

1 Sec. A. 16 V.S.A. § 564 is added to read:

2 § 564. ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE ZONE POLICY

3 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

4 (1) “Attendance zone” means the geographic boundaries within the
5 district that matches a student’s residence to a school or schools for the
6 student’s grade band.

7 (2) “Public school” shall have the same meaning as subdivision 11(7) of
8 this title.

9 (3) “Approved independent school” means an approved independent
10 school that is eligible to receive public tuition pursuant to section 828 of this
11 title.

12 (b) Policy. On or before July 1, 2027, each school board shall develop,
13 adopt, and ensure the implementation of, and make available in the manner
14 described under subdivision 563(1) of this chapter, a school enrollment and
15 attendance zone policy according to the provisions of this section to ensure
16 each resident student is provided a free, appropriate public education that is
17 substantially equal in quality and opportunity by determining a default school
18 within the district for each student to attend.

19 (1) The policy shall align to attendance patterns as they exist on July 1,
20 2026, including established patterns of attendance at approved independent

1 schools and established patterns of attendance at public schools located in
2 other states.

3 (2) Resident students who reside in a member town of a school district
4 that did not operate a school for some or all grades on July 1, 2027, shall not be
5 assigned to a default public school operated by the district in the applicable
6 nonoperating grade band. The policy shall provide a process for such students
7 to apply to any public or approved independent school.

8 (3) The enrollment and attendance zone policy shall be reviewed and
9 updated every five years.

10 Sec. B. 16 V.S.A. § 565 is added to read:

11 § 565. SCHOOL CHOICE POLICY

12 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

13 (1) “Magnet school” means a specialized program that meets baseline
14 quality requirements and also provides in-depth learning in a subject area or
15 emphasizes certain skills or experiences such as STEAM and arts education. A
16 magnet school may be established by a school district designating a public
17 school operated by the district as a magnet school or by an approved
18 independent school that chooses to reclassify as a magnet school.

19 (2) “Hardship” means a set of extenuating circumstances, as defined by
20 the Agency of Education, evidenced by a request made by a parent or guardian
21 to accommodate a student’s need to attend a school outside the student’s

1 assigned attendance zone under the policy developed pursuant to section 564
2 of this chapter.

3 (3) “Intradistrict choice” means policies that permit a family or student
4 to choose to enroll in a public school operated by the school district when a
5 school district operates more than one school per grade band.

6 (4) “Public high school choice” means the statutory program created
7 pursuant to section 822a of this title that allows students attending grades nine
8 through 12 in a public high school to apply for enrollment in a public high
9 school located outside the student’s district of residence.

10 (b) Policy. Each school board shall develop, adopt, and ensure the
11 implementation of, and make available in the manner described under
12 subdivision 563(1) of this chapter, a school choice policy to manage student
13 interest in exercising each type of school choice, including attendance at
14 magnet schools, intradistrict choice, public high school choice, and choice
15 needed due to hardship. The policy shall address the need for a lottery or
16 admissions criteria, depending on the different choice option exercised. The
17 policy shall be reviewed and updated as applicable every five years.