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[Vermont Education Matters](#)



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A daily survey of education news stories published in leading newspapers from around the country.

December 31, 1997

[Legislature will consider bill to increase teacher pensions](#)

Thirty years after she retired from teaching, Eleanor Hall of St. Johnsbury might get a raise. When the Legislature returns next week, one of the first items on its agenda will be a proposal to raise the minimum pension for the 79-year-old Hall and about 500 more of Vermont's oldest retired teachers.

The law now guarantees an annual pension of \$4,550 for a teacher who retired with 30 years of service. The new proposal would increase the annual sum by as much as \$2,000. "That will be the first order of business," said Senate Government Operations Committee Chairman Bill Doyle, R-Washington. "It's a very important bill, and it's

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long overdue." (Associated Press, 12/30/97)

[Gov. Dean honors state's top two Advanced Placement Scholars](#)

Governor Howard Dean says the state is not doing enough for Vermont's "gifted students" and he wants that to change. Dean welcomed two of the state's brightest students to his office today to bring attention to the subject. Matthew Hawkins is home for the holidays. He's on break from Duke University where he is a math major. So is 17-year-old Corinne Crawford, a sophomore at Harvard University. The two sat down with the governor today to talk about education. The pair was recognized by Dean as Advanced Placement Scholars. Gov. Dean said, "If our public school system is going to cater to all the people of Vermont it is going to have to cater people like Corrine and Matthew as well as everybody else." (WCAX-TV News, December 29, 1997)

[GAO to study indoor air pollution in 15 Vermont schools](#)

Congress' investigations agency will study 15 Vermont schools and state office buildings for problems associated with indoor air pollution. The report, requested in early December by Rep. Bernard Sanders, I-Vt., may help shed light on what it takes for Vermonters to get state and federal bureaucracies to respond to complaints, Sanders said. The General Accounting Office conducts investigations for members of Congress to help them shape legislation. The agency's report will not have a direct effect on resolving existing problems, but might lay the groundwork for action. Indoor air pollution results from bad ventilation or from the growth of mold and fungus in wet carpets and building materials. Pollutants range from mold spores to toxic chemicals in everything from carpets to cleaning supplies. (Associated Press, 12/28/97)

[Endowment fund won't solve Stowe's school financing woes](#)

A fund-raising expert hired by the Act 60 Action Committee to assess Stowe's capability to raise charitable donations to support the public school system believes local citizens would be willing to donate about \$5 million over the next two years. But as much money as that may be, it does nothing to solve the long-term problem Stowe faces, and will not benefit the schools over the long term unless either

Vermont News Sources

[Associated Press](#)
[Caledonian Record](#)
[WCAX-TV](#)
[Deerfield Valley News](#)
[St. Albans Messenger](#)
[Addison Independent](#)
[Vermont Times](#)

Other Education News Sources

[The Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
[Weekly Updates on Education Initiatives](#)
[Edupage, a summary of news about information technology.](#)
[U.S. Department of Education's On-Line Library](#)
[Education Commission of the States \(ECS\) News Releases](#)
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the Vermont Legislature makes substantial changes to the new law or local residents are willing to raise taxes well above the mandated \$1.10 statewide property tax. "I don't think you can raise the money it is going to take," said Marilyn Webb Neagley, a professional fund raiser who is based in Shelburne. "All you can hope is that by buying one year" by taking advantage of the Bartlett Amendment "you can get a start in raising a fund that would provide a piece of a solution." (Stowe Reporter, December 25, 1997)

Long-time Deerfield Valley Elementary principal Finck calls it quits

After two decades on the job, Deerfield Valley Elementary School Principal Don Finck announced his resignation on Tuesday. He will leave the post on February 1 for a job in the snowmobile industry. "It was an incredibly tough decision for Nancy and I," says Finck, adding that it was a decision made final only the night before his announcement. "This community has been absolutely fantastic to work for." Finck will take a position in sales management with snowmobile manufacturing giant Arctic Cat. "It just comes down to the fact that I felt I wanted to do something different," he says. "This job has been absolutely great. So many good people have come and gone here. It's really been a privilege to work here." (Deerfield Valley News, December 25, 1997)

Vermont teacher earns spot on Olympic team

Some might think there's pressure skiing through a snowstorm with a berth in the Olympic Games in the balance. Not so Marc Gilbertson. For the 28-year-old teacher from Vermont, Tuesday's 30-kilometer cross-country race over snow-ravaged Mount Van Hoevenberg was a stroll through the park. "Compared to teaching, this is an easy year," said Gilbertson, who stepped away from teaching in order to chase his dream of skiing in the Olympics. "I'm on a ski vacation. This is luxury living compared to what it's like going through the stresses and strains of teaching." Gilbertson teaches history and geography to seventh and eighth graders in Morrisville, Vt., and a bevy of his students and fellow teachers were in the crowd to cheer him onto the Olympic team. (Associated Press, 12/31/97)

December 18, 1997

N.H. court overturns funding of schools

In a long-awaited decision that could have a far-reaching

impact on New Hampshire's tax structure, the state Supreme Court ruled yesterday that the state's system of funding public education is unconstitutional. The court decided, 4-1, that relying on local property taxes to fund nearly 90 percent of the cost of public education places a disproportionate burden on residents in property-poor towns.

"There is nothing fair or just about taxing a home or other real estate in one town at four times the rate that similar property is taxed in another town to fulfill the same purpose of meeting the state's educational duties," Chief Justice David Brock wrote in the 16-page majority opinion. ([Other links: Court decisions and legislation in other states; Chronology of the N.H. school funding case; N.H. tax rates](#)) (Boston Globe Staff, 12/18/97)

Standards-based health units of study topic of course

A five-session course designed to help health educators develop standards-based units of study will be offered starting Jan. 29 at three Vermont Interactive Television sites. *Health Education and the Vermont Framework: Working in Unison*, will be held on the following dates: January 29, February 12, March 12, April 9, and May 7, at (and near) interactive television sites in South Burlington, St. Johnsbury and Springfield. This five-session course is designed to assist educators in developing health-related units of study using the *Vermont Frameworks of Standards and Learning Opportunities*, nationally recognized curricula, Vermont's Guidelines for Comprehensive Health Education, and The National Health Education Standards.

MVU Ghost Out hopes to raise anti-DWI spirit

Missisquoi Valley Union High School (MVU) sophomore B.J. Wilson died at 9:45 a.m. Monday, the result of an alcohol-related car crash. But unlike many people Wilson's age, he lived to tell about it. Wilson was among 11 MVU students in grades 9 through 12 who participated in the sixth annual Ghost Out. The state program is designed to increase student awareness about drinking and driving - an issue that has been receiving statewide attention. Students selected before the event were asked to stand up during class on Monday and say, "I have just become a victim of an alcohol-related crash." When pronounced dead, the students faces were painted white, they were dressed in dark clothing, and they remained silent for the rest of the school day. The event culminated with an assembly.

December 17, 1997

Lawmakers trash Dean's proposal to help rich towns

Gov. Howard Dean's proposal to help wealthy towns ease into the new education financing system was roundly criticized Tuesday by some of the law's chief authors. They also took exception to suggestions by opponents that they do not care for the welfare of children in rich school districts. And questions were raised about the true cost of an accompanying early retirement package Dean has suggested offering to teachers. All in all, it was a difficult afternoon for Administration Secretary Kathleen Hoyt, who represented the governor before the legislative committee overseeing the new law, known as Act 60. (Associated Press, 12/17/97)

Statewide town meeting held on teen substance abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse is considered a serious public health threat... and today a number of people and groups mobilized to fight it. Although Vermont has recently been awarded millions of dollars aimed at prevention, those gathered at today's statewide town meeting on drug and alcohol abuse, say the real solutions lie within society itself. Gov. Howard Dean said, "This is not a problem that can be solved by government. This is only a problem that can be solved by parents, schools, children... by the society as a whole." (WCAX-TV News, December 16, 1997)

Standards-based unit on Vermont's historic diners now available

Vermont's Historic Diners is a new, standards-based, integrated curriculum unit aimed at high school students. Developed by the University of Vermont Historic Preservation Program, the unit introduces the basic concepts and issues of historic preservation and encourages students to make connections between history and the built environment. This lesson can be incorporated into pre-existing Arts, History, or Geography units on the Industrial Revolution, historic architecture, cultural geography, or Vermont history. The curriculum guide and student handout can also be downloaded from the following internet sites:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~vhnet/heredu/diners/diners.html>

<http://www.floodbrook.k12.vt.us/veeone/starter.html>

Committee takes closer look at St. Johnsbury school consolidation

As the facility committee in St. Johnsbury delved deeper into the second phase of a proposal to consolidate grades K-8 into one school, concern was raised Monday night that

the proposal is moving too fast without enough community involvement. After a joint facility committee of school and town officials spent a couple hours brainstorming about how a K-8 school might be set up, Planning Commissioner Diane Rodgers raised the concern that the gathering was "acting apart from the community." Rodgers said that the committee needs to look at the alternatives and also explore how they got where they are. (Caledonian Record, December 16, 1997)

December 16, 1997

Oversight committee envisions minor changes

Despite angry demands for drastic changes to Act 60 since it became law nearly six months ago, a legislative oversight committee is recommending relatively modest revisions. A "technical corrections bill" has been drafted and the committee is scheduled to vote today on whether to recommend it to the full Legislature. "I don't think there's anything that's going to consume the front page of the newspapers," said Senate President Pro Tem Peter Shumlin, a member of the oversight committee and one of the law's chief authors. "My view is Act 60 is an incredibly well thought-out piece of legislation that's great for Vermont schoolchildren and is great for taxpayers." (Associated Press, 12/16/97)

Chittenden South Superintendent Hinds submits resignation

The superintendent of the Chittenden South Supervisory District - Curtis Hinds - has submitted his resignation. The CSSD will accept the resignation tomorrow night at their school board meeting. Hinds' contract was up for renewal next month and his family has already moved back to his home state of Ohio. The Chairman of the CSSD school board says they have been pleased with Hind's performance under difficult circumstances. The personnel director for the district has also resigned leaving a significant number of vacancies in the school district. (WCAX-TV News, December 15, 1997)

Early school budgets in Addison Northwest up 2.5% to 7.4%

All three Addison Northwest Supervisory Union elementary schools are well along in crafting their 1998-99 budgets, with preliminary plans proposing increases ranging from at least 2.5 percent up to 7.4 percent over current spending levels. Vergennes Union Elementary School Principal Betty

Wilder said her preliminary budget proposes an increase of 7.4 percent, with much of that money wrapped up in contracted raises for staff and teachers and payments for the school's renovation bond. Addison may find itself on the low end of the elementary school budget hikes, unless its voters approve a \$410,000 renovation bond on Tuesday. Ferrisburgh voters will see a plan calling for either a 2.5 percent or a roughly 4 percent increase, depending on whether the board decides it will be necessary to hire a new teacher to deal with expected growth in the school population. (Addison Independent, December 15, 1997)

YouthBuild program offers fresh start for young adults

Vermont has seen its share of barn-raising -- but today in Burlington there was a house-raising. Young adults belonging to an organization called YouthBuild -- raised this house this morning in the Old North End. Participants in the YouthBuild program are mostly high-school dropouts. Together they renovate or build low-income housing. But this program does more than improve the construction skills of these young adults -- it also provides them with a classroom education. (WCAX-TV News, December 15, 1997)

December 15, 1997

Study finds students own tobacco company promotional gear

A study of 1,265 sixth through 12th graders in New Hampshire and Vermont found that one-third own promotional gear heavily advertised by tobacco companies during the past seven years. The study also found that children who owned promotional items were four times more likely to be smokers than those who did not, even after researchers adjusted their results to take into account the effects of factors such as friends and family smoking. The study is published in "Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine" and was conducted at five rural middle and high schools in low-income communities in the two states. Participating students filled out anonymous surveys. More than 95 percent were white. (Associated Press, 12/15/97)

DARE students "go to court"

There has been some question lately about the success of a popular drug education program called D.A.R.E.. That stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education. Some police departments, including one in Vermont are thinking of dropping the national program because there isn't any hard

evidence that DARE works. But in other communities like South Burlington, school officials and the local DARE officer have taken the program a step further. Almost the entire eighth grade class of the Frederic H. Tuttle Middle School were in federal court today, to learn about the role drugs play in our court system. (WCAX-TV News, December 12, 1997)

Early teacher retirement plan estimated to cost state \$1.5 million per year

The Early Retirement Option for Teachers that Dean outlined yesterday does increase base spending in Vermont's budget beyond the initial payment of \$1-point 5-million dollars of surplus tax dollars. James Douglas, State Treasurer, explained. "The additional liability to the Teachers' Retirement system, assuming 50-percent of the eligible employees take advantage of the early incentive, would be about \$20-million. That can be amortized over the current amortization schedule of 21 years at about \$1.5 million a year. Perhaps there's some confusion in the Administration about the figure of a \$1.5 million, that's an annual requirement over 21-years. It's not a single lump-sum payment." The Dean Administration says the Governor knew that yesterday. That the phrase "one-time," only dealt with the early retirement offer, not the cost of the program. (WCAX-TV News, December 12, 1997)

December 12, 1997

Dean offers plan to ease impact on rich towns

Gov. Howard Dean offered a deal to rich towns that are worried about the new education funding law: Cut your school budget 10 percent and the state will hold down your taxes. But a key leader from those towns was sorely disappointed with the offer and one of the primary authors of the law also expressed concerns that the proposal would only be an incentive for towns to cut deeply into their budgets. Nonetheless, Dean said Thursday he believed his \$2.8 million plan, combined with a \$1.5 million early retirement package, would ease the transition for towns such as Dorset, Manchester and Stowe into the new funding system, known popularly as Act 60. He also said he believed the plan would help heal some of the deep divisions that Act 60 has caused in towns whose tax rates are low but school spending is high. (Associated Press, 12/12/97)

Vermont arts groups to get \$77,000 in federal grants

Some Vermont arts organizations will get a boost from the

federal government. The National Endowment for the Arts has approved \$77,000 worth of grants for Vermont. The money will go to the Vermont Folklife Center, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, the Grassroots Art and Community Efforts, and the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance. The money will fund education programs, and programs to help Vermont historical societies, museums and galleries. (WCAX-TV News, December 11, 1997)

VUHS ponders big bond

The full membership of the Vergennes Union High School board got their first look on Dec. 8 at a preliminary school-improvement plan which now carries a price tag of \$6.4 million. Included in the proposal, which would be funded by a bond, is 21,500 square feet of construction; a parking lot; renovation of the basement, work which would also make the area handicap-accessible; ventilation, sprinkler and fire-alarm systems; a new roof over the school's one-story portion; and new windows. District business manager Donna Corcoran said she expected the state will eventually fund almost 30 percent of eligible expenses. Vermont's school construction eligibility rules are now being redrawn, but Corcoran believes the state will support most of the VUHS improvements at or near the maximum rate once a final plan is submitted. (Addison Independent, December 11, 1997)

Vermont diocese approves new Catholic school

Vermont's Roman Catholic diocese has given a St. Johnsbury group permission to open a new parochial school in St. Johnsbury. The Good Shepherd Catholic School will open its doors next fall at St. John's Center on Maple Street. The facility will join 11 other Catholic elementary schools in Vermont. But unlike the other schools, the principal and board of the Good Shepherd Catholic School will be directly responsible to the diocese. During the school's first year of existence, it will be for students in kindergarten through grade six. The following year, grade seven will be added, with grade eight added in 2000. Yearly tuition has a price tag of \$2,200, with a \$500 discount for each additional child from the same family. (Associated Press, 12/12/97)

Small town library keeps up with the times

Imagine the convenience of going into the library, pulling up to a computer, tapping a few keys and finding exactly the book, or books you're looking for. In a few weeks the card catalog at the Dover Free Library will be a thing of the past as the switch to an automated system is completed. The library will be one of only a few in the state its size to offer

an automated catalog, says state librarian, Sybil McShane. McShane said many schools are switching to automated systems but public libraries are only beginning to move in that direction. (Deerfield Valley News, December 11, 1997)

December 11, 1997

[To improve workforce training, Vermont looks to Austria as a model](#)

Later this week, the State of Vermont will sign a formal agreement with the government of Austria... it's an agreement aimed at improving the global workforce through an exchange program. The program will send students, teachers, employers, even parents overseas.... in both directions. This is the Austrians' first look at some of Vermont's hands-on educational training programs. About 350 students - both teenagers and adults - come to the Essex Technical Center each year to learn dentistry, medical record keeping, auto mechanics, culinary skills and business technology. But in Austria, students get even more real-life work experience at even earlier ages. Nearly 50-percent of their student population enters apprenticeship programs, beginning at age 15. They end up with a highly-skilled workforce because the students are properly trained and ready to work. And that's one of the areas Vermont hopes to learn more about... as this state and the country of Austria embark on an educational exchange. (WCAX-TV News, December 10, 1997)

[Elevated levels of radon found in Burke Town School](#)

Elevated levels of radon gas were found in some classrooms at the Burke Town School recently, prompting further testing and efforts to eradicate the problem. Caledonia North Supervisory Union Superintendent Mary Ann Riggie said the problem was discovered after a radon test was initiated by Principal Sonny Davis. Last week, school and state officials began a third round of tests involving the placement of "day/night detectors" in some classrooms, the results of which are expected to be available in the next few days. A plan of action will then be implemented based on these findings. (Associated Press, 12/11/97)

[Enforcement chief pleased at low return on tobacco sting](#)

A state tobacco enforcement official says he's pleased a sting operation nabbed just 8 percent of 208 stores for selling chewing tobacco to minors.

"I really expected it would be higher than 8 percent. We

have been so focused on cigarettes," said Albert Elwell, chief of enforcement for the Department of Liquor Control. Seventeen out of 208 stores sold chewing tobacco illegally to juveniles during the latest undercover sting by the department, Elwell said. The 8 percent rate of illegal sales matches the rate of cigarettes sales to children under age 18 found in a undercover sting in June. Vermont law prohibits tobacco sales to people under age 18. (Associated Press, 12/11/97)

[VINS to offer winter workshops](#)

The Vermont Institute of Natural Science will offer four workshops this winter. On Dec. 29, two workshops will be held, one on bird behavior and another on bird nests. On Dec. 31, there will be a field guide studying black bear habitat in the Taconic range, while on Feb. 25-27 a three-day workshop investigating winter mammal activities will be held. To register, contact:

Ned Swanberg, Vermont Institute of Natural Science

Taconic Field School, Manchester Village
vinsned@vermontel.com
(802) 362-4374

December 10, 1997

[Funding law supporters stake claim to state surplus](#)

High tax towns say they have done without for long enough and they laid claim to any money the Legislature decides to add to the new education funding law. They questioned why property-wealthy towns, which have been able to spend lavishly on education with low taxes, should get any more help from the state under Act 60. "Frankly, we think the transition is a little too long," Laura Soares of Randolph said during a roundtable discussion Tuesday with the legislative committee overseeing implementation of the law. "Why do we have to wait? The wait has been too long." Soares' sentiments were echoed by representatives of Worcester and Middlebury, who also appeared on the panel with her. (Associated Press, 12/10/97)

[Essex County residents jittery over Act 60](#)

Essex County residents, home of five of the state's so-called property rich "gold towns," gave Vermont Deputy Tax Commissioner Sean Campbell several bars of discordant Act 60 feedback last night, at a session organized by the county Republican Committee. Rep. Janice Peaslee, R-Guildhall,

introduced Campbell, saying there has been "a lot of confusion on this very complex law." Campbell, the former chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, described the Equal Educational Opportunity act (Act 60) as "a sea change and landmark legislation, so bringing people up to speed is a key part of implementation." He said, "The overall complexity of Act 60 is to make things simpler." (Caledonian Record, December 9, 1997)

Burlington officials explore forming a regional service collaborative

The metropolitan area around Burlington is looking at proposals to consolidate police, school and other public services. On Monday, Burlington city councilors agreed to explore making some services regional, but put off voting on the issue until January to allow time for further study. The city's four Republican councilors proposed sending letters to South Burlington, Essex Junction, Williston, Shelburne, Winooski, Colchester and Charlotte asking for appointments to a regional commission. The commission would discuss regionalizing police and safety services; sharing the cost of recreational activities such as civic centers and skate parks; consolidating school administration; expanding recycling services and affordable housing initiatives. (Associated Press, 12/10/97)

Vermont doing a good job in smoking prevention

A national anti-smoking advocate told a group of Vermonters today that our state has one of the best records in the nation for tobacco use prevention. But he said states cannot do the job alone and that this will be a pivotal year in the US Congress for federal legislation designed to prevent tobacco use. The 1997 Vermont youth risk behavior survey showed that 36 percent of Vermont students between eighth and twelfth grade smoke. That's down two percent from last year. But over one fourth of those students reported to have started smoking prior to age 13. National anti-smoking advocates say we will not be able to reduce teen smoking without more stringent restrictions on tobacco advertising. (WCAX-TV News, December 9, 1997)

Gailer School to move; Shelburne site is top contender

Gailer School's road to a new home may lead it 25 miles north on Route 7 to Shelburne where a vacant former elementary school may prove to be an ideal match to meet the needs of the growing private school based in Middlebury. Gailer School leaders are in final negotiations with Shelburne officials on a plan that would see the nonprofit operation occupy the former Shelburne Village

School, located off Route 7 near the center of the affluent Chittenden County town. The deal, according to Gailer School headmaster Harry Chaucer, is contingent upon a long-term lease arrangement and Shelburne citizens' endorsement of a bond issue to pay for extensive renovations to the building, which has been vacant for the past three years. (Addison Independent, December 9, 1997)

December 8, 1997

Legislators address Stowe Act 60 committee

A group of Stowe citizens earlier this week met with Legislative leaders in hopes of convincing them that changes must be made to the transition provisions within Act 60 or the education of Stowe's school children will suffer greatly. On Tuesday, Vermont Lt. Gov. Douglas Racine, Senate Finance Committee Chair Cheryl Rivers, House Ways and Means Committee Vice Chair John Freidin and Rep. Karen Lafayette, also a member of the Ways and Means Committee, all traveled to Stowe to listen to members of both the Stowe School Board and the local Act 60 Action Committee. During the meeting, nearly 30 locals asked lawmakers to give gold towns like Stowe more time to adjust to the new property tax reform law. (Stowe Reporter, December 4, 1997)

Stowe School Board considers options for next year's budget vote

The Stowe School Board is exploring the idea of delaying this year's school budget vote and holding it some time after town meeting. A delay would allow the board time to determine if the Vermont Legislature is going to make changes to Act 60, and could allow the school district to craft a budget that takes advantage of any alterations. Under the rules of Act 60, the state will impose a town's existing budget, for the sake of calculating how much money a community must share, on any town that does not pass a school budget by June 1. Although a town is free to adopt a different budget after that time, the community will still be forced to share at a rate equal to the figure set by the state on June 1 even if voters adopt a lower amount. The state will not return any money if a town adopts a lower budget, but it will bill any community for the difference should it pass a budget that is higher than what the state assumed. (Stowe Reporter, December 4, 1997)

Essex considers dropping DARE program

Eighty percent of the nation's school districts participate in a

drug education program called D.A.R.E. That stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education. The DARE program was started 15 years ago in Los Angeles and despite its long track record, there is a problem and at least one Vermont community is thinking of dropping DARE. The Essex Police Department has participated in the DARE program for almost 10 years . The DARE officer visits fifth grade classes and teaches kids about drugs and the dangers of substance abuse. But a number of nationwide studies have concluded that there is no proof that DARE works. Essex police spend between \$6,000 and \$7,000 a year on the DARE program. Chief John Terry says that's a lot of money to spend on a program that doesn't deliver results. (WCAX-TV News, December 5, 1997)

[60 schools compete in statewide spelling bee](#)

The finals of the annual state spelling competition for middle school and junior high students moved inside the Statehouse this year. The winners of the 7th and 8th grade spelling competition was the team from Fairfield Center School with a score of 130. Over 60 schools competed statewide and five teams reached the the finals. The Vermont Principal's Association sponsors the competition. (WCAX-TV News, December 6, 1997)

December 5, 1997

[Act 60 handbook pictures generic children](#)

The cover of a 16-page booklet distributed by the state this week pictures cute, eager children in a classroom under the headline ``Act 60: Vermont's Equal Educational Opportunity Act. Your Handbook." But those studious-looking children vying for the teacher's attention are not Vermonters and they're not sitting in a Vermont classroom. Using that particular photo on the cover was the ``lowest-cost alternative," said an executive with the Burlington communications company that produced the handbook for the state. ``We were determined to look after the taxpayers' money," said Peg Devlyn, co-president of Marketing Partners. ``We didn't want to spend hundreds of dollars on a photo shoot and we really wanted to have children be the focus." (Associated Press, 12/05/97)

[Act 60 opponents claim supporters won't debate](#)

Bernie Rome figures he's been to more than 50 forums and meetings since July to crusade against Vermont's new education funding law. But lawmakers and supporters, who have been attending a series of meetings themselves, have

been at only a handful of Rome's appearances to defend Act 60. He'd like to know why. Sen. Cheryl Rivers, a Windsor County Democrat who was a chief author of the law, was angry earlier this week when she was listed on one of Rome's schedules as being on a panel at one of his forums in East Randolph. She had told organizers she would not attend because the format called for her to sit in the audience and listen to Rome's speech with little input herself. Senate President Pro Tem Peter Shumlin also was miffed that his colleagues would be advertised as appearing with Rome when they had not agreed. He said he has advised fellow lawmakers to be cautious about accepting such invitations without understanding the format first. Deputy Tax Commissioner Sean Campbell, who is spearheading the Act 60 implementation for the administration, shies away from appearing on the same dais as Rome.

``He is trying to deliver fire and brimstone and getting activity to repeal Act 60," Campbell said. ``My agenda is to try to explain to people how the law works and what they should expect and what they need to in the next year. I don't see it as my role to go and debate with Bernie Rome on whether or not Act 60 should be repealed." (Associated Press, 12/05/97)

State revenues are up; surplus proposals discussed

The state tax picture is strong enough that Gov. Howard Dean will move ahead with a proposal to help low-tax towns with the transition to a new school financing system. But Administration Secretary Kathleen Hoyt said Thursday the governor would wait until the end of this month before deciding whether to propose an income tax cut. ``He's going to do something on Act 60, regardless," said Hoyt. ``The decision around a tax cut really hinges on what the numbers look like at the end of this month." (Associated Press, 12/05/97)

Montpelier teens cited for alcohol, pot

About a dozen teen-agers, including varsity athletes at Montpelier High School, were picked up by city police over the weekend and were found to have beer and marijuana. The youths were found at a recreation field Saturday around 12:30 a.m. by a police officer who saw suspicious activity, said Chief Douglas Hoyt. Montpelier High School Athletic Director Gomer Morgan said three athletes had been suspended from their respective teams ``for disciplinary reasons/training rule violations." One of them was a starting member of the girls' varsity basketball team and two were members of the boys' varsity basketball team. (Associated

Press, 12/05/97)

December 4, 1997

[NEA Backs Act 60; Will Work With 'Gold Towns'](#)

Believing their role is to help separate fact from fiction now that the state has a new education funding law, leaders of the Vermont Chapter of the National Education Association are crisscrossing the state offering its membership help when it comes to both understanding the complicated new law and selling their community's next school budget. Holding seminars at various high-spending schools, union officials are educating teachers so they can then have meaningful conversations with parents regarding how the new law affects their community, said Angelo Dorta, president of Vermont NEA.

"Our most effective role is educating our members because they are in every community across the state," Mr. Dorta said. "Our first task is to make sure our members have accurate information. If we do our job right, they can then talk from a fact basis and not suppositions and false assumptions." (Stowe Reporter, November 20, 1997)

[Barnet board takes look at weapons policy](#)

School directors in Barnet discussed Tuesday night whether students should be the only ones who are not allowed to have weapons at the Barnet School. Superintendent Chaunce Benedict put forth for discussion a weapons policy draft that is used in other schools. The policy calls for a zero tolerance attitude toward weapons. The part that got school directors talking was a mention of legal action when anyone is found with a weapon on school grounds. Chairman Donald Wernecke said this was an area that held up the board on a weapons policy in the past. His concern was for parents who, during certain times of the year, come to school after spending the day hunting with a rifle in their vehicle. (Caledonian record, December 3, 1997)

December 3, 1997

[Dean says towns shouldn't increase school budgets](#)

If Vermonters want their property taxes to go down, they should hold the line on school spending, said Gov. Howard Dean. He cited a tentative proposal in Barre to increase school spending by 7.4 percent to warn that property tax reductions could be elusive if communities and school boards simply use the new education funding law to raise

spending. "If school districts around the state raise their budgets by very substantial amounts, the impact of tax reductions will be far less than we'd hoped," Dean said at his weekly news conference Tuesday. "I would just urge people to keep spending down." (Associated Press, 12/03/97)

Act 60 primer to be published Wednesday

Vermonters reading newspapers tomorrow will find the Tax Department's 16-page primer on Act 60. Governor Howard Dean says the handbook on Vermont's Equal Educational Opportunity Act has all the answers taxpayers need to determine how the new law will impact them, so long as they DO NOT vote to increase local school spending by more than the rate of inflation. Vermonters will also find an Act 60 description contained in the 1997 State Income Tax booklet this year. Those documents will be mailed December 31. (WCAX-TV News, December 2, 1997)

Florida students take classes online

When Luke Levesque takes his computer class next semester, all he'll have to do is roll out of bed, turn on his computer and read his teacher's instructions. The 11th-grader from Winter Park High School is one of 250 high school students expected to enroll in the state's only online school, The Florida High School. Other states, including California, Nebraska, New Jersey and Washington, already offer online classes to students in a manner similar to correspondence classes. The online classes will help students in rural areas that are short of resources, students with jobs, high-achievers who want to get ahead and students who just don't like school. (Associated Press, 12/02/1997)

December 2, 1997

Easing Act 60 transition will be Legislature's big issue

A central issue for lawmakers when they return to Montpelier next month will be how to modify the transition to a new education funding system for property-rich towns. Already, advocates are staking out their positions and girding for what could be a political battle. On one side are representatives of the rich towns, whose taxes are slated to rise considerably under Act 60. They do not want to modify the transition so much as they want to scrap the law altogether. On the other end of the spectrum, occupied by most of the legislative leadership, is a commitment to maintaining Act 60 largely as it was enacted with a few

modifications viewed primarily as housekeeping or clarifying. (Associated Press, 12/02/97)

[UVM appoints provost](#)

The University of Vermont has hired a top administrator from Washington State University to be its second-in-command. UVM President Judith Ramaley announced the appointment Monday of Geoffrey L. Gamble as the university's provost. "Dr. Gamble has experience, intellect, vision and a passion for higher education's crucial issues such as quality and diversity," Ramaley said in a statement. "I am delighted that he will put these attributes to work for UVM and Vermont at this challenging time when universities that aspire to true greatness must transform themselves and reaffirm their relationship with their communities." (Associated Press, 12/02/97)

December 1, 1997

[Teens discovering tobacco law fines costly](#)

Vermont teenagers have put their drivers' licenses in jeopardy because they have failed to pay a fine for illegally using, or possessing tobacco products. When legislators approved Vermont's new anti-smoking law, they not only banned cigarette vending machines, but they also put some teeth into teen smoking sanctions. Now, when people under 18 are ticketed for the illegal possession of tobacco products, they must pay the \$25-dollar fine, or face the loss of their drivers' license. So far, 250 tickets have been issued under the new law, 107 have not been paid. This week, the Motor Vehicle Department sent license suspension notices to 35 of the delinquent ticket holders. (WCAX-TV News, November 27, 1997)

[Whitingham School Board grapples with reality of Act 60 budget cuts](#)

Act 60 is proving to be a thorn in the side of school boards and superintendents around the state as they prepare budgets for fiscal year 1999. The Whitingham school board is no exception. Windham Southwest Supervisory Union Superintendent Dr. M. Peter Wright presented the school board with a first draft proposal of the fiscal year '99 budget. The budget for the up-coming year shows an increase of \$15,003 or 0.06% over last year's budget. The bottom line figure is \$2,566,359. This figure does not include \$57,000 for building repairs voted at Town Meeting but not included in last year's budget figures. (Deerfield Valley News, November 27, 1997)

[Vermont girls run away with cross country title](#)

A pair of Vermont high school cross country runners took the city by storm this weekend. Erin Sullivan and Tara Chaplin finished first and second, respectively, in the Foot Locker Northeast Regional in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx Saturday. Sullivan, a Mount Mansfield junior who only picked up cross country racing this fall, added the regional title to state and New England crowns she claimed earlier, cruising the 5-kilometer course in 17 minutes, 31 seconds. (Associated Press, 12/01/97)

[One America: The President's Initiative on Race](#)

President Clinton will hold a town meeting on race that will be broadcast over C-Span from Ohio on December 3 starting at 11 a.m. The town meeting is called, "One America: President Clinton's Initiative on Race," and will explore ways to improve race relations by working together.

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