

Summary of School Choice Options in Vermont (November 2007)

School boards in towns that do not have schools at the elementary school level (K-6) (and are towns that aren't members of a public school supervisory union) pay tuition to public schools in one or more other districts. For towns without schools at grades 7-12 (which aren't members of a public school supervisory union), school boards pay tuition to public or approved independent schools that parents choose, within or outside Vermont, not including religious schools. See **Title 16, Sections 821 and 822** of the Vermont Statutes Annotated.

For a list of towns that currently pay tuition, see the document on the Department's Web site, http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_finance_data.html

Title 16, Sec. 1093 allows local school boards to receive students from other communities into their schools on terms and conditions they decide - usually meaning tuition.

Title 16, Sec. 821(c) allows parents to request that school districts pay tuition for their children to attend an elementary school in another town, if the family resides near the other town's school - if the school board decides that the student's education can be more conveniently provided there.

Sec. 821(d) allows the voters in a school district that does not maintain an elementary school to authorize the school board to pay tuition for elementary students at approved independent nonresidential schools (but not at religious schools) at the request of a parent or guardian, if in the board's judgment the student's educational interests can be better served there. In both Sec. 821(c) and (d), the school board's decision is final.

Title 16, Sec. 822(c) authorizes a school board to both maintain a high school and pay tuition to another public school if the board determines that students' best interests are served there, and allows the board to pay tuition to an approved independent school (though not a religious school) if the board judges that a student has unique educational needs that cannot be served within the district or at a nearby public school. School boards' decisions are final.

Title 16, Sec. 827 authorizes voters of a school district that does not have a public high school to designate an approved independent school as the public high school. This section also allows a parent or guardian - who is dissatisfied with the instruction provided or who cannot obtain the kind of course or instruction desired there or whose child can be better accommodated in an approved high school nearer home - to request the school board to pay tuition to another approved high school. The board may approve the request and pay tuition if in its judgment that school will best serve the interests of the student. The board's decision is final.

Title 16, Sec. 828 allows school districts to pay tuition only to independent schools (or tutorial programs) that have been approved by the State Board of Education.

New Notice Requirement for School Boards: In 2006, the legislature added a provision requiring school boards to notify students of choice opportunities, by adding **(28) to Title 16, Sec. 563**, as follows: (28) Annually, [School Boards] shall inform students and their parents or guardians of their options for school choice under applicable laws or policy.