

Act 150 Summary: Public High School Choice in Vermont – April 2007

Enacted by the legislature in 2000, Act 150 required that - by September 2001 - all Vermont public high schools join with at least one other high school to form choice regions. There were no geographic or numerical limits; regions did not have to be composed of adjacent districts, and regions may include more than two schools. Regions vary in size from two to 18 schools.

The law specifies the following:

- application procedures and permissive deadlines,
- unless regions choose a different date, applications are due from students on March 1st; the Department of Education has a list of all regions in the state,
- unless all districts in a region agree, no tuition or other costs can be charged,
- sending districts cover special education and technical education costs,
- permissible limits on the number of students a school could allow to transfer to other schools: five percent or 10 students in any year, whichever is smaller; limits may be larger,
- annually, schools shall determine their capacity to enroll choice students,
- a lottery is required if the number of students exceeds the limits set by the schools for transferring out or in,
- allows students to remain in the new school in subsequent years without re-applying, within certain parameters (i. e., graduation, no longer living in Vermont, or serious discipline issues),
- superintendents shall establish transportation clearinghouses for families needing information about transportation options that would help them exercise choice,
- there is no funding for transportation.

The first time students transferred was during school year 2002-2003. In the current school year, 315 students take part in school choice under Act 150.

Act 150 requires the Commissioner of Education to report to the legislature in January of each year on the implementation of various aspects of the law. The January 2005 report made recommendations on a range of school choice policy options for the future.

In 2006, the legislature repealed the section of Act 150 that allowed the law to expire in July 2007; therefore, it will remain in effect indefinitely beyond that date, unless the legislature changes it.