal, I do not support the formation of this commission for the following reasons:

1. We already have a state-level planning group that includes all of the major education stakeholder associations, including VT-NEA, and that group is working very well. Its input has been invaluable to the development of state guidance including the [guidance for reopening schools](#). I do not believe the formation of an additional state-level group is necessary.
2. The major state-level policy directives for reopening schools have already been developed and published. The work now needs to shift to the implementation of the state-level guidance at the local level. This local implementation work will be significant, and require each school district to work closely with its employees, parents and students to apply the guidance to the context of their specific schools. I do not think a state-level commission would be responsive enough or nimble enough to support schools with the implementation of the guidance at the local level.
3. The commission as proposed would seem to have the authority to mandate many aspects of implementing the guidance. I do not believe this commission would have the necessary legal or regulatory authority to establish and impose these mandates.
4. All of the other major education stakeholder groups, including the Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont Principals' Association and the Vermont School Boards Association, oppose the formation of this commission.