



WINOOSKI SCHOOLS

We are the future.

TO: Members of the Task Force on the Implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report
FROM: Tori Cleiland, Winooski School District Board President
RE: Implementation of the Weights
DATE: October 28, 2021

“We the People’ is not some of us, but all of us.” -Heather McGhee

Thank you each for your willingness to take on the crucial work of recommending to the General Assembly, by the end of the year, an action plan and proposed legislation to ensure that all public school students have equitable access to educational opportunities. The acknowledgment that there are inequities in Vermont’s funding system, combined with this task force’s formation and charge, gives me hope that you will seek a true understanding of this problem, and demonstrate the courage to present a plan that will strategically correct systemic inequities. Specifically, I urge you to implement the recommendations presented in the Pupil Weighting Factors Report.

As made clear in the report, true equity can’t be realized until the state formula is corrected. The problem is *not* that there are inadequate funds available to equitably support the education of Vermont’s students, but that the system for distributing these funds disproportionately benefits students who are already socially and economically advantaged.

In our district, 62% of our students live in poverty, 33% of our students are multilingual learners, and 27% of our students qualify for special education services. As the Pupil Weighting Factors Report clearly indicates, the current funding weights do not reflect the actual costs of meeting the complex educational needs of our students. The inaccurate student weights mean we have the second-highest spending per student and the highest tax rate in Chittenden County. This makes housing even more unaffordable and puts our local budget at risk, which impacts our already-strained system. This undue tax burden impacts the most vulnerable, low-income families in the county.

Realistically, the economic infrastructure is “working according to design” (Ijeoma Oluo). Access to preference, privilege, and power through education is, by design, exclusive and restrictive. The truth is kids and families don’t fail; systems fail kids and families.



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It's imperative Vermont's funding system be redesigned to elevate those who have been historically marginalized. If you fail to propose full implementation of the recommendations of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report you're making a decision to continue failing Vermont students whose lives have been touched by poverty, race, and disability.

I urge you to create an implementation plan for the scientifically derived weights recommended by Dr. Kolbe of UVM, Dr. Baker of Rutgers University, and Drs. Atchison and Levin of American Institutes for Research.

Respectfully,

Tori Cleiland, Winooski School District Board President