

1 H.826

2 Introduced by Representatives Campion of Bennington and Buxton of

3 Tunbridge

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Education; school districts; digital technology; grant funds

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the  
8 Vermont Innovation in Education Task Force and Grant Program to examine  
9 barriers to the effective use of technology in Vermont's schools and to support  
10 access to that technology by, among other things, awarding matching grants to  
11 rural school districts for up to 30 percent of the cost of developing equitable  
12 technology programs.

13 An act relating to the Vermont Innovation in Education Task Force and  
14 Grant Program

15 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

16 Sec. 1. VERMONT INNOVATION IN EDUCATION TASK FORCE;

17 REPORT

18 (a) Creation. There is created a Vermont Innovation in Education Task  
19 Force to examine barriers to the effective use of technology in Vermont's  
20 schools and to support access to that technology through, among other things,

1 the dissemination of best practices and awarding of matching funds under the  
2 Vermont Innovation in Education Grant Program created in Sec. 2 of this act.

3 (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following nine  
4 members:

5 (1) the President Pro Tempore of the Senate or designee;

6 (2) the Speaker of the House or designee;

7 (3) the Chair of the House Committee on Education or a member of that  
8 committee appointed by the Chair;

9 (4) the Chair of the Senate Committee on Education or a member of that  
10 committee appointed by the Chair;

11 (5) one member appointed by the Governor;

12 (6) The Secretary of Education or designee;

13 (7) a representative of the postsecondary education community  
14 appointed by the Governor;

15 (8) a representative of the Vermont Superintendents Association  
16 appointed by the Association; and

17 (9) a representative of the business and industry community appointed  
18 by the Vermont Business Roundtable.

19 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall:

20 (1) examine barriers to the effective use of technology in Vermont's  
21 schools and solutions to overcome them, including:

1           (A) methods to ensure that both current teachers and students  
2 enrolled in teacher preparation programs are able to use technology effectively;

3           (B) strategies to create and procure engaging and cost-effective  
4 digital content to inspire Vermont students;

5           (C) strategies to ensure that all students benefit from access to  
6 technology, especially students who face learning challenges;

7           (D) methods to increase operating efficiencies and enhance learning  
8 opportunities, especially in rural areas, through the use of technology; and

9           (E) best practices to assist districts to prepare students to enter the  
10 workforce or pursue postsecondary education or training without the need for  
11 remediation;

12           (2) develop criteria and a process for awarding grants pursuant to Sec. 2  
13 of this act, including the ways in which it will solicit and evaluate grant  
14 applications; and

15           (3) evaluate and award grants pursuant to Sec. 2 of this act.

16           (d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical,  
17 and legal assistance of the Agency of Education. For purposes of preparing  
18 recommended legislation, the Task Force shall have the assistance of the  
19 Office of Legislative Council.

1       (e) Reports.

2           (1) On or before October 1, 2014, the Task Force shall publish on the  
3       Agency of Education's website and submit to the Governor and the House and  
4       Senate Committees on Education a written report detailing:

5           (A) the results of its examination under subdivision (c)(1) of this  
6       section;

7           (B) the criteria and processes it established for awarding grants under  
8       Sec. 2 of this act; and

9           (C) any recommendations for legislative action.

10          (2) On or before January 31 in 2015, 2016, and 2017, the Task Force  
11       shall submit to the Governor and the House and Senate Committees on  
12       Education a written report detailing the amounts, recipients, and purposes of  
13       grants awarded under Sec. 2 of this act.

14       (f) Meetings.

15          (1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Task  
16       Force to occur on or before June 1, 2014.

17          (2) The Secretary of Education shall be the chair.

18          (3) Action shall be taken on grant applications only if there is both a  
19       quorum and a majority vote of all members of the Task Force.

20          (4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on July 1, 2017.

1        (g) Reimbursement.

2            (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General  
3        Assembly, legislative members of the Task Force shall be entitled to per diem  
4        compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 406.

5            (2) Other members of the Task Force who are not employees of the State  
6        of Vermont and who are not otherwise compensated or reimbursed for their  
7        attendance shall be entitled to both per diem compensation and reimbursement  
8        of expenses pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 from funds appropriated to the  
9        Agency of Education.

10        Sec. 2. VERMONT INNOVATION IN EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM;  
11            REPORT

12            (a) Creation. There is established the Vermont Innovation in Education  
13        Grant Program for the purpose of awarding matching funds to assist school  
14        districts, especially those located in rural areas, to use technology to increase  
15        operating efficiencies and enhance learning opportunities.

16            (b) Process and criteria. Pursuant to the requirements and deadlines  
17        established in Sec. 1 of this act, the Vermont Innovation in Education Task  
18        Force shall develop criteria and a process for awarding grants under this  
19        section, including the ways in which it will solicit and evaluate grant  
20        applications and ensure post-award compliance. At a minimum, a successful  
21        applicant shall demonstrate that it has plans to ensure:

1           (1) the long-term financial sustainability of any technological advances  
2 supported by the grant;

3           (2) professional development opportunities that enable educators to  
4 access the full capacity of new devices and digital content;

5           (3) the creation and procurement of engaging and cost-effective digital  
6 content;

7           (4) student access to and benefit from access to technology, especially  
8 for students who face learning challenges;

9           (5) support from and partnerships with local businesses, entities that  
10 provide postsecondary education and training, and other school districts; and

11           (6) parental involvement with the program to encourage students to  
12 access resources beyond the school day and develop skills necessary to  
13 evaluate online content.

14           (c) Application. On or before November 15, 2014, a school district or  
15 group of school districts may submit an application for funding under the  
16 Program pursuant to the criteria and processes established by the Task Force.

17           (d) Grant awards. On or before December 31, 2014, the Task Force shall  
18 select districts to receive grant funds under the Program. Upon certification by  
19 a recipient that it has immediate access to 70 percent of project costs from  
20 sources other than the Program, the Task Force shall award the recipient an  
21 amount not to exceed 30 percent of project costs. At the request of an

1 applicant, the Task Force is authorized to make periodic partial award  
2 payments at any time on or before June 30, 2017.

3 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

4 The sum of \$750,000.00 is appropriated to the Agency of Education from  
5 the General Fund in fiscal year 2015 for grants to school districts under the  
6 Vermont Innovation in Education Grant Program created in Sec. 2 of this act.

7 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

8 This act shall take effect on passage.