Vermont-NEA
The Union of Vermont Educators

Your Union
Educators: In It For The Children

Of all the reasons Vermont-NEA educators have chosen to be, well, educators, one tops the list hands down: making sure Vermont’s children have every opportunity they can to become healthy, happy adults.

This is important to remember at a time when the conversation around public schools seems to be only about money. Certainly, our public schools do cost money, but the results prove that Vermonter have very much to be proud of. Consistently ranked in the top-five nationally, Vermont’s local public schools are the envy of almost every other state; small class sizes; small community based schools; annual, local accountability; and beacons of commitment, innovation, and dedication.

We asked you over the last several weeks to let us know how things are going in your schools with your students. Many of you responded, and we hope that we can encourage you to come to Vermont-NEA Lobby Day on Feb. 25 at the Statehouse to share your stories in person.

We weren’t all that surprised with your stories: every one of you who continued on p. 7

As they do every year, Vermont’s elected leaders are wringing their hands over what they call the “problem” with education spending.

“We have fewer students, so costs should start dropping.”

“Education spending is unsustainable, we can’t keep spending this kind of money on schools.”

“Small schools must be closed to save money.”

And on and on and on.

But before you get caught up in their tired, stale rhetoric, we thought it would be a good idea to do some math. First, the easy stuff: as a percentage of the Vermont economy, what we spend on public schools (the fourth-best in the country, by the way) has remained virtually unchanged over the last 20 or so years.

And, according to the Public Assets Institute, the cries that property taxes are increasing at an alarming rate are not exactly accurate. The proportion of taxes used to pay for public education has remained constant – at about 47 percent – for the last twenty years. And, adjusted for inflation, the rise in property taxes since 2010 is virtually nonexistent.

“The question everyone seems to be asking is: How can spending go up when the number of students keeps going down? That question assumes that what schools do for students has remained constant. But we know that isn’t true,” Public Assets Institute’s Paul Cillo said.

“Talk to any teacher or principal or school board member, and they’ll tell you how much more schools have to do. They’ll tell you about behavioral problems, mental health problems, kids coming to school hungry. Those problems can be tied back to the rise in poverty, homelessness, increased reliance on food stamps, and declining incomes.”

And some numbers are just too often ignored. Politicians and policy makers simply state as fact that school staffing levels aren’t dropping as a result of the decline in enrollment.

A simple check with the state teachers’ retirement system answers that question unequivocally: over the past 10 years, the number of teachers in the system has declined by nearly 10 percent.

Now for some more fun with math, where we see that for some politicians, all money is not created equal.

Gov. Peter Shumlin proposed a 0.7 percent payroll tax that would take $86.1 million from Vermonters’ collective $12.3 billion payroll. He called it too small to notice. He proposed changing tax rules that would cost some Vermont families $175, money he said families also wouldn’t notice.

Yet he labels as “unsustainable” a school property tax increase of 2 cents, which would cost the typical Vermont homeowner $44.30. So, in Shumlin math, $44.30 is more of a crisis than $175. And, put another way, that payroll tax would, if it were generated through the property tax, cost the average Vermont household $177.20.

So, apparently, $44.30 is greater than $175 and $177.20. (And, for more fun with numbers, hit the payroll tax on the state’s median salary of $52,977 is about $371. Which, again, is still apparently less than $44.30.)

And here’s another example of Shumlin’s subjective use of the words “unsustainable” and “waste.”

Recently, the governor announced that the state needs to severely cut the high school program in the state’s prisons.

In so doing, the Shumlin administration is eliminating 25 jobs and yanking $2 million from the prison system’s high school. But instead of actually pocketing the savings (which many experts say is penny foolish and pound astounding), the governor announced that he is awarding $2.5 million to Globalfoundries, the company IBM already paid $1.5 billion to take its Essex Jct. Plant (and others) off its hands. We’re sure that $2.5 million will go far for a company whose revenue is estimated at about $11.5 million a day.

In other words, 25 middle class Vermonters will be unemployed, but thank goodness Vermont is ponying up the equivalent of five hours of revenue for a foreign owned company.

In the end, here’s the only math that matters: Vermonters invest heavily in their local public schools. Those schools, in addition to being the heart of their communities, also give students more one-on-one time than almost any other system in the country. And the results show it: Vermont’s local public schools are fourth-best in the nation.

Our children perform better than their peers in all but three other states. In fact, in a study by the US Department of Education, if Vermont were a country, it would be a top-seven performer among the world’s richest countries.
Shumlin Spoke About Schools; I Got Angry

Martha Allen

Dear Governor Shumlin,

In January, I sat in the gallery when you gave your budget address. I listened to your proposals and tried to keep an open mind, with an understanding that the State is contending with a deficit. I listened to your plans to improve our economy. Some of your address gave me hope that Vermont is going in the right direction. I support promoting tourism and encouraging businesses to come to Vermont. I enthusiastically support anything that will encourage our young Vermonter's to settle here and raise their families in Vermont.

But, when you spoke about our schools, I became angry. I understand that we have a declining school population. Believe me, I hear it all the time. But what concerns me is I don't hear much about just how to increase student enrollment. I don't know of any plans to entice families into our state. I don't hear that we should be bragging about our excellent school system, one of the nation's best, in order to bring families to Vermont. Realtors love to tell a potential home buyer that a small community has an excellent school. We all know that many families look for a good school before anything else when looking for a community in which to settle.

So, why, in your address, did you only criticize our schools? Why did you say we have to do better with less? Why did you imply that some of our small communities will soon be starved of school funding and be forced to close their schools? You and other people in power in our state have said that our public schools are our most important resource. That is the case, why are you being so short sighted? Why must some communities lose their schools, and kill their towns, when we all want our economy to improve? How can we expect that anyone would want to live in a community without a school? If we look toward the future, and our economy does improve, these towns will continue to be mere shadows of a former thriving community. You have said that Vermont's infrastructure needs improvement and we should make investments in that area. Well, our public schools play a vital role in that infrastructure.

The way we educate our children is changing. Making good use of technology, collaborating across district lines, and becoming more flexible with our school day are just a few of the changes needed to meet the needs of our young Vermonters. But discriminating against a small child and closing her school because she happens to live in a rural area just doesn't seem right. We need to be supporting our communities, not punishing them.

I have read that many Governors across the country are proposing legislation that cuts education spending. These governors are not supportive of the great equalizer, public education. Are you really going to join the ranks of these anti-public education states? I don't want to be a part of this movement and you shouldn't either. Vermont is not Wisconsin, Kansas, Florida, Missouri, Michigan, or Indiana.

The rhetoric of classes that are too small doesn't sit well with me. If you want students to have personalized learning plans, small classes would contribute to personalized learning opportunities. The children in our society face many more challenges than in the past. Many of these children do not have a supportive home where so much social and emotional learning should take place. Our public schools provide much more than an academic experience. We don't want our children to slip through the cracks, and smaller schools are better equipped to meet these children's needs - with support.

I do agree that some of our small high schools are unable to provide the same experience for their students as a larger high school might. If that is the case, neighboring communities should join together to develop a plan that would offer more options for our students. This, however, is about high schools, not elementary schools. If an elementary school has low enrollment, let's bring other services: health clinics, community college, or even businesses into the building. Let's really grab onto the sense of community and work to keep our small towns alive.

I fear that tourists will find themselves driving though more and more ghost towns in the future. Let's support an excellent educational system, not starve it. When we first met I told you that we have one of the best educational systems in the country. You replied, "Why can't we be the best?" Well, Governor, if we continue on this track, we will never stand a chance at becoming the best. Vermonters know that our public schools are Vermont's most important resource. Let's treat them as such.
7 Tips To Boost Test Time Motivation

If you think your students have a short attention span, you’re right. In 2002, the average attention span was 13 seconds. By 2013, we were down to a mere eight seconds—one second less than the attention span of a goldfish.

The many distractions of technology and everyday living make it difficult for children to stay focused. That, in turn, makes it harder for educators to keep kids engaged and energized—especially during assessments, when students can be expected to sit for long periods of time.

Despite the challenges, educators are finding inventive ways to spur their students’ interest and hold their attention. From high-stakes standardized testing to the weekly assessment of student work, here are some creative ways to keep everyone engaged.

1. Let students take charge

Give students ways to take charge of testing situations. The more involved they are the more interested and focused they’ll be. Stephen Jones, an education expert with more than 30 years experience helping K-12 and college students succeed on tests and author of “Seven Secrets of How to Study,” the “Parents Ultimate Education Guide,” and the “Ultimate Scholarship Guide,” suggests forming student study groups before tests and ask participating students to establish their own test-taking goals. “Get students to create their own tests and try them on each other,” Jones suggests.

2. Apply associations

“Create test questions that are relevant and engaging,” suggests Shiv Gaglani, a Johns Hopkins medical student and co-founder of Osmosis, a web- and mobile-learning platform that improves student engagement and memory retention. Use associations in your questions because they are powerful memory hooks. For example, we have an entire question bank related to celebrities and pop culture icons from Kim Kardashian to Ben Franklin,” he says.

3. Go for Games

“Testing can be tough on kids” and is often stressful, frustrating and confusing, says Suzi Wilczynski, founder and president of Dig-It Games. Wilczynski is a trained and seasoned archaeologist who taught middle school social studies in the District of Columbia and Philadelphia. She believes in the power of games to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills, as well as cultural awareness.

It’s important to blend fun and learning when helping students prep and review for tests, Wilczynski says. She recommends “game-based learning,” which can be a powerful tool when used correctly in the classroom. “Digital games encourage students to make mistakes and learn from them in a positive environment,” she adds, “without fear of penalty or embarrassment.” To be effective, they have to be fun. One example of a game used for test review is LootPursuit: Pompeii. “It’s a short game that aligns to Common Core standards [so] teachers know their students are seeing forms of questions that are likely to appear on an assessment, and [that] they’re reviewing the topics that are most important to master — algebra, geometry, ratios and more,” Wilczynski explains.

4. Motivate yourself, motivate your students

“It’s very important for teachers to stay motivated during testing season to keep kids focused and motivated,” says Kathryn Starke, a literacy specialist, author and speaker who spent 13 years serving as a K-5 literacy specialist in Richmond, Virginia. She believes educators need to give students daily positive energy, praise and encouragement so they’ll feel confident in their workload, no matter the task. “Students look to their teachers as models,” Starke says. “If the teachers are stressed, children will be too.”

5. Try take-home

While this won’t work for standardized tests, in other assessment situations try letting students take the test at home so they can do it in the comfort of their rooms or in groups with other students, suggests Michael Provitera, author of “Mastering Self-Motivation,” and professor of organizational behavior at Barry University School of Professional and Career Education (PACE) in Miami, Florida. For example, you might have them watch scenes from a movie, video or documentary, then give them a take-home test that will challenge them to apply theory or models using critical thinking.

6. Stand up!

Something as simple as standing up can help keep students focused. “Activity and motion are key components in learning,” according to Carrie Schmitz, Ergonomic and Wellness Research Manager of Ergotron, an Eagan, Minnesota company that makes standing desks. “Never have students maintain a single posture for longer than 20 to 30 minutes.” When people are seated for long periods of time, they tend to “drift forward and down into a slumped posture that limits the intake of oxygen and leads to fatigue of mind and body,” she explains.

When you notice students starting to fidget or when their bodies tell them to move, have students stand up and flip over their test papers (in appropriate situations) for a few moments before they sit back down and resume the test, Schmitz says. That helps students “change postures frequently throughout the school day,” which is closer to the natural rhythm of human physical activity, she explains.

7. Move your class

The three keys to keeping kids motivated are movement, healthy snacks and making learning fun, says veteran teacher Linda Nathan, who worked with Denver and Cherry Creek School Districts in Colorado for more than 25 years.

“Tests are a half-hour to an hour, each subtest,” Nathan says, but kids can’t hold their attention that long. Even adults can’t sit longer than 20 minutes before they lose focus. That makes the rest of the time “a waste,” she says. Break up those blocks of inactivity by having students do calisthenics in place, walk around the room, or do some aerobics if they’re old enough.

A good snack would be in order before the test, Nathan adds. If your school allows snacks, choose nutritious, easy-to-eat ones such as sliced bananas or sliced apples.

Make learning more fun. Take away the performance anxiety by shifting students’ perspective away from pass-fail toward a progress check. Nathan explains to students that the test isn’t as much about them as it is about the teacher.

This article was written by NEA Member Benefits. You can learn more at neamb.com.

---

NEA Members Save on Tax Preparation with H&R Block

NEA Member Benefits and H&R Block, the nation’s largest tax preparation company and a name that millions of Americans know and trust, have joined forces to offer discounts and special pricing on tax preparation for NEA members.

Take advantage of these special tax preparation savings:

- $20 off in-office tax preparation services through March 31, 2015
- Special pricing on tax preparation software and online tax preparation programs

To download your discount coupon for use at an H&R Block office, start your return online or purchase tax preparation software, please visit www.neamb.com/hrblock.
Turn to the NEA Academy for the best in online professional development, continuing education, and degree programs that fit your budget, your schedule, and your life!

- Special member-only pricing
- Over 600 courses to select
- Peer-reviewed, high-quality content
- Online 24/7 availability
- Graduate credit and CEUs offered
- University partners provide:
  - Tuition discounts
  - Scholarships
  - Fee waivers

NEA membership has its benefits –
Visit the NEA Academy online today!

neaacademy.org
Lawmakers [recently] began to hear from a wide range of voices about what needs to be done to fix the way the state pays for education. Some of the ideas that have become fashionable about fixing education finance may have revived a bit under the clarifying light of reality.

One of those ideas is doing away with the small-school grant. It is received wisdom in some quarters that the high cost of education in the state is due to the many small schools serving the many small towns scattered among the hills and valleys of this mountainous state. Those schools do not benefit from economies of scale, suggesting that we could save money if small schools consolidated into larger ones.

The small-school grant is a bit of extra money to help small schools counter the disadvantages of their small size. If the state were to take away the small-school grant, it would create an incentive for the schools to consolidate, or that is the thinking. In other words, make it harder for the small schools to pay their way and they’ll see the wisdom of consolidating into larger schools.

Legislators heard testimony about how damaging this action would be to community schools. A Cabot resident told the Legislature that eliminating the small-school grant would slice more than $160,000 out of the Cabot school budget, which would require significant cuts or higher taxes.

A report in the Addison Independent from Middlebury provided additional detail about the small-school grant. The elementary school in the town of Addison has 71 students and a small-school grant of $87,000. Seventy-one students among seven grades equates to about 10 students per class, which is the kind of low teacher-pupil ratio that is seen as a budgetary problem or, conversely, as an educational advantage. Eliminating the small-school grant would eliminate money supporting one teacher, requiring the school to consolidate classrooms, perhaps to a multi-age class of 20, or to raise taxes.

Addison is not an anomaly. About a third of Vermont schools get a small-school grant. Eliminating the grant would be to carry out the counterproductive strategy of creating higher taxes in order to achieve lower taxes. If school consolidation is the goal, cutting the small-school grant would help achieve that goal by making life so hard on Addison taxpayers that they could no longer afford their small schools. It makes no sense.

The Legislature also heard from Paul Cillo of the Public Assets Institute who shared his analysis of the state’s recent history of education spending. He noted that as a share of the economy education funding has stayed relatively level over the past 20 years. He said in recent years property taxes, adjusted for inflation, have hardly risen. The student-teacher ratio is low, but the number of teachers has fallen in recent years. Meanwhile, the number of special education teachers and aides has grown because more demands are being made on schools to deal with special education, mental health problems, emotional problems and troubled family circumstances.

School spending has been going up, or holding steady, even as enrollment has been going down, and the reason is that schools are doing more in response to expanding poverty. One out of six Vermonters is on food assistance. We hear more and more about the shrinking middle class as median income falls and families struggle. Schools are being forced to pick up the slack where other institutions and the economy are failing. That is why spending does not fall in a parallel line with decreased enrollment.

Making the tax burden worse in order to make the tax burden easier begs the question easier on whom? The middle class — the majority of Vermonters who benefit from the income-sensitivity provisions of the state law — should not be forced to accept higher tax burdens to ease the burden on the upper-income taxpayers, second-home owners or owners of commercial property.

The small-school grant is not an anomaly going to a few tiny schools tucked away with a dozen students. It goes to a significant minority of schools that exist because we are a state of small towns. Serving the interests of Cabot and Addison is to serve the interests of scores of communities of similar size throughout the state.
Your Power

Shumlin Pulls Plug on Single Payer

A week after Vermont-NEA President Martha Allen and other advocates for Green Mountain Care held a Statehouse press conference reiterating their support for a universally available, publicly financed health care plan, Gov. Peter Shumlin pulled the plug.

The news sent shock-waves through the state's political establishment, earning scorn from some of the Democratic governor's most ardent supporters. And while the governor said that he had concluded that such a system was too expensive and would cause too much disruption in the economy, his decision threw the future of health insurance for public education employees into turmoil.

"I am extremely disappointed with Gov. Shumlin's decision to pull the plug on a universally available, publicly financed health care system for Vermont," Allen said. "We advocated for Green Mountain Care because we believed it was the best path forward for you and your families' wellbeing. Even though the governor has ended his fight, I want to assure you that we will never give up ours."

For the time being, of course, most of you will remain covered through the Vermont Education Health Initiative, the highly successful health insurance plan jointly operated by Vermont-NEA and the Vermont School Board Insurance Trust. But VEHI as we know it, as we've long explained, will not exist forever.

"We know that many of you questioned the union's support of Green Mountain Care," Allen said. "The board has long supported divorcing health insurance from employment, and found in Green Mountain Care the best path forward for all of us in Vermont. Our advocacy was and is based on the belief that the health insurance landscape is changing, and we are always looking for what will be best for our members."

Your Vermont-NEA staff – including Director of Benefits Mark Hage, Executive Director Joel Cook and others – is working with Allen to forge a new path. "I know that, together, we will do what we always do: fight for what is right for each other, our schools, and most importantly, our students," she said. "Thank you for everything you do every day to keep our local public schools Vermont's most important resource."

What Now?

The Vermont Education Health Initiative – the health insurance you and your fellow members have relied on for decades – is monitoring the landscape in the wake of Gov. Peter Shumlin's decision to abandon his efforts to create a publicly financed, universally available health care system.

In a recent note, VEHI said it "cannot speak authoritatively on what is in store for Vermont in respect to further reforms...VEHI, for its part, has begun exploring regulatory and legislative options that would make it possible for the trust to serve school districts and their employees indefinitely, with or without grandfathered plans; and that would be permissible within the framework of the Affordable Care Act."

partisanship continued to show its ugly head too often in the 113th Congress, we were encouraged by signs of bipartisanship on certain education issues. Most importantly, however, we remain optimistic that the new Congress will find ways to work together to improve education for all students. This is not only right but necessary given the fact that more than half of the nation's public school students qualify for free-and reduced-price meals.

"The new Congress is already gearing up to rewrite the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the cornerstone of the federal presence in K-12 education. Now is the time to make sure that Congress gets this law right so that we may fulfill at last America's promise of equal opportunity for all students regardless of their zip code.

"We hope that the glimmers of bipartisanship at times in the last Congress will lead to greater collaboration at this crucial moment during this Congress. We will continue to work with members of Congress from both sides of the political aisle to ensure the success of every student in America."

"The entire country would be a better place if the rest of Congress cared as much about the middle class as our delegation does," Allen said. "Whether its support for working people, for public education, for better healthcare, Senators Leahy and Sanders and Representative Welch are there for Vermonters."
Your Union
The Kids Matter

from p. 1

responded put the needs of your students first. Whether it’s a special educator working in a building where 40 percent of students are special needs or a dedicated teacher dealing with the aftermath of budget cuts, it all came back to doing what’s best for Vermont’s children.

Here is what some of you had to say. We encourage you to tell us your stories by visiting vteaf.org/classroomstories.

“I have heard a lot of talk about how Vermont is spending too much money on education. No one ever says exactly how much is ‘too much.’ We hear that the current rate of spending is unsustainable, but no one says what rate of spending would be sustainable,” writes BFA-St. Albans EA member Donald Finney.

“At my school, BFA-St. Albans, we have been operating under lean budgets for a number of years and I can’t imagine more money being cut from our school. Last year, my department lost an excellent young teacher due to budget cuts. As a result of her position being cut, our class sizes have increased in certain sections and our students don’t get to interact with this energetic, committed teacher who was a graduate of BFA. For nine years, I directed a summer writing program for talented students who spent their first week of summer vacation working with professional writers. Due to budget cuts, that program was cut, eliminating this opportunity for students from a wide socio-economic spectrum.

Your decisions about school funding will have a direct impact on the children and youth of Vermont.”

“Children in small communities need the intensive support of their community schools now more than ever,” writes member Sasha Irish.

“Many children in my district come to school hungry and without proper clothing, especially in the winter. Many come to school full of anxiety or anger because of things that are happening at home. In our small community, teachers and staff know each student and family well and are able to provide the extra support that individual students need — whether it be keeping a thick coat set aside for a child to wear at recess, or working with parents to help children deal with the emotional stress in their lives. The community connection is essential in meeting these students’ physical and emotional needs so that they are ready to learn when they come to school.”

“I’ve taught in Franklin County high schools for just over 30 years. Last week I talked with one student returning from being a page in Senator Leahy’s office; with a second student glowing, that this coming June she would be the first in her family to graduate from high school; and with a third, showing me the angry stitches from his very recent and most severe of many episodes of self-cutting,” wrote member Neal Smith. “As educators, we try to guide, reach, and teach all of our students, starting by meeting each one right where they are. And as my story of the three students attempts to convey, they are now in a wider range of places than I’ve ever experienced. I dream of a world, or at least a State of Vermont, where we may have more resources, AND where—as stewards of our youth—we use our continuum of school- and community-based services and resources to better reach, serve and support our youth.

“I believe that we will reap great rewards if we invest wisely, comprehensively, and yes: adequately. Our youth represent the future of Vermont’s human resource; the future of our state and nation, and perhaps more boldly, a form of human input-output function. Failing to coordinate services AND invest adequately and wisely will have its own sad consequences.

“We certainly see many happy and sad consequences every day. Will the growth of Vermont’s skills trust and brain trust outpace the growth rate of its dropouts? The growth rates of its substance- and/or social services-dependency levels? Its tax payers versus tax-dependents? Its under-employable? Its incarcerated? Vermont’s schools are right on the front lines of these questions and issues. I’ve worked with at risk youth in Vermont for most of my career. These are not hypothetical, rhetorical, or manipulative questions I pose. I work with individuals, many of whom are on the margins and in the balances. For them, and the rest of us, your actions hold great importance.”

“I work as a paraprofessional in an elementary school. I have worked in this school for about 16 years,” member Debra Lyons said. “Currently, the superintendent of our school has decided the best way to reduce the school budget (ie. school spending) is to cut teachers and paraprofessionals. Many of them throughout the district. His opinion is that the impact of losing this much teaching staff will be ‘negligible.’ How can that possibly be? This particular school has a high demographic of needy, special needs kids and children from low income families.

“How can less educational support not have a huge impact on these kids? Every day I see and work with kids whom should have individual assistants and don’t. These kids are sitting in classrooms not knowing what to do, how to do it, and feeling like failures. It’s a disservice to these children. Their needs should come first - not the paving of a parking lot! I fear there will be many kids that will slip through the educational cracks. Many paraprofessionals are being cut in next year’s budget (5 to be exact). We are already spread so thin I have to wonder if IEP goals are even being met.”

And member Amy Macbeth sums up perfectly what this whole education debate is about.

“Today we have more children coming from stressful environments. Class sizes are too large for them to get the needed attention. The demands on teachers and service providers is increasing. Children need smaller educational environments and more structured contact with trained professionals (both academic and social/emotional). In order to be effective, these professionals need adequate time to collaborate, plan, and then analyze lessons and assessments so adjustments can be made accordingly.

“Every time a resource is cut, it’s the children who suffer. When the stress becomes too much causing talented professionals to leave, it’s the children who suffer. When class sizes are made too large, it becomes more behavioral management rather than academic instruction. Again, it’s the children who suffer.”
Vermont's Delegation Earns Perfect 'A' From NEA

Senators Patrick Leahy and Bernard Sanders and Rep. Peter Welch all earned perfect grades of 'A' from the National Education Association in its annual Congressional Report Card.

"Those of us here in Vermont know that our three-man delegation to Washington has our backs," said Vermont-NEA President Martha Allen. "When it comes to protecting our schools, investing in our educators and teaching our children, the Vermont delegation delivers, year after year after year."

The Report Card tracks members' of Congress overall support for public education, students and educators, with each member receiving a letter grade of A through F. Members of Congress are notified in writing and in advance any time NEA may score a vote in the Legislative Report Card. In addition to votes, the Report Card grades also reflect other key legislative actions, such as behind-the-scenes advocacy for education and educators, bill co-sponsorships, committee votes and members' accessibility to education advocates in their home state or district.

The federal budget, education funding, education policy, immigration reform, and kitchen-table issues dominated the votes cast by members of Congress.

76 Congressional Republicans earned passing grades in 2013-2014 compared to only 35 Congressional Republicans with passing grades in 2009-2010, a significant increase.

Of the 76 Republicans with passing grades, 19 House and Senate Republicans earned grades of A or B, 27 earned grades of C, and 30 earned grades of D.

NEA Director of Government Relations Mary Kusler issued the following statement:

"The stakes are high for Congress. The outcome of what happens in Washington has an immediate, direct impact on students, educators, and families. While

continued on p. 6

Did you know?

Your annual Representative Assembly is March 27 and 28 at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee. Coming in two weeks is the annual RA edition of Vermont-NEA Today, where we'll give you proposed dues, candidate letters and a glimpse at new business items.

More at vtnea.org/ra2015

Newspaper: Small is Beautiful, p. 5
President’s View: Shumlin's Story on Schools Makes Me Angry, p. 2
At Test-Time, 7 Tips to Help Your Students Thrive, p. 3

Rutland Education Association's Ellen Green is combatting the growing problem of attacks on educators - by students.