



*vision*

*leadership*

*achievement*

*excellence*

Vermont  
State  
Board  
of Education

Department  
of Education

November  
2006

2006-2007  
STRATEGIC PLAN

## Vermont State Board of Education

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## Vermont Department of Education

Richard H. Cate, Commissioner

### Mission

We provide leadership and support  
to help all Vermont students achieve excellence.

### Vision

The State Board of Education and the Department of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student while ensuring student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.

*The Vermont Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, marital status, sex, disability, age or sexual orientation in its programs or activities.*

**education.vermont.gov**

November 2006

## **HISTORY**

Section 180 of Title 16 requires the State Board of Education (Board) to “adopt through a public process a statewide strategic education plan to describe how the agency will help school boards to improve student performance.” In September and October 2003, Board members worked with a facilitator to gather information - from educators, administrators, school board members and others across Vermont – about their expectations of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board and the department in relation to schools and school districts.

In October 2003, the Board and Commissioner Richard H. Cate began to craft what they heard into a coherent working document, describing roles and responsibilities, and assigning them to the commissioner, the Board, or both. The roles and responsibilities cover the following areas: Advocacy; Licensing; Budget; Planning & Research-Based Decision Making; Communications; Policy; Evaluation & Supervision; Professional Development; Fiscal Planning; School Construction; Legislation; Standards, Assessment, Accountability and Technical Assistance.

In January 2004, the Board and Commissioner Cate began to develop a Strategic Plan. At the same time, a group composed of the Board chair, the commissioner and eight department staff members was convened to help draft the plan. The group brought the results of their work to the Board each month to support and inform the Board’s strategic planning process. The Board adopted the Strategic Plan at its meeting in June 2004. The five-year plan is expressed in the five goals listed below, which are based on the respective Board and department roles and responsibilities:

- I. Support high-quality, innovative instruction to improve student achievement
- II. Provide and promote high-quality educational leadership
- III. Promote safe and positive learning environments
- IV. Build department capacity to best support external needs
- V. Practice and promote effective use of all resources Vermont State Board of Education and Department of Education Strategic Plan

## **2006-2007 STRATEGIC PLAN**

The 2006-2007 Strategic Plan is the latest iteration of the State Board of Education and Department of Education goals for the upcoming year. The Strategic Plan includes objectives and strategies that support each goal. Since 2004 the Board has revisited the plan annually and has chosen specific strategies to focus on each year. The previous years' Focus Strategies can be found at the end of the plan.

In addition, the 2006-2007 Strategic Plan eliminates several strategies that have either been accomplished or integrated into the ongoing work of the department. At its June retreat, the Board reviewed all of the strategies and selected the following five to be included in its work plan for the 2006-07 fiscal year:

### **2006-2007 FOCUS STRATEGIES**

**Develop, coordinate, and improve administrative and educational leadership skills in the State of Vermont by working with the Vermont Educational Leadership Collaborative (VELC). (II.C.2\*)**

**In collaboration with the VSBPE, advance regulations that expand options for alternate routes to licensure that produce well-qualified teachers. (I.E.1\*)**

**Engage the people of Vermont in a conversation about the quality, cost and governance of our education system, with a focus on student success combined with high standards. (V.D.5\*)**

**Analyze performance data at all grade levels to quantify gaps in student performance (based on gender, poverty and ethnicity); then develop recommendations to address any identified gaps. (I.A.3\*)**

**Develop options/models of technology integration to improve the delivery of high quality instruction to serve all students;**

**Develop options/models for distance learning to improve the delivery of high quality instruction to serve all students. (V.D.2\*)**

While the Board is committed to the goals that are the foundation of the plan, it will be flexible. The Board will continue to review the plan each year to ensure that it has completed the work it has committed to do and to update the strategies as necessary.

*\* These Focus Strategies are also in bold print throughout the document. The prefix designations (e.g. I.A.4.) refer to the goal, objective and strategy designations that appear in the Strategic Plan (e.g. Goal I, Objective A, Strategy 4). Each objective has indicators, which are measurable results that reflect the success of the objective. Several of the indicators are numerical, and therefore are expected to increase or decrease as a desired result.*

## STRATEGIC PLAN

### Goal I. Support high-quality, innovative instruction to improve student achievement

#### Objective A. All students achieving their full potential

##### Strategies

1. Gain an understanding of the issues associated with early education in order to develop a position on a coordinated statewide system of early education
2. Support the implementation of *High Schools on the Move* principles as the statewide vision for secondary education
3. **Analyze performance data at all grade levels to quantify gaps in student performance (based on gender, poverty and ethnicity); then develop recommendations to address any identified gaps**

##### Indicators

- a. Percentage of kindergartners ready for school (Kindergarten Readiness Survey)
- b. Percentage of schools ready for children (KRS)
- c. Number of secondary schools implementing the principles of *High Schools on the Move*
- d. Drop-out/Graduation rates
- e. Disaggregated results of statewide assessments
- f. Proficiency of students eligible for free and reduced lunch compared to peers
- g. Teachers trained to meet the range of student abilities, including gifted and talented
- h. Percentage of students attending schools that provide opportunities to meet their needs

#### Objective B. A statewide accountability system identifying student needs related to achievement

##### Strategies

1. Develop and produce grade level assessments for one year of high school in ELA and math
2. Develop and produce a science assessment for three different grade levels

##### Indicators

- a. Percentage of students assessed
- b. Percentage of schools that identify individual student needs
- c. Results of statewide assessments

#### Objective C. A clear statewide definition of high-quality instruction

*Original strategies have either been accomplished or integrated into the ongoing work of the Department.*

##### Indicators

- a. Definition of high-quality instruction
- b. Use of research projects dedicated to high-quality instruction

#### Objective D. All schools meeting or exceeding School Quality Standards

##### Strategies

1. Establish and support an efficient and effective process for implementing the School Quality Standards
2. Provide information and training to the field
3. Develop a long-term plan for implementation of the K-12 expectations for Modern and Classical (non-native) languages within the *Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*

##### Indicator

- a. Percentage of schools that meet or exceed standards

## **Objective E. A sufficient number of well-prepared instructional and support staff for all schools**

### **Strategies**

- 1. In collaboration with the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE), advance regulations that expand options for alternate routes to licensure that produce well-qualified teachers**
2. Conduct an early-exit survey of a sample of teachers to determine reasons for leaving

### **Indicators**

- a. Percentage of vacancies by specific endorsement areas
- b. Percentage of emergency licenses
- c. Percentage of paraeducators with at least two years of post-secondary education
- d. Percentage of National Board Certified teachers
- e. Number of teacher preparation programs
- f. Percentage of school districts offering mentoring programs
- g. Number of teachers choosing alternative licensing routes

## **Goal II. Provide and promote high-quality educational leadership**

### **Objective A. State Board of Education members who are well prepared and effective**

#### **Strategies**

1. Ensure Board members receive appropriate professional development
2. Evaluate State Board operations annually

#### **Indicators**

- a. New members attending National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) orientation
- b. Outcomes of Board self-assessment
- c. Percentage of Strategic Plan initiatives implemented
- d. Participation in NASBE study groups and events

### **Objective B. A Department of Education that provides effective leadership**

#### **Strategies**

*Original strategies have either been accomplished or integrated into the ongoing work of the Department.*

#### **Indicators**

- a. Percentage of staff rating the leadership climate favorable or higher on an internal survey
- b. Percentage of management staff in work-related professional development
- c. Percentage of general fund budget requests supported by the Administration and the Legislature
- d. Percentage of commissioner's performance targets achieved

**Objective C. Well-prepared and effective administrators and school board members serving all schools**

**Strategies**

1. Collect, analyze and provide information about other governance structures that support effective management of schools
2. **Develop, coordinate and improve administrative and educational leadership skills by working with the Vermont Educational Leadership Collaborative (VELC)**
3. Enhance Board decision-making through two-way communication with educational leadership organizations, school boards, legislative educational committees, parents, home study groups and post-secondary education institutions

**Indicators**

- a. Average tenure of school administrators
- b. Percentage of goals met on school action plans
- c. Percentage of administrators in professional development programs
- d. Percentage of school board members completing the Vermont School Boards Association training
- e. Percentage of schools meeting or exceeding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets
- f. Drop-out rates

**Goal III. Promote safe and positive learning environments**

**Objective A. All schools supporting the needs of a diverse student and staff population**

**Strategies**

*Original strategies have either been accomplished or integrated into the ongoing work of the Department.*

**Indicators**

- a. Number of reported harassment incidents
- b. Demographic trends in staff
- c. Demographic trends of participants in educator-preparation programs

**Objective B. All schools working with other organizations and parents to improve and maintain student well-being**

**Strategy**

1. Create a parent advisory council to provide input to the commissioner

**Indicators**

- a. Reported drug- and/or alcohol-related use
- b. Number of peer leadership programs
- c. Number of physical fitness programs offered in schools
- d. Youth Risk Behavior Survey results

**Objective C. School facilities that provide a safe and productive learning environment**

**Strategies**

*Original strategies have been either accomplished or integrated into the ongoing work of the Department.*

**Indicators**

- a. Number of school facilities that are adequately maintained and meet safety requirements
- b. Ratio of available state funding for school construction to requested amount

**Objective D. All schools with an effective comprehensive plan that addresses student behavior**

**Strategies**

*Original strategies have been either accomplished or integrated into the ongoing work of the Department.*

**Indicators**

- a. Number of schools that have a comprehensive plan
- b. Number of harassment incidents reported
- c. Number of weapon-related incidents reported
- d. Creation of a definition of bullying
- e. Completion of study on bullying
- f. Percentage of schools providing training in prevention/conflict resolution
- g. Youth Risk Behavior Survey results

**Goal IV. Build department capacity to best support external needs**

**Objective A. A positive and effective working environment for all department employees**

**Strategies**

1. Combine Berlin and Montpelier Department of Education locations

**Indicators**

- a. Results of internal survey
- b. Single location for Department of Education offices

**Objective B. A State Board of Education annual budget that adequately supports the Strategic Plan**

**Strategies**

1. State Board will:
  - Review the budgeting process annually
  - Review the proposed annual budget at the August Board meeting
  - Allocate and prioritize budget initiatives
  - Recommend a final budget by the October meeting
  - Advocate for the budget as needed

**Indicators**

- a. Percentage of Strategic Plan strategies funded in the budget
- b. Number of Strategic Plan strategies implemented
- c. Balanced budget on department balance sheet
- d. Existence of a five-year financial and resource plan

**Objective C. Department of Education staff that has the knowledge and skills to carry out its responsibilities**

**Strategies**

*Original strategies have either been accomplished or integrated into the ongoing work of the Department.*

**Indicators**

- a. Percentage of staff participating in mission-driven professional development
- b. Percentage of staff members indicating on internal survey they are adequately prepared to accomplish their jobs
- c. Percentage of managers reporting that staff is adequately prepared to accomplish their jobs
- d. Percentage of completed staff performance evaluations

**Objective D. A Department of Education communications strategy that supports the vision of the Board and department**

**Strategy**

1. Establish a communications strategy that will:
  - Clearly define and communicate department roles and responsibilities
  - Share communications with staff and external stakeholders
  - Develop and promote Web-based tools for communication with diverse audiences using varied access to technology
  - Develop and sustain a well informed, positive relationship with media

**Indicators**

- a. Percentage of individuals responding to the customer satisfaction survey
- b. Results from customer satisfaction survey indicating visitors' understanding and use of Web site
- c. Annual cost of publishing documents
- d. Number of media reports accurately reflecting education issues

**Objective E. Vermont statutes and State Board regulations that enable improvements in our education system**

**Strategy**

1. Review and revise Title 16 and other education-related statutes and State Board regulations

**Indicator**

- a. Publication of revised statutes and regulations

**Objective F. A State Board of Education with clearly communicated roles and responsibilities**

**Strategies**

1. Review and update Roles and Responsibilities at least annually

**Indicators**

- a. Staff aware of the Roles and Responsibilities
- b. Superintendents and school board members are aware of the Roles and Responsibilities
- c. Public is aware of the Roles and Responsibilities

**Goal V. Practice and promote effective use of all resources**

**Objective A. A Department of Education with effective and efficient operations**

**Strategy**

1. Create a unified and efficient electronic grant and contracting process

**Indicators**

- a. Staff awareness of grant processes
- b. Grant processing cycle time

**Objective B. Department of Education resources that are aligned with the Mission**

**Strategy**

1. Regularly review the mission and organization of the department

**Indicators**

- a. Alignment of job descriptions with actual duties
- b. Results of internal survey

**Objective C. Technology that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the department**

**Strategy**

1. Expand the capacity to collect and report data electronically

**Indicators**

- a. Use of teleconferences to reduce meeting costs
- b. Percentage of technology-based innovations

- and resources implemented
- c. Percentage of school districts submitting data electronically
- d. Technology proficiency level of department staff
- e. Fully operational student information system

**Objective D. Cost-effective, high-quality delivery models for all students**

**Strategies**

1. Poll the field for interest in creating a statewide calendar and common class time
2. **Develop options/models of technology integration to improve the delivery of high quality instruction to serve all students; Develop options/models for distance learning to improve the delivery of high quality instruction to serve all students**
3. Revise existing and develop new benchmarks, reports and other indicators useful for assessing the efficiency of school districts
4. Revise school accounting handbook to establish consistent accounting of district revenues and expenditures statewide
5. **Engage the people of Vermont in a conversation about the quality, cost and governance of our education system, with a focus on student success combined with high standards**

**Indicators**

- a. Number of courses offered via teleconferencing (collaborative distance learning)
- b. Number of independent study courses taught in secondary schools
- c. Number of high school students participating in Advanced Placement/honors level courses
- d. Development by the State Board of a concise set of recommendations regarding the cost and quality of education
- e. The cost of education in Vermont is comparable to the national average
- f. The test scores of Vermont students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams

### **2004-2005 STATE BOARD FOCUS STRATEGIES**

Continue support for the implementation of the *High Schools on the Move* principles as the statewide vision for secondary education (I.A.4.)

Develop a public school choice proposal by January 1, 2005, for submission to the Legislature (I.A.8.)  
Adopt measurable School Quality Standards by June 30, 2005 (I.D.1.)

Ensure that State Board members receive appropriate professional development (II.A.1.)

Allocate resources and prioritize budget initiatives by October 19, 2004 (IV.B.3.)

Analyze the cost and quality of education in Vermont in comparison to national data and develop specific recommendations to contain costs while ensuring the quality of education, by June 30, 2005 (V.D.6.)

### **2005-2006 STATE BOARD FOCUS STRATEGIES**

Gain an understanding of the issues associated with early education in order to develop a position on a coordinated statewide system of early childhood education. (I.A.1)

Develop a long-term plan for implementation of the K-12 expectations for Modern and Classical (non-native) Languages within the *Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. (I.D.4)

In collaboration with the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE), examine the roles and relationships of the Board and the VSBPE with a focus on policy issues relating to high quality alternate routes to licensure. (I.E.4)

Develop, coordinate and improve administrative and educational leadership skills in the state of Vermont by working with the Vermont Educational Leadership Collaborative (VELC). (II.C.2)

Enhance Board decision-making through two way communication with educational leadership organizations, school boards, legislative education committees, parents, home study groups, and post-secondary education institutions. (II.C.4)

Analyze the cost and quality of education in Vermont in comparison to national data and develop specific recommendations to contain costs while ensuring the quality of education. (V.D.6)

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION**

**Vision, Mission, Goals**

*Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will align the Department of Education’s work with the Board and department’s vision and mission.

Work of the department will comply with state and federal laws.

*Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

The Board and commissioner will ensure that their vision, mission, goals and work are focused on students.

A strategic plan will be developed and revised as needed.

**Advocacy**

*Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

The Board and the commissioner will advocate for the best possible educational opportunities for each student. Every decision will be weighed against the likely impact on students.

The Board and the commissioner will aim to close the achievement gap among Vermont students and set the climate for focusing on students.

The Board and the commissioner will institutionalize the focus on students’ personal achievement – emphasizing that every student is important and capable of reaching her or his potential.

**State Education Budget**

*State Board Responsibility*

The Board will ensure that the annual budget is adopted in accordance with applicable procedures of the Governor’s Administration.

In the budget process, the Board will comply with fiduciary responsibilities.

*Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will develop a budget based on specific assumptions and goals established by the Board.

The budget will be developed in a timely manner, written clearly and will implement the Board’s vision, mission, and goals.

The budget will be developed in cooperation with the Governor’s Administration after the Board has been informed of potential issues and has had an opportunity for consultation.

The commissioner will develop and oversee a system for monitoring the department’s budget.

*Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

The Board and the commissioner will advocate for the state education budget with the Governor and Legislature.

## **Communications**

### *State Board Responsibility*

Board members will communicate with external partners only with consensus and/or with authorization from the entire Board.

### *Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will ensure that individual Board members and the full Board are appropriately informed in a timely fashion, and that communications are clear and concise.

The commissioner will establish a clear process and system for communication with all stakeholders.

Information will be based on valid and reliable data.

### *Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

Together with the commissioner, the Board will actively seek input from stakeholders, including parents.

The Board and commissioner will be informed of current issues and how they affect students.

The educational community will know and understand the Board's goals, policies and initiatives.

Communications will establish a strong, positive image of the Board and the department working in concert.

## **Evaluation & Supervision**

### *State Board Responsibility*

The Board will adopt policies to guide the evaluation and supervision of Department of Education staff, the commissioner and the Board.

The Board will engage in a formal annual self evaluation.

The Board will ensure that the commissioner clearly understands its expectations in a written agreement.

### *Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will ensure that every Department of Education staff member is evaluated at least annually.

All evaluations will be based on clear roles, responsibilities and expectations.

### *Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

There will be an annual State of the State report for education made available to the Vermont community.

## **Fiscal Planning**

### *Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner's fiscal planning efforts must consider long-term needs, and include resource assessment.

## **Legislation**

### *State Board Responsibility*

Board members will be seen as drivers of educational policy, and legislative efforts will focus on the best interests of students.

The Board will develop policies for the conduct of legislative activity.

*Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will ensure that Board members maintain an awareness of federal legislation and are proactive in influencing new and proposed changes in federal legislation.

*Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

The Board and commissioner will be proactive in setting a legislative agenda for education.

The Board and commissioner will create a relationship with the legislature so the State Board is seen as a valuable resource with access to experts in educational matters.

The Board and commissioner will develop working relationships with Vermont’s federal legislators.

**Licensing**

*State Board Responsibility*

The State Board will adopt appropriate criteria for determining highly qualified teachers.

They will appoint capable representatives to the Vermont Standards Board of Professional Educators and will provide direction to and evaluate the effectiveness of that board.

*Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will ensure that the licensing process leads to the employment of highly competent teachers and administrators in Vermont schools. The process must be efficient and accessible.

*Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

Together with the Standards Board, the State Board and commissioner will ensure that regulations and procedures are focused on the best interests of students.

The Board and the commissioner will ensure that appropriate standards and procedures for surrender, suspension and revocation of licenses are in place.

Decisions will be based on reliable data.

**Planning, Research-based Decision Making**

*Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will ensure that the Department of Education and the Board have an effective Management Information System (MIS).

The commissioner will ensure that research is focused and targeted, and that research and planning leads to continuous improvement in accomplishing the mission. The commissioner will ensure these responsibilities include assessment of resources. Planning and research should lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness. The commissioner will work in partnership with others. Planning must result in coordination of efforts and activities.

*Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

The Board and the commissioner will ensure the processes and documents enable goals to be readily identifiable.

The Board and the commissioner will ensure these processes will assist in identifying needs and actions, and will result in greater creativity. Issues will be clearly articulated and addressed.

## **Policy**

### *Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will ensure that policies are thoughtfully created and comprehensive.

Policies will respond to federal requirements in a common sense manner.

The commissioner will take steps to ensure that local districts understand the work of the department. He will ensure that effective working relationships exist between districts and the department and Board.

### *Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

The Board and the commissioner will work together to identify the need for policy and be proactive in policy development.

The Board and the commissioner will be cognizant of the impact of policy on local school districts.

The number of policies should be determined by absolute need. Policies must be visionary. Continued relevance must be reviewed, and there shall be accountability by those responsible for implementation.

Policy development should include all interested parties: parents, students, school and Department of Education personnel, education associations, and others.

Policies must be consistent and comply with state and federal law, and must be aligned with the vision, mission and focus on students.

## **Professional Development**

### *State Board Responsibility*

Every new Board member will participate in a structured orientation process as called for in current policy.

Board members will participate in professional development opportunities provided through a variety of sources, such as the National Association of State Boards of Education. Professional development will be considered “venture capital” and an “investment for the future.”

### *Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will ensure that high quality professional development is available to all Department of Education employees in accordance with contract requirements and systems needs.

Professional development programs will be consistent with the Strategic Plan.

## **School Construction**

### *State Board Responsibility*

The Board will ensure a priority list of school construction projects is submitted annually to the Legislature.

The Board will advocate for adequate resources to fund the school facilities plan.

### *Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will create a statewide facilities needs assessment and a planned sequence for school construction projects.

All new construction and renovation projects will meet established criteria.

The priority list of school construction projects will be monitored and will evolve over time.

The statewide plan will consider the following: geographic and demographic needs of the state; health and safety requirements; functional facility design with a primary focus on students; current and future approaches for renewable energy and energy efficiency; design with innovation and awareness of future needs; and use of technology and alternative means of accessing instruction and learning opportunities.

*Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

School construction projects will include the purpose and functions of schools as centers and resources for communities.

There will be an established list of quality and technical criteria to guide the design and construction of new and renovated school facilities.

**Standards, Assessment, Accountability and Technical Assistance**

*State Board Responsibility*

The Board will ensure its assessment result in improved instruction and learning. It will be relevant in time and measurement and be applicable to informed decisions and actions.

The Board will ensure this work results in teaching to the standards and not teaching to the test. The Board aims to create a culture and environment of “developing schools” rather than “failing schools.” These efforts should focus on assessment and not favor high skills over the love of knowledge and creativity.

*Commissioner Responsibility*

The commissioner will ensure that work in assessment is cost efficient and effective.

The commissioner will ensure that there is clear, proactive communication with all stakeholders. Documents developed in these areas will use language clearly understood by parents and students.

*Commissioner and Board Responsibility*

The Board and the commissioner will ensure that every student has substantially equivalent opportunities for learning.

The Board and the commissioner will ensure consistency of standards among all schools. There will be clarity and understanding of what is and is not measurable.