

Reorganization and Policy Priorities

Vermont Agency of Education

January 14, 2026

Agenda

- **Agency Reorganization**
- **Policy Priorities**
 - Career Technical Education
 - Vision
 - Policy Framework
 - Implementation Timeline
 - Chronic Absenteeism
 - National Context
 - Chronic Absenteeism in Vermont
 - Goals for Statutory Change
- **Questions**





Agency Reorganization

Why Now?

- Increasing demands on AOE for transformative leadership and direction setting to elevate academic achievement and improve operational efficiency
- Federal uncertainty and an overhaul of the state public education system require strong and coordinated support from the AOE
- Must realign and reprioritize work to deliver on the Agency's strategic plan
- Make our organization more resilient and agile to changing federal and state demands



How Did We Get Here?

- Listen & Learn
- Federal Monitoring Findings
- Landmark education transformation following series of large-scale education changes
- All Staff Planning

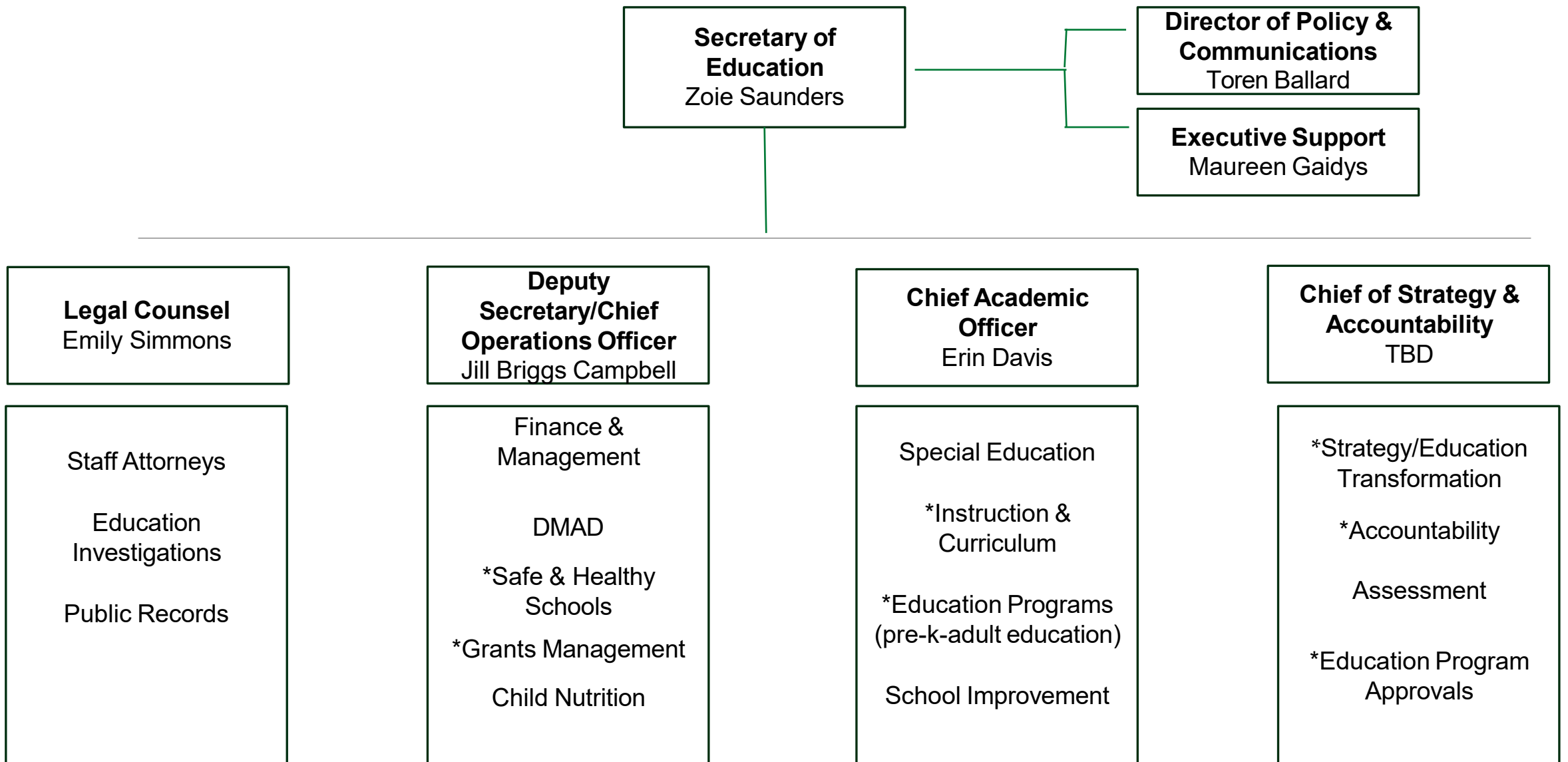


What Do We Hope to Achieve?

- Organize ourselves to deliver on our strategic priorities:
 - Improve statewide academic performance
 - Expand college and career readiness
 - Promote safe and healthy schools
 - Support operational effectiveness
 - Ensure high-quality special education services and differentiated support for all students

And, in doing so, achieve our vision of being the best education system in the country where we give all kids roots and wings





*New Team

Alignment with Strategic Plan

- **Benefits of reorganization**

- Aligns work to the Agency's strategic plan & state's education priorities
- Improves coordination and alignment
- Leverages staff expertise to provide more streamlined support to field

- **Elevated focus on**

- Special Education
- Pre-Kindergarten
- Safe & Healthy Schools
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Education Finance
- Accountability & School Improvement
- Education Program Approvals



Recruitment & Next Steps

New Education Transformation Positions – Interview Phase

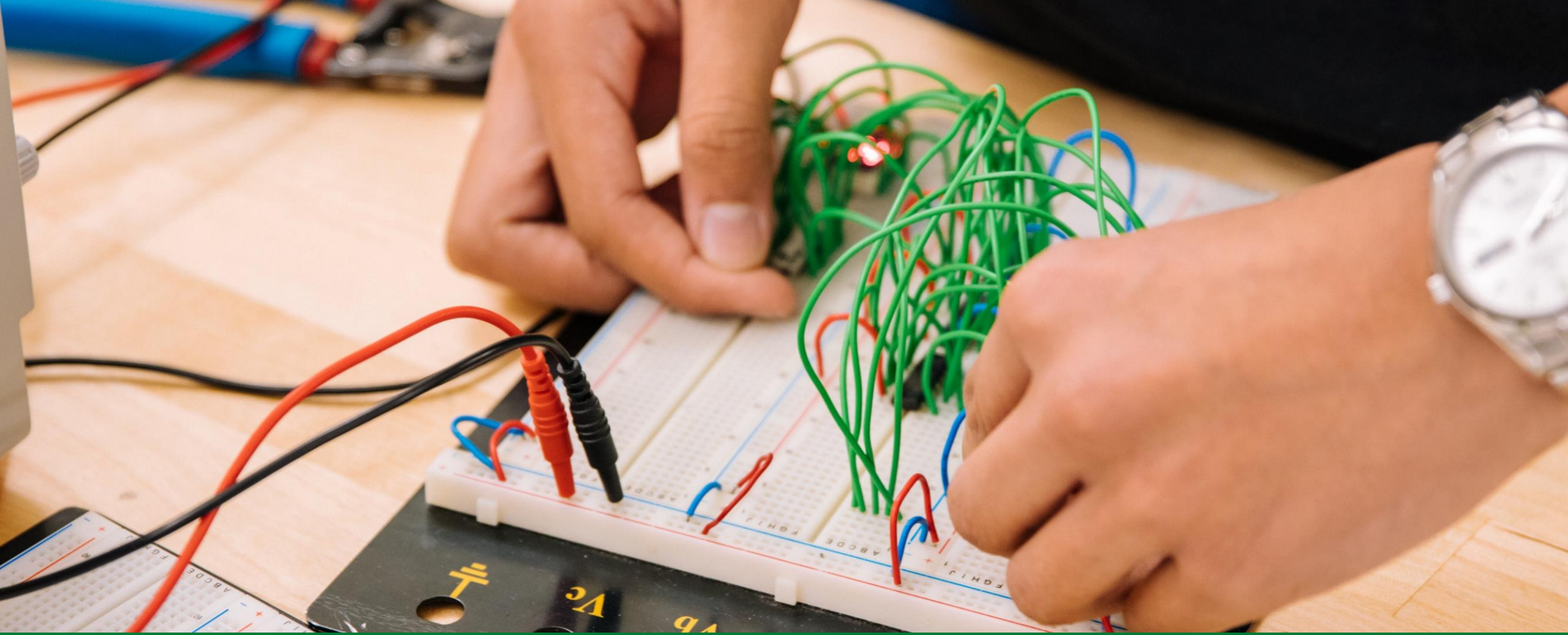
- 5 positions specialized in curriculum support; learning & teaching; facilities; data; business operations

Realigned Positions as part of reorganization – Recruitment, Review, & Interview Phase

- Examples include Deputy Chief of Academics, Curriculum & Instructional Design Lead, School Health & Wellness Coordinator, Chief Strategy & Accountability Officer

Next Steps

- Steering Committees
- Division Planning



Reimagining Career Technical Education

CTE Vision

Every Vermont Student, Ready for Life After Graduation

- Every student, regardless of geography can discover strengths and pursue interests
- Graduates prepared for college, careers, and life
- Learning is meaningful, hands-on, and connected to the real world
- Clear, supported pathways from school to adulthood

CTE as a Foundation, Not an Alternative Option

- CTE embedded in middle schools and high schools statewide
- Blended pathways: rigorous academics + applied learning
- Learning happens in classrooms, labs, job sites, and college campuses
- Students no longer forced to choose “academic” *or* “technical”

Establish State-of-the-art Regional Comprehensive High Schools

Equity Challenge

- Access to CTE tied to proximity to a technical center
- Inconsistent program quality and availability
- Transportation barriers limit participation
- Too many students miss early exposure and career exploration



Policy Framework



1. Statewide CTE Education Service Agency (ESA)
2. Quality, Curriculum & Accountability Framework
3. Middle School & Early High School Exposure
4. Integrated PK–12 Delivery Model
5. Statewide Funding for Universal CTE Access
6. Staged Transition & Implementation Timeline

1. Statewide CTE Education Service Agency

A Unified Delivery & Governance Backbone

- Education Service Agency (ESA) delivers high-quality CTE statewide
- Directed by the legislature, authorized by AOE; accountable for system quality
- Employs CTE educators and manages curriculum, PD, and oversight
- Oversees programs across centers, high schools, and middle schools
- Access no longer depends on geography or district capacity

2. Quality, Curriculum, and Accountability

Ensuring Rigor Everywhere

- Industry-aligned curriculum and credentials
- Program approval, review, and continuous improvement
- Professional learning and instructional coaching
- Coordinated student services and equitable access
- Statewide, sector-specific advisory boards

3. Middle School & Early High School Exposure

Early Exposure, Stronger Pathways

- Career exploration and applied learning begin in middle school
- ESA provides curriculum, training, and guidance
- Districts deliver exposure through the foundation formula
- Stronger career advising and navigation for students and families

4. Integrated PK–12 Delivery Model

CTE Where Students Are

- CTE infused into all high schools and middle schools
- Reduced reliance on stand-alone centers
- Shared planning for labs, equipment, and safety
- Coordinated transportation for work based learning, early college, credentials
- Regional partnerships with colleges and employers

5. Statewide Funding for Universal Access

Equitable, Predictable, and Transitional

- Unified statewide CTE appropriation
- Replaces fragmented tuition-based funding
- Program-driven budgets aligned to workforce needs
- Strategic use of Perkins and federal funds
- No new financial burden on local districts

6. Staged Transition & Implementation Timeline

A Staged, Responsible Approach

- Governance and quality first
- Infrastructure planning follows – buildings take time, students need access now
- Stability for students and educators
- Clarity for employers and partners

Implementation Timeline

Fall 2026: Legislature directs AOE to establish ESA

Fall 2027: ESA Executive Director hired

Dec 2027: Central office staffed; frameworks finalized

July 1, 2028: ESA “go-live” for CTE delivery

SY2028-29: Stand Up and Strengthen

- First unified statewide CTE budget
- Standardize quality and curriculum
- Improve equity, data, and student services
- Update programs using advisory board guidance



SY2029-30: Expand and Modernize

- Expand CTE exposure to grades 6-10 statewide
- Launch new and modernized programs
- Align credentials and postsecondary pathways
- Inform long term infrastructure planning



Chronic Absenteeism

National Context

A Persistent Post-Pandemic Challenge

- Chronic Absenteeism nearly doubled nationally during COVID
- Remains 75% higher than pre-pandemic levels
- Disproportionate impact on:
 - Students in poverty
 - Students with disabilities
 - Students of color

Impact on Students and Communities

- Difficulty reading by 3rd grade
- Lower middle school achievement
- Increased dropout risk
- Reduced access to:
 - Extracurriculars
 - Nutrition programs
 - School-based health supports

What Drives Chronic Absenteeism?

Out-of-School Factors

- Health conditions (student/family)
- Mental health and substance use
- Housing instability and poverty
- Transportation barriers
- Family caregiving or work demands

In-School Factors

- Bullying, harassment, safety concerns
- Academic anxiety and disengagement
- Weak relationships with adults
- Perceived irrelevance of school
- Exclusionary discipline

Chronic Absenteeism in Vermont

Chronic Absenteeism in Vermont

- Increased **67%** since 2019
- ~18% (2019) → ~30% (2023)
- Highest rates among:
 - Students experiencing homelessness
 - Students in poverty
 - Students with disabilities



Challenges

A Fragmented Attendance System

- Stakeholder engagement findings:
 - Inconsistent practices across districts
 - Unclear roles and responsibilities
 - Confusing expectations for families
 - Limited effectiveness of escalation pathways

Data Quality Gaps

- Excused vs. unexcused absence definitions vary by school
- Inconsistent data reporting undermines statewide analysis
- Families experience unequal treatment
- Limits AOE's ability to recommend interventions

Goals for Statutory Change

- Reframe truancy as part of a continuum of chronic absenteeism
- Clarify expectations for:
 - Schools Districts
 - Families
 - State partner
- Establish consistent, documented intervention pathway
- Reduce inequitable and ineffective punitive responses

What Is Changing

- New definitions and consistency
- Clear prevention and response expectations
- Standardized escalation and reporting
- Removal of ineffective penalties
- Alignment across public and approved independent schools

Future Implementation Support



- AOE model policy with tiered interventions (Attendance Works framework)
- Statewide convenings and training
- Communication and technical assistance
- Local policy adoption and school implementation for SY 2027–28



Questions?