

## APPENDIX F

# Snapshots

## School Districts' Proposals and Conversations

### Act 46, Secs. 9 and 10

The Agency of Education prepared a "Snapshot" of each proposal submitted by a single district or a group of districts.

Each Snapshot includes key passages from the Section 9 Proposal inserted into the common list of topics developed from the language of Act 46 and provided to each school board in advance of the Section 10 Conversation. *Italicized text* represents quoted language.

In some cases, the Snapshot also includes additional information gleaned from the Conversation.

If the board representatives prepared written responses to the common list of topics and provided them electronically, then those responses are integrated in full into the Snapshot as well.

If the written or verbal information provided by a district did not easily translate into responses to the common list of topics, then the information provided is listed as notes rather than as responses to each topic.

A common group of data points is included at the end of each Snapshot.

*The Snapshots are arranged in the same order in which the Secretary's proposed plan discusses the Section 9 Proposal submitted by the district or group of districts.*

The common set of topics provided to all school boards in advance of the Conversations and on which the Snapshots are based are as follows:

## Topics of Discussion

1. How does the proposal support your ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?
  - a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
  - b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?
  - a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
  - b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?
5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver[ education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?
6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then
  - a. Why is merger not “possible”?
  - b. Why is merger not “practicable”?
7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then
  - a. Why not?
  - b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?

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# 1. The Brattleboro Union High School District and its Four Member Elementary Districts (Brattleboro; Dummerston; Guilford; Putney)

## The Brattleboro School District – Snapshot

SU: Windham Southeast SU

Date of Conversation: April 6, 2018

### Participants:

- Board Members: Jill Stahl Tyler (Chair); Spoon Agave; David Schoales
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Lyle Holiday; Business Manager Frank Rucker

### Current O/T Structure:

- PK-8 operating
- Town is member of BUHSD for 7-12

### Governance Proposal:

Create a unified union school district with Brattleboro, Dummerston, Guilford, and Putney as members as proposed by § 706 Study Committee and approved by State Board on September 20, 2017

### Other Notes:

- Unanimous vote of Act 46 Study Committee to present Study Committee’s proposal to electorate
- November 7, 2017 Merger vote:
  - Brattleboro – 375 Yes; 850 No
  - Dummerston – 91 Yes; 473 No
  - Guilford – 161 Yes; 262 No
  - Putney – 171 Yes; 370 No
- Brattleboro School Board’s vote on Sec. 9 Proposal was not unanimous:  
*“After careful consideration of all paths to compliance with Act 46, the vote remains split three in favor and two against the Study Committee’s Articles of Agreement. However, the majority believe the Articles developed by the WSESU Act 46 Study Committee provide the best solution for meeting the goals and objectives of the law. Additionally, we wish to continue to build upon the momentum gained over the last two years towards achieving a region-wide collaborative approach to the education of the children in our region.”* (Letter, p. 1)

### Other Resources:

- [Board Letter submitted as Sec. 9 Proposal, dated December 22, 2017](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Windham Southeast SU – 2,262  
Brattleboro (K-6) – 713.15  
Dummerston (K-8) – 142.00  
Guilford (K-8) – 130.90  
Putney (K-8) – 156.65  
Vernon (K-6 o / 7-12 t) – 299.45  
Brattleboro UHSD (7/9-12) – 816.27

### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

Participation in § 706 Study Committee, which met for two+ years, held public meetings, etc. After failed merger vote, Board continued discussions.

## April 6, 2018 Conversation:

### Jill Stahl Tyler:

- Compared proposed merger proposal with AGS group's proposal (adopted by Dummerston and Vernon)
  - See *A Comparison of Merger Proposals*, her written overview of what she shared verbally
- Proposed articles included compromises, e.g., to reassure smaller districts fearful of school closure and also reassure Brattleboro that a small majority in a small town couldn't permanently veto what rest of unified district believed was best
- Believes all districts facing similar issues, but that Guilford is "just more honest" about them

### Spoon Agave:

- Looking at big picture – every year more people are becoming homeless, involved with DCF in some way, etc. – the "indicators of society slowly disintegrating keep increasing"
- Fewer people are voting
- It's increasingly hard to find candidates to run for Board seats
- Engagement is core of democracy and "it's disappearing at a noticeable rate"
- Less trust in communities and in government – increasing hopelessness
- Small local school boards provide opportunities for community and connections – and sees that being undermined by centralized board, with meetings in far-away locale, with little representation on the board, and "no provision for the dissemination of information"
- What is critical is left out of all proposals - how education will help kids to sustain and improve where they live

### David Schoales:

- Sustainability – merger would not be sustainable for Brattleboro schools:
  - Brattleboro provides services for others in region
    - 50% home ownership
    - Town taxes are high
  - Brattleboro's education taxes are lowest in region
  - Merger will cause education tax to rise in Brattleboro, meaning combined town/ed tax in Brattleboro will be even higher than now
  - Results in a transfer resources from Brattleboro schools (with highest poverty rate) to other schools (with lower poverty rates and lesser achievement gaps)
  - Concerned that if unified, Brattleboro voters will not support unified school budget because combined town / ed taxes will rise and because switching to Australian ballot
    - Concerned that unified budget will fail because Brattleboro voters represent large percentage of all voters
    - Concerned that the quality of schools will decrease as a result
- Transparency – merger would cause loss of transparency:
  - Brattleboro has unique form of town governance (Representative Town Meeting)
  - Both town and school budget discussed at same Report Night and voted on at Representative Town Meeting in late March
    - If unified, then separate meeting and Australian ballot three weeks before Representative Town Meeting
    - Concerned that attendance at school district meeting would be low – very low attendance currently at Union High School budget meeting
    - Would lose transparency of current system
  - Brattleboro is example of what Legislative meant when acknowledged that a UUSD "may not be possible or the best model to achieve VT's educational goals"
  - See *Practicality, Sustainability, and Transparency in Brattleboro* his written overview of what he shared verbally

### If State Board changes Windham Southeast SU's boundaries:

- Marlboro could be included / maybe also other districts in Windham Central / Windham NE

## The Dummerston School District and the Vernon School District – Snapshot

SU: Windham Southeast SU

Date of Conversation: April 9, 2018

### Participants:

- Dummerston Board Members: Kristina Naylor (Chair); Michael McGillion; Susan Meggiolaro; Jody Normandeau
- Vernon Board Members: Michael Hebert (Chair); Kerry Amidon; Sandra Morrison
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Lyle Holiday; Anne Beekman; Laura Chapman; Don McLean; Paul Normandeau; David Schoales

### Current O/T Structure:

Dummerston:

- PK-8 operating
- Town is member of BUHSD for 9-12

Vernon:

- PK-6 operating
- 7-12 tuitioning

### Governance Proposal:

- Adopted Alternative Governance Structure (AGS) Committee’s proposal
- Retain current governance structure – four town elementary districts, one union high school, one PreK-12 town district (K-6 operating/PreK and 7-12 tuitioning)
- Retain current SU with the five districts (above) and Vernon as members
- Proposes meeting / exceeding the Act 46 goals under the current governance by, *e.g.*, creating an “Opportunity and Equity Committee” and school-based Community Leadership Councils; exploring a Regional Educational Assistance Fund; and implementing a Limited Student Transfer policy and more joint contracts for services

### Other Notes:

- Unanimous vote of Act 46 Study Committee to present proposal to electorate
- November 7, 2017 Merger vote:
  - Brattleboro – 375 Yes; 850 No
  - Dummerston – 91 Yes; 473 No
  - Guilford – 161 Yes; 262 No
  - Putney – 171 Yes; 370 No

### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- Board’s Responses to Common List of Topics (integrated in full below)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G, Appendix G

### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

See Brattleboro Snapshot above for the K-12 ADM in FY 2018 for the region

### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- Prior to merger vote, Dummerston created an AGS proposal subcommittee
- After vote, all WSESU districts (board reps and many community members) participated in an AGS Committee
- 16 meetings by mid-December 2017

## School Boards' Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

c. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

d. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

#### What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- In the 1 ½ years after the study committee identified programmatic inequities (e.g., universal meals, behavioral support programs, full-time PreK, languages) “the schools of the WSESU had rapidly moved to equalize opportunities” (p. 6)
- “Generating additional local revenue is the only present way to increase meals availability, and for that a comprehensive assessment of needs and a determination of efficient models for delivery need to be developed on a per location basis. The kind of cross-district problem solving is possible to achieve within a cooperative union structure and has in fact occurred in the past.” (p. 6)
- 706 study committee found inequities in student outcomes – “However, consolidation alone will not, in and of itself, remove these differences. Similar disparities exist among the consolidated three schools of our largest town district. ... Focused remediation within the limits of available resources must occur across any governance system.” (p. 6)
- April 9, 2018 Conversation:
  - Project based learning schools don't score as high on SBACs
  - Important to demonstrate success in other ways
  - SBAC scores have improved due to interventions
- Proposes
  - School-based Community Leadership Councils (CLCs) (p. 10) A volunteer committee for each PreK-8 district with “at least one school board member, a teacher, a parent, an administrator, an interested citizen, and student representatives, where deemed appropriate ... to discuss and work towards an understanding of the needs (and strengths) of each school.”
  - Opportunity and Equity Committee (OEC) (p. 10) School Board members serving on the CLCs would meet as representatives to this “official committee” that would meet “regularly to investigate, propose and recommend equity and efficiency initiatives throughout the [supervisory] union.”
    - OEC committee participate at full board “carousel” meetings to update the SU board members on “compliance with Act 46 goals and to set collective goals for efficiency and equity.”
    - “The [OEC] committee is intended to engage districts in collaborative efforts and resource sharing to accomplish cross-district equity instead of the current practice of only focusing on local budgets at Town Meetings.”
  - Regional Education Assistance Fund (p. 11) Suggests “WSESU investigate initiating a Regional Education Assistance Fund. It is proposed that all districts contribute to this fund to improve equity and efficiency, transparency and accountability supervisory-union wide. Alternatively, the REA fund could be created through a process of SU assessment.”
    - OEC committee would “determine the best use for REA funds and make recommendations to the full Supervisory Union board”
    - “Funding apportionment should be sensitive to factors agreed by the [OEC] committee and proposed to the SU as appropriate”
    - “Cost-savings found through increased staff sharing identified by the Opportunity and Equity committee might effectively offset REA contribution costs.”
  - Limited Student Transfer policy (pp. 14-15) Allow limited number of students to enroll in another district's elementary school. “Enrollment flexibility can also provide incentives for parents to enrolling students in the public-school system, rather than private schools, as studies have shown that availability of only a single desirable school feature can often make or break a placement decision.” (p 15)



Boards' written response to conversation topic #1:

*Our proposal creates a structure dedicated to identifying opportunities to improve for all our students. The Opportunity and Equity Committee's (OEC) purpose is to focus our attention on areas of inequity and provide interventions and solutions.*

*WSESU schools have limited assessment instruments that enable us to identify inequities in student academic performance by school. We do not compare grades or graduation rates by town. Our town elementary schools have unique cultures and programs. We have no way of identifying any difference in outcomes resulting from these different approaches.*

*To remedy this situation so we can accurately identify any inequities in our schools, the OEC will oversee the long-term strategy of tracking programmatic differences and measuring performance over time.*

*Tracking all students' academic performance in middle and high school as well as graduation rates by town/school of origin will help us identify where schools need support and interventions. Although this information has been requested in the past by several elementary boards, it has not been provided. In response to the AGS team's request, our current administration has begun tracking that information going forward.*

*School-based Leadership Councils composed of teachers, parents, principals, and at least one school board member will develop a deep understanding of each school's programming successes and needs and bring that knowledge to the OEC.*

*This new communication structure will create opportunities to understand why/how/withways schools are successful and enable other schools to draw on their methods and improve their efforts. This transparency will enable sharing of information, resources, and practices that otherwise would remain isolated in each individual school. It will create opportunities for teachers to create learning teams outside their classrooms and schools, to share ideas and resources, to help each other improve.*

*Limited School Transfer will create opportunities for students to remain within a school district even if a family moves. Research indicates that reducing student 'churn' improves educational outcomes. Where multiple family moves, especially those that occur mid-year, are often associated with chronically underserved students, we expect this policy will help improve outcomes for these students. This policy will also create opportunities for students to transfer to a different public school if the current school is not a good fit. The WSESU has lost several students to private schools, and if they had had the opportunity to switch schools within the WSESU, they may not have followed that path and would have remained in the public-school system.*

**8. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“Most of our schools demonstrate proficiency above the state average on the SBAC assessments and have made improvements over the past three years of SBAC testing. Some schools have even obtained levels of proficiency for students receiving [FRL] assistance or identified for special education assistance that exceed the state SBAC average for all students.” (p. 7) – SBAC and NECAP data is attached as appendix to AGS proposal*
- April 9, 2018 Conversation: Dummerston has low administrator turnover
- Proposes:
  - The OEC committee will review recommendations of the Integrated Field Review, lead the assessment of school needs, and develop a plan of response.

Boards' written response to conversation topic #2:

*The OEC will review the Recommendations of the Integrated Field Review. It will lead the assessment of the areas of need in each school and develop a plan to respond. As a central communication resource, the OEC provides the opportunity for teachers and administrators to share ideas and resources across all seven elementary schools.*

*Through our current staff sharing arrangements our schools currently meet or exceed the Educational Quality Standards*

*Our large Union High School allows us to meet and exceed the EQS at the High School level.*

**9. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Already realizes efficiencies in consolidated SU functions – e.g., in addition to those required by law (SpEd, transportation, negotiations, etc.) also fiscal services management; teacher professional development funds; consolidated purchasing “where appropriate” (p. 6)
- Districts currently share positions – sometimes by design, sometimes by coincidence – e.g., librarian, music, PE – “This cooperative approach allows schools to offer full-time employment to highly qualified educators, while apportioning teaching time to the individual needs of the school.” (p. 7)
- Compare staffing levels to Picus Odden recommendations and reduce staff where necessary through attrition (p. 7)
- Proposes:
  - See Regional Assistance Fund above
  - OEC committee will:
    - help identify operational efficiencies and facilitate SU wide sharing of resources (p. 12)
    - compare each school’s student-staff ratios and help identify benchmarks and opportunities for reducing
  - Same savings identified by 706 study committee for staff “configuration exists for individual districts in the present [supervisory] union structure by working collaboratively” (p. 13)

Boards' written response to conversation topic #3:

*The OEC and Leadership council provide a structure for clear understanding of building level needs so resources can be shared more efficiently. This structure opens avenues for staff to collaborate, be more flexible, and share innovations and resources.*

*We expect more effective communications and planning will lead to lower costs and potential for more joint contracts for services. This is likely to improve the ratio of students to staff. When we reviewed the efficiency study from Washington Central we were surprised to note that our current system of an executive/finance committee of a few members is an inefficient one. ‘Carousel’ meetings will improve cross-fertilization of ideas between elementary districts, as well as reduce time spent in meetings for SU staff. We also expect to increase coordination of purchasing, consider expanding this to other SU’s as we collaborate more.*

*We intend to carefully track the development and evolution of this new structure to assure success. We expect a quarterly review of actions and initiatives to be part of an ongoing assessment of effectiveness, and to develop a report card for tracking future growth and performance.*

*Our Regional Educational Assistance fund will allow for transfer of resources if areas of need are identified. A protocol, application, assessment, and renewal system to distribute the fund will be developed.*

*One of the great challenges to our school's enrollment is the growth in our private schools. Currently if their local school is not a good fit, many families enroll in our growing private schools. In our Supervisory Union, we estimate that 15-20% of our local students are enrolled in private school or homeschooled. Limited school transfer will attract families back into the public school by giving them options to have their children attend a school that may be a better fit for their child, at no cost to the family. We already have anecdotal evidence of interest in this program from local families who currently have their students enrolled in private school.*

*Retention of the Vernon School District as an equal partner in our Supervisory Union will assure system sustainability. The efficiency of our High School Union and WSESU depend upon their participation. Use of WSESU services will help assure Vernon students are prepared for the BUHS curriculum will be less likely to require interventions to be successful. This will also increase the likelihood that Vernon students will continue to attend BUHS in their historic percentages so that the BUHS debt is not borne more heavily by the remaining districts, as Vernon is no longer a member of BUHS. They will also continue to financially support our Supervisory Union, and this will allow us to keep retain the economies of scale of our current SU.*

**10. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

- The current, single-town school “district school board structure allows for immediate local access by constituents, and these boards can take rapid responsive action. ... Our larger consolidated [sic] school district, Brattleboro, does not provide quite the same level of simple local community access.” (p. 9)
- April 9 Conversation:
  - Dummerston doesn't have a problem filling Board seats
  - Dummerston had a contested seat in 2018
- Proposes:
  - Retain local boards
  - School-based Community Leadership Councils
  - Opportunity and Equity Committee
  - Rotate location of meetings

Boards' written response to conversation topic #4:

*These issues are extremely important given the growing lack of confidence in governance.*

*Our AGS seeks to increase participation in school governance among all our stakeholders through building-based Leadership Councils. Leadership Councils will include teachers and students and be eyes and ears in every building and town.*

*Under merger, the budget vote in Brattleboro will have occurred three weeks before the Representative Town Meeting. The highly engaging and effective school district presentation of the budget to the public before Representative Town Meeting, which has been essential to building community understanding of the realities in the schools will be diminished- certainly it would be sparsely attended if it had no authority or decisions to make. The experience of very low annual turnout for our union high school budget meeting (less than .5% of eligible voters) clearly demonstrates public participation in our region is greater and accountability improved with smaller governance structures.*

*Retaining local boards means more locally accessible governance ‘foot-soldiers,’ which increases opportunities for engagement with the public. Students, parents and taxpayers will have greater and better access to their governing bodies. Maintaining the larger number of board members means more brainpower to a wider range of local and SU-wide problems and solutions- more focused oversight on a wider range of committees. If people are engaged, the process is sustained. Engaged, invested people translates to increased transparency.*

*Town meetings will continue to examine budgets and reports. Smaller district budgets are easier to present and for the public to understand and can be questioned from the floor.*

*Transparency and accountability are enhanced by greater collaboration among school boards through the OEC and carousel meetings so members will be well informed about operations in other districts. Rotation of OEC meetings through the various communities will provide greater opportunity for public engagement.*

*We propose to give a full presentation of the SU budget and an advisory vote at Town Meetings to increase the transparency and accountability of this structure.*

*REA-funded projects will be regularly assessed for effectiveness and sustainability.*

**11. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver[ education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #5:

*Smaller entities allow for closer alignment of parents’, voters’ and taxpayers’ needs to the district priorities.*

*Budgets are regularly examined and supported by voters. Presentations before and at Town Meeting well attended and engaging, people feel that their vote matters and they have an obligation to understand their budget. While our local school budgets are typically voted on by 10-15% of our registered voters, less than 0.5% of the registered voters in the attend our BUHS Union annual meeting and budget vote, already a large merged district with a large budget. Local taxpayers will continue to be able to vote on their budgets and votes will necessarily reflect their values. Smaller budgets are understandable and more controllable. Individual budgets which identify separately the areas of, and cost of collaboration and sharing make it easier to study, modify and adapt these shared costs to improve delivery of services.*

*Communities have opportunities to get information and provide input on programs that might not be effective or wanted. This sustained level of community involvement has meant better programming and better integration of new parents and new community members with more voices heard. There is more flexibility to be responsive to local to community concerns. Issues are managed quickly and efficiently by locally based boards.*

*Rotating the location of OEC meetings provides opportunities for schools to work together to fulfill needs of their students and for the public to access information about what area schools are doing.*

*This is a bottom-up, grass-roots process that will enable our towns to support each other and encourage greater public engagement and support.*

**12. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**

**a. Why is merger not “possible”?**

**b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**

- Dummerston and Putney have differing debt levels
- Differing sizes of towns mean disparate voting power
- Vernon cannot be merged because pays tuition and does not want to change
- Brattleboro’s taxes will increase

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #6:

*K-8 Dummerston and Putney have differing debts- \$0 and over \$1,000,000.*

*K-6 Vernon will not join a merged union, so our current system would be weakened.*

*Disparities in size (K-6 Brattleboro is five times larger than K-6 Guilford) means surrounding towns will have little voting power if merged.*

*Tax implications- Brattleboro tax rate will increase, already the highest overall because of infrastructure costs as regional economic hub and inability to implement a Local Options Sales Tax due to proximity of New Hampshire.*

*ALL our towns would lose something they value in a merged union district. Our Supervisory Union has a long record of excellent outcomes and efficient operations. Our schools and communities are unique, and there is no specific evidence that our differences are causing inequities that affect student outcomes. There are few specific reductions or efficiencies, beyond savings on audits, that have been identified that would result from a merger.*

**13. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

- Both Dummerston and Vernon want Vernon to remain in the SU
- April 9, 2018 Conversation: Most Vernon students will continue to enroll in Brattleboro UHS so important for continuity to remain in SU

## The Guilford School District – Snapshot

SU: Windham Southeast SU

Date of Conversation: April 3, 2018

### Participants:

- Board Members: Emily Hartz; Michael Roberts
- Also in Attendance: Beth Bristol (former Board Chair and Study Committee Member); Superintendent Lyle Holiday; Business Manager Frank Rucker

### Current O/T Structure:

- PK-6 operating
- Town is member of BUHSD for 7-12

### Governance Proposal:

Create a unified union school district with Brattleboro, Dummerston, Guilford, and Putney as members as proposed by § 706 Study Committee and approved by State Board on September 20, 2017

*“Following multiple readings of the AGS proposal, and interactive question and answer sessions with the [Guilford School Board] representative of the AGS sub-committee and other involved community members, we remain unclear as to how this proposal addresses our biggest challenges, or complies with the law.” (Letter, p. 2)*

### Other Notes:

- Unanimous vote of Act 46 Study Committee to present Study Committee’s proposal to electorate
- November 7, 2017 Merger vote:
  - Brattleboro – 375 Yes; 850 No
  - Dummerston – 91 Yes; 473 No
  - Guilford – 161 Yes; 262 No
  - Putney – 171 Yes; 370 No

### Other Resources:

- [Board Letter submitted as Sec. 9 Proposal, dated December 18, 2017](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

See Brattleboro Snapshot above for the K-12 ADM in FY 2018 for the region

### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- § 706 Study Committee – two years; including *“numerous public informational sessions and community forums”* (Letter, p. 2)
  - After November vote, board
    - *“regrouped to further contemplate our path to compliance”*
    - *“joined a sub-committee to study the potential for an”* AGS
      - § 706 Study Committee previously *“examined and discounted”* AGS option
      - But *“we heard the voices of members of our community and gave this option further consideration”*
      - *“multiple readings of the AGS proposal”*
      - *“interactive question and answer sessions with the GTSB representative of the AGS sub-committee and other involved community members”*
- (Letter, p. 2)

### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

- Letter, p. 1; emphasis in original:  
*“The GTSB is very much aware of the driving forces behind Act 46, and has felt first-hand the impacts of declining enrollment and rising costs on Guilford Central School. We have made tough budget decisions and been forced to limit programming opportunities in an effort to keep costs affordable to our tax payers. We have experienced the fluctuations in annual enrollments and the subsequent effect on our ability to respond to the changing needs of our students while controlling costs. We recognize the necessity for imminent change.”*  
  
*“Our biggest challenge is the volatility of our cost per student, and the impact that calculation has on our school offerings and our long term sustainability. The path to compliance with Act 46 for Guilford school must directly address that challenge.”*
- April 3, 2018 Conversation:
  - Urgency – Guilford cannot stay the same
  - Began sending 7-8 graders to Brattleboro Union a few years ago – three year roll-out to “arrangement” because thought would be merging; now coming to a head
  - Regional middle school possibilities if merge
  - Past year – started PreK – at full/over capacity – 15-16 on waiting list
  - Brattleboro has higher poverty but lower cost/pupil and more programs
  - AGS proposal is very complex and doesn’t address cost per pupil issues
  - Guilford has a lot it could share – e.g., farm to school; place based education
  - Rather than closing Guilford (or another small town) elementary school – other options – e.g., Brattleboro has three elementary schools – convert one into central office
  - Things that make the Guilford school special will need to be cut if it stays a single-town district because not sustainable

## The Putney School District – Snapshot

SU: Windham Southeast SU

Date of Conversation: April 3, 2018

### Participants:

- Board Members: Alice Laughlin (Chair); Anne Beekman; Timothy Morris; Emily Pals
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Lyle Holiday; Business Manager Frank Rucker

### Current O/T Structure:

- PK-8 operating
- Town is a member of BUHSD for 9-12

### Governance Proposal:

- Board submitted a document per Act 46, Sec. 9 – but made no proposal
- Board’s submission under Sec. 9 “serves as a report of [its] understandings rather than a declaration as to how [the] district should best comply with Act 46 and Act 49” (Submission, p. 1)
- April 3, 2018 Conversation:
  - All Board Members agree there need to be changes, but don’t agree on what the changes should be – (2 v. 2 at Conversation)
  - AGS proposal (adopted by Dummerston and Vernon) dilutes Putney’s ability to take care of its students without allowing anyone to take advantage of an increased ADM

### Other Notes:

- Unanimous vote of Act 46 Study Committee to present Study Committee’s proposal to electorate
- November 7, 2017 Merger vote:
  - Brattleboro – 375 Yes; 850 No
  - Dummerston – 91 Yes; 473 No
  - Guilford – 161 Yes; 262 No
  - Putney – 171 Yes; 370 No
- 164 acre wooded hillside – school district divided it from 12 acre school grounds – pursuing long-standing goal of protecting it with conservation easement

### Other Resources:

- [Board Submission submitted in lieu of a Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

See Brattleboro Snapshot above for the K-12 ADM in FY 2018 for the region

### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- § 706 Study Committee – “two years of research, discussion, and collaboration between all four merging towns” (Submission, p. 4)
- Survey after vote – “community values, how to address increasing costs in light of decreased enrollment, what to retain or expand in the Articles of Agreement, and recommendations for the future of education in Putney.” (p. 4)
- Considered many options including “keeping our School Board, merging with Dummerston and/or Guilford, Marlboro and Westminster; giving all kids school choice [; and] turning PCS into an independent school.” (p. 19)
- Participated in AGS committee formed by two other school districts (p. 19)



## School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

**NOTE:** The standard topics below are framed in terms of a “proposal.” The Putney School Board’s submission under Sec. 9 was not a proposal (see above), but we have included information and comments from their submission under whatever question below seemed most appropriate.

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“In 2013 we created a five-year, long range plan to address the issues of decreasing enrollment, increasing costs and consequently our limited ability to offer the programming our students need.” Had positive results. When Act 46 enacted, “put aside this plan as education law was addressing many of the challenges we faced and our energies were required to address compliance.” (p. 1)*
- Full time PreK for last six years (pp. 4 and 15)
- Grants have enabled same enrichment programs as rest of districts in SU, including individual and small group after-school tutoring programs – but integrated more slowly in P because of budgetary limitations (p. 9)
- Self-contained middle school (p. 12)
- Middlebury Interactive Language – online program with four languages for 6-8, part-time certified language teacher supervises, but doesn’t speak most of languages offered – want to improve program (p. 14)
- Currently above 40% of elementary students eligible for FRL (pp. 1 and 9)

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Has wanted Universal Meals and had made arrangements to fund costs not reimbursed by federal program – but school poverty numbers lowered just enough to disqualify it from program (p. 10)
- Operates own food service program, has Farm to School program, sustainability coordinator, “scratch cooking” – educational as well as nourishing (pp. 10-11)

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

**4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Chronic problem recruiting board members
- Few residents come to Board meetings
- Cost prohibitive to use community access TV (p. 18)

**5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Enrollment has risen, in part due to increasing enrollment in full-time PreK program (p. 7)
- Anticipate enrollment will rise – school has good reputation “beyond our region” – some families unable to relocate to Putney because of lack of or expense of housing – new 22 unit housing project being built (p. 7)
- Putney has capital debt for two projects – renovation and energy efficiency. “These upgrades and retrofits have resulted in ... immediate – and predicted long term – energy savings” (p. 8)

- In past, has enrolled more 7-8 graders from Westminster (which tuitions those grades) – but Bellow Falls Middle School renovations might be seen as a *“more appealing option”* and Westminster Board *“has apparently been actively discouraging families from heading out of their district.”* (pp. 8-9)
6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
    - Some children in Westminster and Brookline live closer to Putney Central School than to their own – some have attempted to enroll *“with varying levels of success.”*
    - Westminster children would benefit from easier access to Putney school *“and most of those families identify Putney as their community”*
    - *“We ask that this dynamic be considered as district lines are redrawn.”* (pp. 7-8)
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

## 2. The Missisquoi Valley Union High School District and its Three Member Elementary Districts (Franklin; Highgate; Swanton)

### Snapshot

SU: Franklin Northwest SU

Date of Conversation: February 8, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Robert Berger (Franklin), Connie Beyor (Highgate), Jason McConnell (Sheldon)
- Also in attendance: Superintendent Winton Goodrich

#### Current O/T Structure:

Franklin – PK-6 operating, Town is member of UHS for 7-12  
Highgate – PK-6 operating, Town is member of UHS for 7-12  
Swanton – PK-6 operating, Town is member of UHS for 7-12  
Missisquoi Valley UHS – 7-12 operating (Franklin, Highgate, Swanton)  
Sheldon – PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning

#### Governance Proposal:

*“Enhanced Alternative Governance Structure”* – Retain current district governance structures within current SU and make changes to address identified weaknesses

#### Other Notes:

- FNESU:
  - Enosburg and Richford – same O/T structure as Franklin, Highgate, Swanton, Missisquoi
  - Franklin Northeast PreK-8 UUSD (Bakersfield ; Berkshire) – same O/T structure as Sheldon
    - Advance acceptance of any like district adjoining FNE SU if SBE requires merger
- Maple Run SD (Former Franklin Central) – same O/T structure as Franklin, Highgate, Swanton, Missisquoi
- GISU – northern bridge to island in FNW SU

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Franklin Northwest SU – 2,000.50

	<u>K-6</u>	<u>7-12</u>
Franklin	99.1	112.20
Highgate	300.10	207.78
Swanton	521.1	<u>427.81</u>
[Missisquoi Valley Union		747.79]
Sheldon (K-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning) –		338.60

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- Exploratory committee – forum in each town to hear community needs and concerns – result was not to form 706 committee (pp. 1, 4)
- Current committee charged with recommending the optimal governance structure – reached out to:
  - Alburgh, Bakersfield, Georgia School Boards – re merger or resource sharing
  - Maple Run USD – to see how they approached Act 46
  - Community members, teachers, principals, taxpayers, legislators (pp. 1, 4, 6)

## School Boards' Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

- *"It is not the intention of our 'Enhanced FNWSU AGS' to be satisfied with just meeting the goals of Act 46. FNWSU intends to explore new ideas which may have never been tried, or even thought of, to exceed the goals of Act 46."* (p. 2).
- In general, the districts propose to:
  - create new administrative committees for oversight/advisory purposes
  - explore intradistrict K-6 choice
  - explore out of country/ out of state enrollment in MVHS
  - consider centralized custodial / maintenance
  - expand shared teachers
  - expand bulk purchasing
  - combine and streamline board meetings
  - *"ensure"* that every school has adequate behavior / intervention services

### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to "provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities" in a "sustainable" manner?

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?

- *"Research and implement"* elementary / middle school choice within SU (pp. 12-13) – policy recommendations:
  - 5 students in and out per year based on school board approval with considerations for geography, transportation, capacity, *"family circumstances,"* etc.
- *"Implement curriculum focus and accountability measures to ensure all students are provided equitable learning opportunities (i.e., all teachers using and implementing same curriculum) and learning successes. FNWSU meets and often exceeds goal #1 of Act 46 and provides more equitable opportunities across the SU regarding curriculum and instruction. They include:"*
  - *"Ensure each school has adequate behavior / intervention services based on need and population" – currently not doing so*
  - *"Ensure each school has behavior system and personnel" to be successful – currently not all do*
  - *"Create formalized practices for common positions and systems (e.g., Instructional Coaching)"*
  - *"Implement an improved supervision and evaluation system that better matches the instructional framework" under the Marzano framework – being implemented 2017-2018*  
(p. 10)
- *"Establish an 'Instructional Resource Team' to promote access to learning opportunities and ensure all students are afforded educational opportunity."* – Superintendent, Business Manager, Curriculum Coordinator, Principals – meet before each school year, present findings to boards for approval (p. 11)
- Exploring CTE collaboration among all Franklin County CTE centers (attached to Feb 6 email)
- Appendix A (page 4): *"[T]here is already substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities." Improvements can be already be achieved in current structure and no evidence that consolidated structure will lead to greater equity. The "schools ... will be best served by the implementation of our enhanced alternative governance structure, which has been designed to exceed all of the goals of Act 46."*
- Appendix B: Test scores below state averages at MVSU and all other districts except Franklin.
- February 8, 2018 Conversation:
  - Do not have major equity issues – time and access in substantial agreement
  - Two schools have gaps – now have action plans
  - Students have equal access to opportunities
  - Schools have different opportunities due to location/geography
  - Equal access to professional development
  - Reorganizing some areas to work on equal access

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“Continue to enhance and support [SU]/school improvement teams”*
  - *“create site-based school improvement team”* (Principal, Guidance Counselor, Math Teacher, Literacy Teacher, SpEd Teacher) *“to create, monitor, and update all site-based continuous school improvement plans”*
  - *“formally establishing an SU level school improvement team”* (Superintendent, Curriculum Director, SpEd Director, Director of Indian Education, a Principal, a School Board Member) that will meet monthly to review above and facilitate implementation
  - Will *“adjust”* NCLB/Title 1/ESSA-required school improvement teams to *“include”* work described above (p. 9)
  - Teams *“will serve as conduits for staff collaboration, peer review, and effective problem solving within each school”* (p. 10)
- *“Build upon existing plans to enhance [SU’s] effectiveness” – e.g., teachers and school leaders already using Marazano Research, MTSS, and Anthony Muhamed’s work on transforming school culture* (p. 9)
- *“Improve opportunities to improve students’ ability to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards.”* (p.11)
  - *“Study measures taken ... [and e]nsure each school has adequate academic or behavior intervention services.”*
  - Track students from elementary to HS to determine overall graduation rates
- *“Support practices and processes that enable student to achieve at the proficient and above proficiency levels”* (p.11)
  - Will *“continue to investigate the methodology and processes”* related to testing in each district and *“assess”* which leads to best outcomes
- 4 of 5 schools identified as *“required corrective action”* because of low test scores and so raising test scores is high priority
- Appendix B (page 16):
  - Have not found evidence that merging will improve test scores
  - Dropout rate higher than state average, but rate dropping and trends predict continuing to drop
- February 8, 2018 Conversation:
  - Aligned curriculum but do not have uniform results on standardized testing
    - Looking further into delivery and accountability
  - Info flows from elementary schools to MVU, but feedback from MVU to elementary is missing – addressing that
  - Understand they have work to do
    - Evaluating what works best in each school and developing best practices

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“The Superintendent and Boards will prioritize the review / amendment of all existing policies, and approve the adoption of new policies designed to support, and maintain the changes identified in the AGS operational methodology.”* (p.10)
- *“Continue exploring and sharing resources”* (p.12)
- *“Many of the efficiency measures being adopted by merging districts ... have already been implemented by FNWSU” – e.g.*

- SpEd, transportation contracts, district-wide negotiated contracts, curriculum coordination, fiscal service management
  - bulk purchasing, food services, shared teaching staff, discussion of centralizing custodial/maintenance staff, recommending expanded bulk purchasing
  - *“Make collaboration between and within districts an individual and organizational performance expectation”* (p. 13)
  - *“Assess and improve board meetings in terms of quantity, topics, and efficiencies.” -- “We are going to cut down on the number of meetings, combine meetings where possible, and focus on making every meeting streamlined, organized, efficient and effective. We will also assess the topics and results of our meetings. We believe we can be more strategic and involved in matters of importance, such as discussing and monitoring our improvement plan at every meeting.”* (p. 13)
  - Appendix C (pages 10-14)
  - Ratios getting lower because of increased number children who have experienced trauma.
  - February 8, 2018 Conversation:
    - Sharing staff: some hired by SU; some with districts, where have two contracts
    - Turnover varies from school to school
      - [~40 staff members annually, per superintendent]
      - Teach in FNW SU for a few years and then get job in Chittenden County
    - Highgate – high administrator turnover, 4 principals in 7 years
    - Aligned curriculum but do not have uniform results on standardized testing
      - Looking further into delivery and accountability
    - Looking at CTE collaboration with Enosburgh in FNESU
    - Looking at virtual merger of central office with GISU
- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- *“Use data to measure success in meeting/exceeding Act 46 goals, and to inform future strategies.”* (p. 12)
  - *“Provide communication and information regarding the Supervisory Union budget to the community and stakeholders.”* – expand communication re: SU budget *“by discussing this at local public budget informational meetings”* (p. 12)
  - *“Establish a yearly ‘State of the Union’ Report”* (p. 13)
  - Keep Act 46 Committee together and change mission to advisory (p.14)
  - Appendix D
  - February 8, 2018 Conversation:
    - Extra meetings to explain SU budget
    - Elementary budgets tend to pass / MVU budgets do not
    - Tax rates would increase in 4 of 4 towns
- 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- *“Research and implement”* intra-SU school choice program that would split ADM 50/50 for students between the sending and receiving districts (pp. 12-13)
  - *“Investigate a foreign student/out of state student team to research and develop a system designed to attract foreign and out of state students to enroll at”* MV Union Middle/High School – China, Canada, and New York (p 14 and Appendix E)
  - Appendix C: Drop in enrollment slower than State overall or relatively stable
  - Appendix D:
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- The *“factors that make a merger not as beneficial to [Act 46] goals or as visibly necessary”*
  - Franklin: high test scores and low taxes – merger will increase cost/pupil and tax rate and will not increase student performance (p.2)

- Franklin, Highgate, Sheldon residents “made it clear” that want to maintain local control and “town identity was critical to them” (p.2)
  - Sheldon has different structure than other FNW SU districts (p. 2)
    - Sheldon 9-12 – pays tuition to Enosburgh, BFA, and MVU “in that order of frequency,” which “reflects the underlying issues that make merging [all FNW SU districts] into one district a challenge” (p. 5)
  - FNW SU districts haven’t experienced big decline in enrollment – no SSGs – no phantoms
  - November 7, 2017 – Voters supported recommendation to retain current structure (pp. 2, 8-9)
    - Franklin – 161 Yes / 0 No
    - Highgate – 103 Y / 1 N
    - Swanton – 148 Y / 105 N
    - Sheldon – 87 Y / 0 N
  - MVU source of frustration: assessments not as high as region; “towns feel a lack of control and ownership” – evidenced by low turnout as annual meetings etc. and not referred to as “our school” (p. 5)
  - Elementary students “generally perform better” on assessments than MVU students – “Therefore, one might hypothesize that creating a PK-12 school board would not cause middle and high school performance to improve.” (p. 8)
  - Loss of local control per townspeople at meetings in exploratory phase / fear of school closure (pp. 5-6)
  - Smaller towns would “by law” have less representation on a merged board than the larger communities (p. 5)
  - “perception of failed cooperation between towns” or “bad blood” among the communities relating to various (town-related) financial issues – e.g., Highgate’s ice arena; Swanton’s Valley Rescue (lawsuit) (p. 6)
  - Franklin, Highgate, Swanton, and MVU would have cost increase (pp .6-7)
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

### 3. The Oxbow Union High School District and its Two Member Elementary Districts (Bradford; Newbury)

#### The Newbury School District – Snapshot

SU: Orange East SU

Date of Conversation: March 19, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Danielle Corti; Paul Jewett
- Also in attendance: Representative Chip Conquest

#### Current O/T Structure:

- PK-6 operating
- Town is a 7-12 member of the Oxbow Union High School District; Riverbend CTC at Oxbow

#### Governance Proposal:

- Remain as single-town operating elementary school district
- Add Blue Mountain UUSD as a distinct district to Orange East SU

#### Other Notes:

- The Village of Wells River is within the Town of Newbury, but the Village is a member of the Blue Mountain UUSD and all Village students are enrolled there
- District owns elementary school building and Town Common (playground for school)
- Town owns Town Hall (gymnasium and cafeteria for school) - informal agreements

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Orange East SU (with Blue Mountain) – 1,737.5 (1,343.5 without Thetford)

Bradford ID (K-6) – 221

Newbury (K-6) – 137

Oxbow Union High (7-12) – 273.83

*[total Bradford, Newbury, and Oxbow Union districts: 631.83]*

Blue Mountain Unified Union (three towns; K-12 o) – 380.25

Thetford (K-6 o / 7-12 designating) – 394

Waits River Valley Unified Union – 332.42

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- § 706 Study Committee; conversations with other districts in region
- community survey

#### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

#### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

#### What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- *“especially intrigued by the possibilities”* if BMU is in OESU – *“By coordinating the programs offered at the Middle and High School levels at the SU level, it would be possible to facilitate the sharing of staff between the two schools and to create magnet programs at each of the schools”* (pp. 5 and 6)
- With addition of BMU to SU, *“it may be possible to provide shared staffing and/or enhanced special education programs among [the Bradford, Newbury, and BMU] elementary schools”* (p. 6)
- March 19, 2018 Conversation:
  - Currently exchange elementary students with Blue Mountain students – 1-to-1

#### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?



a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?

- Oxbow High School is "sufficiently large enough to provide the array of opportunities required to meet the EQA standards" (p. 6)
- Assessment results for Newbury Elementary students "are below state norms" (p. 6; Appendix B at 9-10)
  - "But the school's Continuous Improvement Plan offers specific actions that will be undertaken to address areas where the test scores indicate performance gaps" (p. 6; Continuous Improvement Plan is at 11-20), e.g.:
    - "Bring an instructional coach for PBL design who also manages our MTSS protocol and practices" (p. 13)
    - "Include interventionists and special educators during our H-Cubed PBL design time" (p. 13)
    - "Monitor Student data for growth" (p. 14)
    - "Gather Staff feedback for effective use of time and share out at staff meetings for review" (p. 14)
- "Confident that the PBL program being implemented ... will ultimately yield higher test scores" (p. 6)
- Although Board "does not view test scores as the most effective metric for measuring student learning, they do use the results ... to inform their decision making" (p. 6)

3. How does the proposal support your ability to "maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?"

What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?

- "The Newbury School Board believes that after examining the potentially adverse consequences of a forced merger and the potential benefits of improved collaboration at the SU level, the current OESU districts are likely to be more open to working collaboratively to achieve economies of scale and more willing to exploring programs the SU can offer more effectively and efficiently, programs are impossible teach district to develop independently." (pp. 5 and 6, [sic])

4. How does the proposal support your ability to "promote transparency and accountability" in a "sustained" manner?

- If BMU joins OESU: "acknowledges that leading an AGS SU of six boards and five different operating structures would be a challenge" – but "given the impossibility of changing operating structures in Thetford, BMU, and Waits River and the need to include each of those districts in an SU in order to achieve operational efficiencies, the most optimal outcome for OESU and BMU" would be four districts:
  - Merger of Bradford, Newbury, and Oxbow
  - WR UUSD
  - BMUUSD
  - Thetford
- But four districts "would be at least as complicated" as what Newbury proposes above, "especially given the process required to forge articles of agreement ... and to get that newly merged district to operate effectively." (p. 5)
- Survey is opportunity for community feedback – (p. 6; survey responses at Appendix C)
  - "clear evidence that the communities not only value the schools, they value the local, fundamental democratic structures: the town meeting and the elected town school boards" (p. 7)
- "evidenced transparency in budget development, merger talks and the formulation of education initiatives" (p. 6)

5. How does the proposal support your ability to "deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value" in a "sustained" manner?

- History of passing budgets (p. 7)
- Staffing ratios are above state average (p. 7; Appendix A at 8-9)
- "overall cost-per-equalized student is not out of line with other comparable districts in Vermont" (p. 7)

6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then

a. Why is merger not "possible"?

**b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**

- *“Potential merger partners opted out of earlier merger deliberations” – Rivendell; Thetford; Waits River; and Blue Mountain (“impasse”) (p. 2)*
- *“Neighboring districts have incompatible operating structures” (p. 2)*
- *Newbury + Bradford + Oxbow “will not yield a preferred governance structure” because merger “will neither achieve the parameters of a preferred governance structure nor yield the administrative savings anticipated ... Indeed, unless a merger involves more than three districts, the operational costs of the SU will be higher for all three districts” (p. 2)*
- *Property issues – Town and District ownership and use (see “Other Notes” on p. 1) based on “good working relationship” and “informal understanding” – merger would necessitate “transfer of ownership, the development of memorandums of understanding, and the associated legal costs” (pp. 2-3)*
- *Academic issues –*  
*“As deliberations on the potential merger with other districts proceeded, the Newbury ... representatives to the 706b committee sensed that Newbury Elementary School’s programs like [project based learning], and their unique Farm to School Initiative and Forest School approach might be compromised and the school would lose its identity and connection with the community.” (p. 3)*
- *“Uncertainty: The Newbury School Board is reluctant to proceed with any merger discussions until the status of Thetford, Waits River, and Blue Mountain is clear. If any one of these districts is not incorporated in a SU with Newbury, the Newbury School does not believe a preferred governance structure is feasible.” (p. 3)*
- *March 19, 2018 Conversation: There are possibilities of merger, but the relationships don’t exist – believes that the districts and their school boards should work on building trust and then make governance changes*

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

- *Believes BMU should be part of OESU – both SUs “recently experienced turnover in Superintendency and ... both are currently led by interim Superintendents. The Newbury School Board believes that one Superintendent should be hired to oversee” the enlarged SU (p. 4)*
- *“The Newbury School Board has a particular affinity with BMU” (p. 4) because:*
  - *“a portion of its residents’ children attends BMU High School.”*
  - *“BMU high school is located within the Town of Newbury”*
  - *Children participate in “out-of-school activities” together*

## The Bradford ID and the Oxbow Union School District – Snapshot

SU: Orange East SU

Date of Conversation: March 23, 2018

### Participants:

Board Members: Lucas Barrett (Bradford ID) ; Melissa Gordon (Bradford ID)

### Current O/T Structure:

- Bradford: PK-6 operating
- Oxbow UHS (Bradford; Newbury): 7-12 operating

### Governance Proposal:

- Created a unified union with Bradford, Newbury, Oxbow Union, and Blue Mountain Unified Union
- Add Rivendell (p. 2, 4)
- Maintain Orange East SU with three districts:
  - newly merged district (above)
  - Waits River Valley Union School District (PreK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning)
  - Thetford (PreK-6 operating / 7-12 designating)

### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

See Newbury Snapshot above for the K-12 ADM in FY 2018 for the region

### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- § 706 Study Committee
- Bradford, Newbury, and Oxbow Union Districts met in November about working together

### School Boards' Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“there is a functional and cultural need for change if our schools are to provide effective 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning experiences” (p. 4)*
- *“It will be impossible, based on past and current practice, to improve learning opportunities for students until a governance structure places everyone at the table and a common vision is the first order of business” (p. 5)*

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

- a. In re: students within the district(s)
- b. (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- c. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Appendix E (pp. 12-15): SBAC comparison data for Bradford, Newbury, Oxbow, and Blue Mountain

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- OESU districts do not have history of working together (p. 3)
- *“are not yet fully compliant with the mandates of” 16 VSA § 261a (SpEd; transportation; etc.) (p. 3)*

- *“long-term, systemic challenges within the OESU governance structure”* (p. 4; Appendix H)
  - March 23, 2018 Conversation:
    - School boards of the three districts are not getting along and working well together – the boards are “going in different directions”
    - If the three districts are merged into one unified district with one board, then even if there are split votes, the board and unified district itself would be going in a single direction
4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
  
  5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver[ education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner**
  
  6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
    - a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
    - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
    - March 23, 2018 Conversation:
      - Boards believe Bradford, Newbury, and Oxbow Union should be merged
  7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
    - a. **Why not?**
    - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
    - March 23, 2018 Conversation:
      - If Blue Mountain UUSD also merged with them, then believe perhaps it should be its own SU – if so, then Waits River UUSD could be a member of the new Central VT SU and Thetford could be a member of the White River SU

## 4. The Spaulding Union High School District and its Two Member Elementary Districts (Barre City; Barre Town)

### Snapshot

SU: Barre SU

**Date of Conversation:** The boards chose not to schedule a meeting.

**Participants:** N/A

**Current O/T Structure:**

Barre City – PK-8 operating, Town is a member of UHS for 9-12

Barre Town – PK-8 operating, Town is a member of UHS for 9-12

Spaulding Union High – 9-12 operating, plus regional CTE center

**Governance Proposal:**

The districts created a new § 706 study committee with the expectation that the committee will present a proposal to the State Board by August 2018, the voters will vote on the proposal by September 2018, and – if approved – the district will assume operations on July 1, 2019.

**Other Resources:**

- [Letter dated December 15, 2017 submitted pursuant to Act 46, Sec. 9](#)
- [2016 § 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Barre SU: 2,130.07

	<u>K-8</u>	<u>9-12</u>
Barre City	751.15	318.47
Barre Town	713.20	<u>347.25</u>
<i>[total Spaulding Union</i>		<i>665.72]</i>

## 5. The Union 32 High School District and its Five Member Elementary Districts (Berlin; Calais; East Montpelier; Middlesex; Worcester)

### Snapshot

SU: Washington Central SU

Date of Conversation: March 8, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Matthew DeGroot (§ 706 Committee Chair; Worcester Board Member); Flor Diaz Smith (§ 706 Committee Member; East Montpelier Board Member); Scott Thompson (§ 706 Committee Member; U-32 Board Member)
- Also in attendance: Superintendent Bill Kimball

#### Current O/T Structure:

- Berlin– PreK-6 operating, Town is a member of UHS for 7-12
- Calais– PreK-6 operating, Town is a member of UHS for 7-12
- East Montpelier– PreK-6 operating, Town is a member of UHS for 7-12
- Middlesex– PreK-6 operating, Town is a member of UHS for 7-12
- Worcester– PreK-6 operating, Town is a member of UHS for 7-12
- Union 32 – 7-12 operating

#### Governance Proposal:

Remain as five single-town districts and one union middle/high school district in the same SU

#### Other Notes:

§ 706 Study Committee chose, at beginning of process, to take action only if approved by a supermajority – 9 of the 11 members – rather than the simple majority per 16 V.S.A. ch 11

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Washington Central SU – 1,350.21

##### K-6

Berlin – 182.55

Calais – 108.90

East Montpelier – 189.00

Middlesex – 142.60

Worcester – 63.10

##### 7-12

U-32 – 664.06

FY2018 K-12 ADM elsewhere in the region

Montpelier-Roxbury USD – 1,099.42

Barre SU – 2,130.07

Danville School District – 287 (SU – 948)

Washington Northeast SU

Cabot – 150.43

Twinfield – 306.74

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

Process included:

- Self-analysis and discussion by each district's board
- § 706b study committee – initially a consultant, then a two-person facilitation team
- Community forums in each town
- All-district voter survey – “independent, third-party researcher,” adults-only

- “many other activities”

### School Boards’ Written Analysis and Conversation– Overview:

- “all the boards of WCSU are unified, coordinated, systematic, and intentionally explicit in their stated commitment to proficiency-based learning and to achieving equity in the quality and variety of educational offerings” (p. 11)
- Developed and adopted during the last three years (pp. 10-11):
  - Unified Mission Statement
  - “comprehensive set of system-wide Student Learning Outcomes”
    - “set clear expectations and define explicit measurable targets” for academic and transferrable skills
  - Theory of Action – “mirrors that of the [AOE] in several ways, and many of the equity provisions in ESSA are explicitly embedded in it”
  - Implementation Plan (2016-17 = 1<sup>st</sup> of 5 years)
    - Learning outcomes (above)
    - “commitment to a rigorous use of multiple data-driven and decision-making measures”
    - “range of flexible instruction techniques designed to identify and address individual needs in real time”

#### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Currently (p. 12-13):
  - All elementary schools offer PreK, after-school, and summer programs on sliding scale cost basis –
    - “not uniform across schools, but rather are differentiated”
    - “results are shared ... as a way for effective approaches to spread”
    - “Student counts and cost drivers can be factors in determining the extent of such services or the manner in which they are offered”
  - “All schools ... offer in-school and extracurricular activities” and “[e]very effort is made to ensure that cost, fees, or transportation do not present barriers”

#### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

- In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Currently (pp. 11-13):
  - “system-wide shift to proficiency-based learning” (began 2016-17)
  - “proficiency based graduation requirements” (Class of 2020 = exclusively PBGR)
  - MTSS in all schools
    - WCSU Leadership Team coordinates policy and delivery
    - Education Support Team coordinates deployment at each school
  - “multiple data-driven assessment and decision-making measures” – e.g., literacy assessment from report cards, 3 local common assessments, and 3 outside assessments
  - “array of comprehensive [SpEd] services” that “are increasingly consolidated, coordinated, and administered at the SU level”
  - School Start-Time Subcommittee
  - Multi-tiered approaches to social, emotional, and behavioral support
  - PLPs – “most systematic” in 7-12
- Assessments – overview of SBAC – SU-wide (p. 14)
  - Literacy – Last 2 years = above state average all grades assessed

- Math – Last 2 years = below state average, except 7th grade
  - 3 year scaled scores = FRL two grades lower average both literacy and math
  - *“Combined 3-year scale scores show performance from preK-6 school to preK-6 school ... varies by approximately two grade levels. ... The data do not examine possible reasons or causes for the variance.”*
  - Closing gap for students at risk *“in some schools and grade levels”* – EM example
  - Acknowledge they may need to overcome *“structural inertia”* to implement systems across schools (p. 15)
  - Last 2-5 years, *“demonstrated that it is capable of achieving ever greater levels of commitment and implementation of equity-driven models and systems”* – e.g., PLPs, PBL, multi-tiered supports, and *“resource coordination”*
  - *“In light of this, consolidating school governance would seem to offer questionable advantages in terms of increasing the speed or effectiveness of improving equity”*
  - Debt differences would cause taxes to rise in Calais and Worcester – *“those least able to afford such increases. As a result, consolidation would perversely increase equities in school finance among our five towns, not decrease them. ... and does not appear to offer any promise of greater equity in educational opportunities”*
  - *“For the time being”* current structure is best (p. 15)
  - Quality (pp. 16-22)
  - Areas WCSU districts are working on (p. 23):
    - SBAC Math results are low
    - *“At all grade levels, we continue to see significant gaps based on socio-economic status”*
    - May be *“mismatch”* between SBAC and local literacy assessments – may need to adjust local standards
    - SBAC and local math assessments *“also not in alignment”* and *“need to investigate the criterion scores we use to identify which students are in need of additional assistance”*
    - Provide more professional development for teachers to *“align their scoring practices to adopted performance indicators”*
    - Need to *“develop better ways to assess some of our Student Learning Outcomes”*
    - Update Continuous Improvement Plan
  - *“We need to provide support to our multi-tiered system of supports throughout the”* SU
  - 4-year cohort graduation rate (pp. 13-14)
    - Last 5 years – 87-90%
    - Last 10 years – 84-95%
    - 2016-2017 –
      - 91.9% overall
      - 31.6% for students *“at-risk”* (FRL, IEP, 504)
  - 2016-17 student *acceptance* into post-secondary education of *“some kind”* (including voc cert, etc.)
    - 62.3% overall
    - 34.8% for students *“at-risk”*
  - Post-secondary enrollment *“seems to fluctuate quite a bit from one year to the next”*
  - Unweighted 3 year average – 59.4% 2013-15; State average was just under 59%
3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- *“Have moved toward fully coordinated and shared resources ... in the following areas: Budgetary and financial accounting; Forecasts; Risk management; Payroll; Purchasing; Accounts payable; Billing; Grants accounting and reporting; Administering employee benefits; Many state, federal, and auditor compliance reporting requirements; Human resources; Teacher and staff contracts; Transportation, including all bus contracts; Information technology; Pre-K screening; Special Education; Curriculum; Student Learning Outcomes; Theory of Action; Implementation Plan; Report cards; and Mission Statement.”* (pp. 7 and 27)



- Executive Board commissioned efficiency study – two parts, 2014 and 2015 (overview pp. 24-25)
    - SU Board adopted recommendations, such as limiting role of the executive committee and “a more frequent use of ‘carousel meetings’ to promote SU-wide integration”
    - District boards: “single policy committee, more policies in common, consistency of boards’ presence on the [SU’s] website, and clarification of accountability chains”
    - SU-wide school bus contract
    - “the Study shows that WCSU boards seek to – and do- work together to improve efficiencies. The impulse extends to shared programmatic and other non-financial resources” – e.g.,
      - Student learning outcomes – adopted by six boards
      - Centralized curriculum
      - Most in-house professional development also centralized
      - “Sharing of U-32’s facilities management expertise with the elementary schools” – help ready schools over summer or if expertise needed
      - Use a combined budget chart, which “allows our boards to benchmark their financial performance against each other”(p. 26)
    - Ratios – given at SU level (p.26)
    - Efficiency Study II envisioned a unified district – “modeling constraints [prevented] projecting any efficiencies” but cost savings very small (p. 27)
    - “WCSU boards are interested in investigating the adoption of Policy Governance” (p.36)
- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- “Members of three of our boards attended the spring 2017 ‘Strengthening and Sustaining Public Engagement in Vermont’ ... training conducted ... by the national training group Public Agenda. We are committed to bringing this type of training to all our board members, as well as establishing norms for school-community planning. As we pursue an exploration of the Policy Governance model, we anticipate opportunities to establish supervisory union-wide board policies and protocols to ensure effective community engagement.”*
- 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Overview (pp. 30-35)
    - History of budgets passing
    - High school attracts tuition-paying students
    - Differing levels of indebtedness
  - “WCSU boards are interested in exploring the creation of a central equity fund to share the burden of providing for our most disadvantaged students no matter what school they attend. This fund could in theory also provide for indemnifying our most disadvantaged town against loss of state support (e.g., its small school grant).” Fund could be managed by U-32 because SU can’t. (p. 37)
  - March 8, 2018 Conversation:
    - Re: Alice Agney SpEd Study:
      - Implemented items required by law
      - Cost sharing for next budget – equalized assessments across all districts based on equalized pupils for SpEd and transportation
    - Re: Mike DeWeese Studies #1 and #2:
      - 55 recommendations
      - “implemented the most important” – e.g., carousel meetings
      - Have not implemented a majority or any related to structure
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. Why is merger not “possible”?
  - b. Why is merger not “practicable”?
- Communities concerned about school closure in consolidated governance structure and districts

- Found “no surefire way to afford smaller communities a way to protect their schools and their voice in school closure decisions under a consolidated structure” (p. 31; emphasis in original)
  - “Greatly differing levels of indebtedness” (pp. 32-35)
    - “How pooling debt creates inequity”
  - “WCSU boards are open to exploring collaboration with districts outside our SU” including “sharing an administrative umbrella” (p. 36)
  - March 8, 2018 Conversation:
    - Merger is:
      - *Impossible* – because the differing debt levels would make merger inequitable; least two affluent communities will experience tax increase
      - *Impractical* – because of community opposition to a single board and budget structure
      - *Unnecessary* – can “define a clear trajectory of improvements” under current structure; they have identified “plans and steps” to achieve the improvements and so governance change is not necessary, especially given the “impossible” and impractical” reasons above
    - Act 46 discussions have dissolved silo-type barriers – dynamic is changing as a result
    - “Robust” survey demonstrated community “disgruntlement” and opposition
    - Rumney voters voted out Board members who supported merger
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

## 6. The Barnard Elementary School District (NMED)

### Snapshot

SU: Windsor Central SU

Date of Conversation: March 23, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members and Board-designated representatives: Carin Ewing Park; Pamela Fraser; Linda Treash
- Also in Attendance: Alison Davis; Randall Szott

**Current O/T Structure:** Operates PK-6, Town is a member of the MUUSD for grades 7-12

**Governance Proposal:** Remain a single-town, PreK-6 operating district within the WCSU

#### Other Notes:

- Sole NMED in re: the Windsor Central MUUSD (operational 2018; town is 7-12 member)
- March 7, 2017 unification vote – 103 Yes; 155 No; 10 Blank or Spoiled

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- Board's Responses to Common List of Topics (integrated in full below)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Windsor Central SU (K-12) – 872.14

Barnard Elementary (K-6) – 62.00

Windsor Central MUUSD – 753.84 (total of combining districts; operational July 2018)

Pittsfield (K-12 tuitioning) – 56.30

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- SU Exploratory Committee / § 706 Study Committee / AGS Committee
- See # 6 below for more details

#### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation– Overview:

- *"We argue that our plan will create the smallest number of districts practicable within our region at this time because ... the [MUUSD's] Articles of Agreement ... undermine our district's and the WCSU's ability to best meet the goals of Act 46."* (p. 5)
- *"the member districts in the supervisory union meet the [Act 46, Sec. 5, AGS] guidelines of points 1 [collective responsibility], 2 [§ 261 compliance], and 5 [ADM >900]"* (p. 9)
  - #5 (differing levels of indebtedness) is not applicable
  - *"Regarding point 3... a smaller number of districts is not practicable under the merging parameters set forth by potential partners."*
  - *"Barnard is collectively responsible for PreK-12 education."* (p. 10)
- *"Barnard is Geographically Isolated"* (pp. 10-12) – high elevation and *"seasonally inhospitable"* -- which *"is a factor in our proposal"* because:
  - *"road and weather conditions ought to be considered in the development of complete metrics for"* Small School Grants
  - *"Barnard's geographic isolation underscores the importance of maintaining reliable, high quality early education within our community"*

#### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to "provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities" in a "sustainable" manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?

- #1 – Preschool Program (pp. 5-6):  
*“Barnard Academy’s Preschool Program leads the commitment to Equity in Early Education within our supervisory union, and Board independence is required at this time to sustain it. Our full-time public preschool program will be in jeopardy in a merger with WCMUUSD.”*
  - *“prequalified, fully-funded PreK offering – up to 35 hours for four-year-olds, and up to 21 hours for three-year-olds”*
  - *“This four-star STARS-rated program is at risk in the current merger plan.”*
  - Commitment for nine years
  - *“no other district in the SU currently demonstrates this strong commitment to their preschoolers.”*
  - WCMUUSD considering incorporating in-house PreK *“where possible, but at level-funding”* and tuitioning beyond 10 hours
  - *“Our stronger commitment ... would be in peril if we are consolidated”*
- #2 – Excellence and Innovation (p. 6):
  - *“Barnard Academy is poised to be a leader within our supervisory union for innovation in learning”*
  - *“Barnard taxpayers’ ‘No’ vote on the study committee plan which would have undercut our school, shows its commitment to the strength of our community school, its current successes, and its potential for growth and educational leadership within the supervisory union.”*

Board’s written response to conversation topic #1:

**Our PreK program** offers substantial learning and social opportunities and removes economic barriers. The preschool program offers 21 hours to 3 year-olds and 35 hours to 4-year-olds at no cost to families. Our 4-Star preschool program leads the SU’s commitment to early education by funding Unified Arts coursework to these students, such as library, art, music, and PE. Positive outcomes have been steady pupil count; improved early reading/literacy achievement; stronger math, social science, and science knowledge; greater social/emotional skills; and greater participation in the wider school community. Our program has been supported by our taxpayers for ten years while our districts’ per pupil spending has remained low to average for the State.

**Our After School Program** offers substantial learning and social opportunities and removes economic barriers. It is self-funded and has brought a modest income to the school while remaining available through financial aid to all families who need the services. It offers different enrichment activities each day taught by visiting experts, such as Spanish language, robotics, drumming, and robotics. The preschool program is highly regarded by the SU’s EEE director, Maria who regards it as a model for the SU as it develops its offerings in other schools.

Through our **Place-Based Learning** initiative, we are increasing our curricular connections to Outdoor Learning environments, which offer an alternative to text-based instruction which has been shown to be especially helpful for children with learning differences and learning challenges (Autism, Asperger’s, Attention Deficit Disorder).\* For those students coming from insecure home environments, time spent outdoors has also been shown to reduce stress and increase the capacity for attentive learning. The multi-sensory experience of the learning environment, along with the sense of control inherent in self-directed exploration and learning, allows those who may otherwise lose confidence and initiative a place to fully participate in their learning experience.

**Strong student’s performance** reflected in standardized test scores and curricular commitment to Math and Literacy interventions to raise proficiency and proficiency with distinction levels

**Enrichment** programming is connected to field trips to outstanding local resources: community centers, museums and the National Parks Service. We don’t merely visit such sites but work to create a strategic integration of community resources such as Silver Lake, Marsh-Billings, Dartmouth College, the Hood

Museum, and Montshire Museum into our curriculum. The Barnard Recreation program and Extracurricular clubs and teams increase access to regional activities.

***In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?***

*Barnard Academy is the only school in the WCSU, and a rare school in the state to have as extensive--2-year, full-time, 100% publicly financed--PreK program.*

*Our student's standardized test scores show our students perform well above state averages and often above our neighboring schools.*

***What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?***

*Beginning in FY19, Barnard is implementing **Learning Hubs**, currently under development with the leadership of our Principal Hannah Thein in concert with our new Superintendent's vision. A Learning Hub is a dynamic learning environment designed to promote collaboration and creativity as well as to facilitate personalized learning. Co-teaching, flexible groupings, and inquiry- and project-based learning are part of the vision. The Hubs will be the platform for the Place-Based/Outdoor Education and STEAM initiatives that are the basis of Barnard Academy's action plan. Learning Hubs allow BA to addresses educational goals while having flexibility in managing resources. Specifically, they enable Tier II interventions within this framework which support the sustainability of providing special education services.*

*We are a model for program development of strong PreKs across the SU based on our decade of experience by being a model for program development. **Within the MUUSD Board, we are advocating for a stronger PreK offerings** as we believe that not only is this vital for equity issues, it is a strategy for cost containment in regards to future special education needs.*

*We are **expanding Foreign Language** offerings and through the purchase of "Transparent Languages" software and increasing instruction time.*

*Barnard supports improvements towards equalized preparedness across the SU for 7-12; our new principal is actively **involved in curriculum coordination across the SU.***

*In summer 2018, the Board has approved funding for the following facility developments:*

***Building a receiving kitchen in order to offer breakfast and lunch and to expand Farm-to-School programming.***

*Creation of a **Maker's Lab** to support STEAM programming*

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to "lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards" in a "sustainable" manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?**

Board's written response to conversation topic #2:

***In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)***

*We are committed to meeting and exceeding the State's Education Quality Standards guidelines, and we do currently meet the standards. We offer curricular content in each category outlined in the standards -- literacy (including critical thinking, language, reading, speaking and listening, and writing); b.*

mathematical content and practices (including numbers, operations, and the concepts of algebra and geometry by the end of grade 10); c. scientific inquiry and content knowledge (including the concepts of life sciences, physical sciences, earth and space sciences and engineering design); d. global citizenship (including the concepts of civics, economics, geography, world language, cultural studies and history); e. physical education and health education as defined in 16 V.S.A. §131; f. artistic expression (including visual, media and performing arts); and g. transferable skills (including communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, inquiry, problem solving and the use of technology). Additionally, we offer students two physical education classes per week, and at least 30 minutes daily of physical activity in addition to P.E., and provide comprehensive elementary health and physical education learning experiences. Our school leadership and staff conform to or exceed the requirements of these guidelines. There are appropriate professional learning opportunities and evaluations of staff. Retain a school nurse for .3 FTE and a counselor for .2 FTE.

**In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?**

Because of our cooperative relationship with the SU, we conform to SU-wide policies that impact how we conform to some of the guidelines.

As far as we are aware, the newly unified district also meets the State's Education Quality Standards guidelines.

**What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?**

Barnard Academy's Action Plan--with its **Place-Based Learning and STEAM initiatives**--will be implemented in the context of Learning Hubs which will allow us to more flexibility to meet the goals of academic excellence and equitable access to learning opportunities.

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to "maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?"**

**What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?**

- #3 -- Operational Efficiencies (pp. 6-7):
  - Steady enrollment numbers and lower per pupil costs speak to the importance of sustaining Barnard Academy and our ability to deliver Act 46 goals independently to achieve the greatest Operational Efficiency for our supervisory union."
    - "steady-to-rising enrollment for the past ten years" – this year up 10%
    - Per pupil spending "has been second lowest in the SU in recent years ... as our student-to-teacher ratio has been highest in the SU, achieved in part by combining grades in classrooms with low enrollments"
  - "Undercutting a school and a community that is thriving, per the Study Committee Plan, would likely affect the SU enrollment patterns negatively"

**Board's written response to conversation topic #3:**

Our actual enrollment increased from 69 to 82 students in FY18. **Increased enrollment** combined with increasingly efficient use of staff (see next point) supports this goal.

**SU-wide Learning Hubs** will enable more flexibility in managing staff resources within the Barnard school district while meeting educational quality goals. They will allow for Tier II interventions within the classroom setting, maximizing efficient use of staff. We will be able to teach more students with fewer staff.

We will continue to **work within the SU to share personnel** hired at the SU level for services such as counseling, school nurse, and special education.

We are *increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff by reducing one Paraeducator in FY19.*

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

Our Principal Hannah Thein and Barnard Academy are in a leadership role with respect to modeling and supporting the SU-wide move towards more flexibly-staffed learning opportunities available within Learning Hubs, which promotes both operational efficiencies and positive educational shifts in educational strategies. In FY19 Hannah Thein will deliver (**Learning Hub**) **coaching for teachers on collaborative teaching methods across the SU**, and BA’s whole school commitment to Learning Hubs will act as a model as this is developed across the SU.

**4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

Board’s written response to conversation topic #4:

*Transparency and accountability is safeguarded best by open town hall debate coupled with from-the-floor voting on the school budget. Our proposal rejects the move to Australian ballot that comes with merging, which disallows these processes.*

*The multi-million dollar MUUSD budget shows no detailing of costs at each building, and so has no way to show that education tax dollars and the opportunities that they pay for are being distributed equitably. With this context, had we merged, the Barnard Board representatives would not have had the ability to ensure that Barnard students were receiving equitable educational services, and a minority voice on the Board would undermine their ability to be accountable to Barnard taxpayers concerns.*

**5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

• #4 – Fiscal Responsibility (pp. 7-8):

- *“Maintaining School Board responsiveness and agility is the best means to achieve Fiscal Responsibility for our district.”*
- *“At a small school, flexibility and creativity are paramount to administering the budget in an efficient way and still achieving the quality and breadth of student opportunities...”*
- *“independent, 3-member [board] ... is currently the best way to protect the level of efficacy required”*
- *Barnard “will serve as a point of comparison for the budgetary decisions of the new WCMUUSD”*
- *“Our spending, our tax rates, and tax rate volatility are in line with many other districts including many with large enrollments”*

Board’s written response to conversation topic #5:

*Our budget is fiscally responsible and shows a commitment to containing costs. For example, for **FY 19, Barnard Academy per-pupil costs are \$15,538**, which includes the cost of public funding of a 2-year PreK program the other schools do not have. This is lower than many schools in our region, including the unified district’s per-pupil cost for K-12 which is \$17,445.00, with \$16,060.54 for unified elementary and \$18,602.97 for MS/HS.*

*We are seeking to **reduce our budget further through the flexible and cooperative use of teachers and staff** (i.e. Learning Hubs).*

***Our FY19 tax rates are lower than any of the towns in the unified district** (despite the fact that we do not receive Act 46 tax incentives). Barnard’s Estimated Total Tax Rate is 1.5097, while merged district towns have the following rates: Woodstock is 1.7361, Reading is 1.6795, Plymouth is 1.6787, Pomfret is 1.6738, Killington is 1.6383, and Bridgewater is 1.7772.*

6. *If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then*

- a. *Why is merger not “possible”?*
- b. *Why is merger not “practicable”?*

(pp. 18-22):

- SU Exploratory Committee
- § 706 Study Committee (June 2015 – March 2017):
  - Barnard had three different reps; missed five meetings “during a crucial four-month decision-making period” – misconception about Barnard’s population and enrollment trends “seems have gone unchallenged while the restructuring plan was developed”
  - Barnard appointees to study committee didn’t engage community
  - Plan originally proposed to restructure Barnard school as PreK-2 – then changed to consideration of PreK-4 – not good for Barnard: “Inequity and Insufficient Justification”
  - “Misinformation” – including reliance upon Town-by-Town Proportionality as model of board membership
- Alternative Structure Committee Work (March 2017 – December 2017):
  - Website; AOE presented at community meeting; survey;
  - Reached out to other districts re: “possible merging or sharing of resources,” including a joint contract – Stockbridge, Reading; West Windsor; (Bethel, Royalton)

Board’s written response to conversation topic #6:

***Why is merger not “possible”?***

*It is “possible,” but there is no evidence that it would lead to better student outcomes, increased equity, lower costs, increases in transparency or accountability, or lower tax rates.*

***Why is merger not “practicable”?***

*Our electorate voted down a merger with WCSU towns because the merger terms were likely lead to centralizing students to more central school and closing a thriving community school, which we believe would undermine the equity, academic excellence, and sustainability goals of Act 46. Before and after the vote, we sought to amend three Articles of Agreement of the merger plan (those related to Board composition, protections for school closure, and school restructuring) towards terms we felt were equitable to our town’s citizens. Merger committee members, and then representatives on the not-yet-ratified WCMUUSD Board did not wish to pursue the conversation. Imbalances of power between merging communities require a structural solution that give representatives of smaller towns a real voice in school decisions, and that balance the real inequities in political and financial resources. As representatives of the Barnard School District, we continue to work towards just such a structural solution across our SU, in order to secure the best opportunities for our kids. Until such a solution is reached, we believe it is impracticable to merge with the MUUSD in light of the goals of Act 46.*

7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

- a. **Why not?**
- b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

Board’s written response to conversation topic #7:

*We looked at bringing in some partners from other SUs (Stockbridge of White River Valley SU and West Windsor of Windsor Southeast SU). These potential relationships--both or either of which could have enlarged our SU--did not work out as each pursued other options. While merging SUs in a larger, structural sense could offer efficiencies and cost savings; this would be difficult for us to achieve alone, and appears to us to be the purview of the SUs or the State.*

**If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**



*As this was not in our purview, we did not arrive at a firm, unified decision on this question. We would support SU consolidation in the State.*

## 7. The Cambridge Elementary School District (NMED)

### Snapshot

SU: Lamoille North SU

**Date of Conversation:** February 8, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Member: Mark Stebbins (Chair)
- Superintendent Cat Gallagher; Business Manager Deb Clark

**Current O/T Structure:** Operates PK-6, Town is a member of MUUSD for 7-12

**Governance Proposal:**

- February 8, 2018 Conversation:
  - Chose not to submit Section 9 proposal – but go with what SBE decides
  - Town understands this is the law and they have to comply
  - Working with MUUSD Board to change articles and address Cambridge’s areas of concern
  - Decided if wasn’t going to propose something very different, then not to hire consultant, etc.

**Other Notes:**

- Sole NMED in re: the Lamoille North MUUSD (operational 2017; town is 7-12 member)

**Other Resources:**

- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Lamoille North SU – 1,618.11 (K-12)

Cambridge (K-6) – 296.85

Lamoille North MUUSD – 1,321.26

**Process by which reached conclusion:**

- February 8, 2018 Conversation:
  - After second vote not to merge (TMD 2017), survey to get feedback with three options
  - Townspeople = amend articles of agreement for UUSD (small response overall)
    - Half of community’s concerns can be fixed by discussions/action of unified board (building use, different systems of transportation) but other concerns will need to be decided by voters
  - Study Group considering what articles could be changed

**School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:**

1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?
  - a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
  - b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- February 8, 2018 Conversation:
  - High quality and array of education programs at Cambridge elementary –
  - There had been fear of diluting programs / concern a larger board would start removing programs
  - Have seen that MUUSD is expanding opportunities – e.g., sharing language instruction – and that unification makes it easier to align curriculum / programs

2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?
  - a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
  - b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**  
**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
  - February 8, 2018 Conversation: Steady decline in all schools – bubble has made it into middle school
4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
  - February 8, 2018 Conversation:
    - MUUSD: Savings / expenditures / carry forward insulating MUUSD from pressure on tax rates – especially compared to what tax rates would have been if hadn’t merged
    - Cambridge:
      - Tax rate low in re: rest of region – 8 cent decrease wasn’t an incentive, would have translated to 1.5 cents
      - This year, calculated tax rate if had merged and if not – not much difference
6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
  - a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
  - a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
    - February 8, 2018 Conversation: perhaps Lamoille South districts and/or Wolcott

## 8. Huntington Elementary School District (NMED)

### Snapshot

SU: Chittenden East SU

Date of Conversation: April 27, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Paul Susen (Chair); Jordan Davies; Stacey Symanowicz; Carrie Wyatt
- Also in attendance: Superintendent John Alberghini; Duncan Keir; Megs Keir; Helen Keith; Andrew Pond (MMMUSD and CESU Chair)

**Current O/T Structure:** Operates PK-4, Town is a member of the MUUSD for grades 7-12

#### Governance Proposal:

- Remain a single-town, PreK-4 operating district within the CESU
- No written proposal submitted

#### Other Notes:

- Sole NMED in re: the Mount Mansfield MUUSD (operational 2015; town is 7-12 member)
- Votes of Huntington electorate on creation of a UUSD (from article by Helen Keith in *The Times Ink! of Richmond and Huntington* dated April 2018 and submitted in support of the Sec. 9 proposal by Ms. Keith; not independently verified):
  - Merger Proposal #1 (without MUUSD option)  
June 7, 2011 – 85 Yes / 365 No
  - Merger Proposal #2 (with MUUSD option)  
November 4, 2014 – 285 Yes / 521 No
  - Vote to Join Existing MUUSD as Full Member  
March 1, 2016 – 370 Yes / 413 No  
March 6, 2018 – 204 Yes / 306 No

#### Other Resources:

- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Chittenden Central SU: 2,348.59  
Huntington (K-4) – 100.00  
Mount Mansfield MUUSD – 2,244.59

#### April 27, 2018 Conversation:

- Want to ensure that youngest children attend school in Huntington
  - Parent volunteers
  - Shorter bus rides
  - Way to embrace young families as a whole into the community
- Community loves building and has “gone above and beyond” to maintain and improve it
  - Energy efficiency / geothermal
  - Doesn’t think larger UUSD community would have supported it
  - Concerned that if part of a larger district then an issue with the Huntington facility won’t rise to the top of the priority list for years – Huntington would no longer control own “destiny”
- Merger would not be good for town itself
  - Coming together to talk about issues is good for the community
  - People won’t travel 23 miles for a board meeting
- Sees appeal of merger, but no benefit to Huntington –
  - Can rely on SU for efficiencies – e.g., teacher negotiations –
  - Already precedent to share and collaborate
- Huntington too far distant for intradistrict sharing / school choice
- Community voted “no” 4 times – if add together votes cast in all: 2549 – 37% T / 63% No

- MUUSD relies on “policy governance” – Huntington uses “participatory governance”
  - Believes is more flexible and encourages community engagement
- Have had stable multi-age classrooms for years
  - Chosen as educational policy – not as means to manage fluctuating class sizes
  - Currently PreK; two kindergarten rooms; three 1-2 rooms; two 3-4 rooms
- Hires part time specials teachers (*e.g.*, 0.4 foreign language who is hired for additional hours elsewhere)
- 2 students from Buel’s Gore
- Not focused toward Jericho or Underhill -- but employment, health, recreation, etc. focused “everywhere else”
- MUUSD is engaged in intradistrict choice – Huntington not involved
- MUUSD making use of local councils that are moving from former fundraising responsibilities to identifying the “hopes and dreams” of the local community / providing information and advice to the MUUSD board

## 9. The Orwell Elementary School District (NMED)

### Snapshot

SU: Bennington-Rutland SU

**Date of Conversation:** March 20, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Glen Cousineau (Chair); Alison Eastman; Robert Quesnel; Peter Stone
- Also in attendance: Superintendent Brooke Farrell; Director of Finance Cheryl Scarzello; and citizens Karen DeMoy, Stefanie Wilbur, Mark Young, and Russell Young

**Current O/T Structure:** Operates PK-8, Town is a member of the MUUSD for 7-12

**Governance Proposal:**

- No written proposal submitted
- Board members have not reached consensus on a proposal for the best way forward

**Other Notes:**

- Sole NMED in re: the Slate Valley MUUSD (operational 2018; town is 9-12 member)
- Votes of Orwell electorate on creation of a UUSD:
  - Proposal #1 (without MUUSD option)
    - April 12, 2016 – 121 Yes / 211 No
    - June 21, 2016 reconsideration vote – 166 Yes / 204 No
  - Proposal #2 (with MUUSD option)
    - March 7, 2017 – 137 Yes / 219 No

**Other Resources:**

- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – 2018 , Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Addison Rutland SU – 1,227.92 (K-12)

Orwell – 121.50 (K-8)

Slate Valley MUUSD – 1,106.42 (total of combining districts; UUSD operational July 2018)

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

- Participation in two 706 study committees
- Three votes of electorate
- Public meetings
- Board meetings

**March 20, 2018 Conversation:**

- There is some concern that creation of the MUUSD will lead to “bad feelings” on the part of districts that voted in favor of creating a unified district that will impact the good, collaborative relationship that Orwell historically has had with the other AR SU districts
- Skepticism that full merger will lead to any better options for Orwell students or taxpayers
  - “take good care” of their students in need
  - More criticism that they don’t meet the needs of higher achieving students – not as well prepared for high school as students in other towns; need to “catch up” when reach high school; Orwell is working with the curriculum coordinator to address
- Merger will make the structure less convenient for parents and other taxpayers to participate
- Merger will remove Orwell taxpayer’s direct ability to “change, approve, or disapprove the budget” at town meeting

## 10. The Windham Elementary School District (NMED)

### Snapshot

SU: Windham Central SU

Date of Conversation: April 10, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Carolyn Partridge (Chair); Beth McDonald
- Also in attendance: Jerry Dyke; Nancy Dyke; Mickey Parker-Jennings (Teaching Principal); Kathleen Scott; Rich Werner (WCSU Chair); Gail Wyman

**Current O/T Structure:** Operates PK-6, Town is a member of the UHS for 7-12.

**Governance Proposal:** Remain a single-town, PreK-6 operating district within the WCSU

#### Other Notes:

- Sole NMED in re: the West River MUUSD (operational 2019; town is member for Grades 7-12)
- March 7, 2017 unification vote – 66 Yes; 74 No; 1 Blank or Spoiled
- WCSU meeting September 2017: voted 15-3 to support Stratton and Windham in their paths

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE enrollment and ADM data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Windham Central SU: 868.76

Windham (K-6) – 15

West River MUUSD – 452.91 (total of combining districts; operational July 2019)

River Valleys USD – 234.70 (K-6 operating / 7-12 tuitioning; total of combining districts; operational July 2019)

Marlboro (K-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning) – 119.15

Stratton (K-12 tuitioning) – 47

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion: (pp. 1-3)

- Participating in 706 study committee – public meetings
- After MUUSD creation / WESD rejection – formed local Act 46 committee; meets monthly
- Surveyed voters because post vote conversations indicated didn't understand vote – survey subcommittee worked several months – 88 surveys returned = 30% response rate – top three responses in order of priority:
  - Keep education quality high
  - Keep decision making at the local level
  - Keep K-6 students close to home

#### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

##### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

##### What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- “substantial equity” among the WCSU schools – “While some differences exist, the basic requirements and educational standards are met entirely.” (p. 5)
- Special opportunities at WESD due to “close relationship between local School Board members and the larger community, emphasizing the need to maintain our local School Board.” (p. 5)
- Some of offered programs: Meadows Bee Farm (miscellaneous opportunities), vegetable garden, after-school ukulele lessons, performances at local events, spinning and weaving classes, classes at ceramics studio, Early Stages program at Weston Playhouse (pp. 5-8)

- Detailed Plans – for Goals #1 and 2 (pp. 11-12):
    - Explore sharing PreK staffing across WCSU so that provided in WESD building
    - Will share professional development resources across the SU
    - Teachers across SU *“will benefit from sharing each school’s unique programming”*
    - *“Students will benefit from participation in WCSU professional development based on the CIP”*
    - *“Students will benefit from teachers’ participation in the WCSU-wide mentoring program for new educators”*
    - Seek opportunities for sharing administration so students participate in sports, art, etc. with other schools
    - Work with other schools in WCSU to develop *“special events, ... including Science Fairs and Engineering Challenges”*
    - *“Develop collaborative programming with other elementary schools beyond the WCSU”*
    - *“Explore expansion of public middle school choice”*
    - Grades 9-12 continue to be able to access public high school choice
  - April 10, 2018 Conversation:
    - Excellent education – many special programs and opportunities (see Report)
    - WESD is happy to share any of its programs / facilities with other districts
    - May be able to offer PreK – have a teacher certified for PreK and SpEd – anticipate growth in PreK population over next five years and currently go to Weston, Londonderry, Newfane, etc. for PreK
- 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**
- a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
  - b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- *“Parental involvement with a child’s education is widely recognized to be extremely important to a child’s ultimate success. ... Merging with the MRMUUSD would most likely require parents and community members who want to participate in Board meetings to travel to a central location a great distance away under sometimes less than optimal road conditions at a time when they would most likely be putting their children to bed.” (p. 3)*
  - *“in, at least, two instances, children have come to WES with a special ed. label and graduated without it” (p. 7)*
  - *“Our true goal ... is not that everyone should end up a millionaire but that they lead productive, happy lives making a living doing something they truly love” (p. 8)*
  - Little staff turnover (e.g., current teachers = 23 and 14 years) (p. 8)
  - Testing (p. 12) –
    - *“Much of our latest testing is not reportable because of our small numbers and confidentiality concerns”*
    - *“Our challenge is that our third graders are not accustomed to using computers ....In fact, some of our parents are reluctant to let their children use computers at an early age.”*
    - An aggregate of the SBAC math (Grades 3-6) = *“need for improvement”*
    - An *“aggregate of recent graduates”* = 89% proficient
  - April 10, 2018 Conversation:
    - Not much turnover in leadership
- 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- Already collaborate – e.g., *“shared teachers [e.g., music, PE, nurse], special education services, and group buying strategies” (p. 8)*



- Detailed Plans (p. 12):
    - Will “continue to coordinate and collaborate ... regarding school policies, professional development, and curriculum” (p. 12)
    - SU / MUUSD discussing centralized Director of Facilities, Transportation, and Security
      - Three WESD School Board members do these tasks “as part of their normal duties” and more cheaply than would be the Windham share of centralized services
  - April 10, 2018 Conversation:
    - SU / MUUSD already performs some duties collectively – e.g., bulk purchasing
- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- “no one can remember a vacancy” on the three-member school board “for the last 35 years or so” (p. 9)
  - WESD Board broke down line items when residents wanted more detail (p. 9)
  - Detailed Plans (p. 13): participation in LCAS, SU-wide analysis of SBAC results, annual fiscal audit, and continuation of SU-wide standards-based report card
  - April 10, 2018 Conversation:
    - Community members want to participate in school board meetings – if joined as full PreK-12 member, then board meetings likely to be in central location
    - Budgets pass unanimously on voice vote
    - Most transparent and accountable for voters to have a local budget – voice would be lost if PreK-12 member because Windham’s population so small
- 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- “in the next five years we will have an additional 18-20 children attending WES” (p.14)
  - Trend “has been slowly, but steadily growing”
  - Explored other transportation options – “significantly more expensive primarily due to Windham’s geographic location” (p. 3)
  - Reports at appendix A-4 to the Proposal
  - Detailed Plans (pp. 13-14):
    - “Windham will achieve this goal based on continued receipt of the Small Schools Grant based on geographic isolation.”
    - Survey results indicate satisfaction
  - April 10, 2018 Conversation:
    - Many programs (e.g., ukulele) provided at no cost
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- Geographically isolated and treacherous driving conditions:
    - “small mountain-top community” that is “accessed only by steep and/or dirt roads” (p. 1)
    - School is at elevation 1,712 feet – must go through W Townshend (600 ft) to reach any other WCSU schools (p. 1)
      - Trip to nearest schools = 20 minutes “in a school bus on a good day” (p. 4)
    - Quotes Dan French in the June 30, 2017 *Southern Vermont Regional Governance Analysis – Route 100 Corridor*: “schools in the WCSU and the WSSU are more isolated from each other than many in the Kingdom due to the mountainous terrain, a significant variable when considering any changes to the governance structure.” (p. 3)
    - Windham Hill Road = “steepness and sharp curve at the bottom of the hill” – provides examples of accidents (p. 4)
    - Weather conditions can differ from those in rest of SU

- “concern that our capital debt level of approximately \$22,000 is significantly less than that of the NewBrook School (\$352,166) and Leland and Gray Union High School (\$1,580,000)” (p. 15)
- April 10, 2018 Conversation:
  - Geographically isolated and treacherous roads – refers to Dan French report and statements by bus driver who is selectboard member and road commissioner (in Proposal)
  - Windham Elementary School has a “target on [its] back” in regarding closure
    - Former Commissioner Vilaseca – identified Windham as a school that the State “should no longer carry” (quoting Windham Chair)
    - Also anecdotes that MUUSD is having talks about closing a school – probably Jamaica – but WESD is concerned it will be Windham School
  - WESD voters rejected merger
    - Subsequent conversations with voters who voted “yes” – would have voted “no” if they understood what it would mean to vote “yes” (resulting in survey)
    - Survey – overwhelmingly – WESD community wants its own budget and its own local school board

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

- April 10, 2018 Conversation:
  - Happy to remain as part of WCSU

# 11. The Bellows Falls Union High School District and its Four Member Districts (Athens, Grafton, Rockingham, and Westminster)

## Snapshot

SU: Windham Northeast SU (all districts)

Date of Conversation: March 30, 2018

### Participants:

- Athens / Grafton Joint Board Members: Lynn Morgan (Athens Board); John Bryar (Grafton Board)
- Rockingham Board Member: Rick Holloway (Chair);
- Westminster Board Members: Cheryl Charles; Elise Manning
- Bellows Falls Union Board Member: David Clark (Chair of WNESU Board; Westminster resident)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Chris Kibbe; Bruce Sterling (Westminster resident)

### Current O/T Structure:

- Athens, Grafton, and Westminster: PK-6 operating; 7-8 tuitioning, Towns are members of the UHS
  - Athens and Grafton operate the PK-6 school jointly by contract with a joint board
- Rockingham: K-8 operating, Town is a member of the UHS
- Bellows Falls UHS: 9-12 operating

### Governance Proposal:

Retain current structure (5 districts, 6 school boards; SU board) and current SU boundaries

### Other Notes:

March 7, 2017 Merger vote:

Athens – 69 Yes; 14 No

Grafton – 81 Yes; 156 No; 12 Blank/Spoiled

Rockingham – 283 Yes; 191 No; 46 B/S

Westminster – 155 Yes; 436 No; 15 B/S

### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- Board's Responses to Common List of Topics (integrated in full below)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Windham Northeast SU – 1,151.29

	<u>K-8</u>	<u>9-12</u>
Athens	49.90	11
Grafton	51.15	31
Rockingham	469.69	231.69
Westminster	232.20	<u>74.66</u>
<i>[Total Bellows Falls Union</i>		<i>348.35]</i>

### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- § 706 Study Committee – 6 months of meetings – A, G, and W voters did not approve proposal
- Superintendent convened three SU-Wide meetings / W convened another regional meeting
- Each town school board created its own Act 46 committee

### School Boards' Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?
  - a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
  - b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- School boards “will create an Out-of-School Program Task Force to consider the viability of establishing equitable before and after school programs, and summer programs” (p. 8)

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #1:

*As the data in APPENDIX E indicates there are no consistent disparities in the performance between schools within WNESU*

*The relatively equitable outcomes on the SBAC tests is due in large measure to the system-wide use of assessments developed and implemented, system-wide professional development, and system-wide wide curriculum and instructional programs. This, in turn, is the result of the boards within the SU commitment to have the SU oversee all staff development. To ensure continued improvement in these areas the districts within the SU have provided sufficient funding for both continued training in the recently adopted math and writing programs and the development of written curriculum documents.*

*Furthermore, each school has devised a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) that addresses the specific deficiencies in student learning as identified as a result of an analysis of the SBAC assessments (see APPENDIX H). All of this work has been accomplished through the SU, which each district fully supports and which directs and oversees the curriculum and assessments in each school.*

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- SBAC: Students at or above State averages in “33 of 41 benchmarks, a marked improvement over the prior year where 24 of the 41 were attained” (p. 5; Appendix E)
  - System-wide professional development supporting implementation of a standards-based curriculum and instructional programs in math and writing, budgeted to continue FY1 209
  - Continuous improvement plans at each school (Appendix H)
- “expects each WNESU board to commit to a full review of the recommendations included in” the IFR Report issued in December 2017 (p. 8)

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #2:

*WNESU students are performing at or above State averages in SBAC tests on 33 out of 41 benchmarks, a marked improvement over the prior year.*

*In an effort to sustain the improvements noted above, the SU is overseeing all staff development for 2018-19, with funding for both continued training in the recently adopted math and writing programs and the development of written curriculum documents.*

*As noted in the response to item 1, each school has devised Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) that address specific deficiencies in student learning as identified as a result of an analysis of the SBAC assessments (see APPENDIX H). All of this work has been accomplished through the SU, which each district fully supports and which directs and oversees the curriculum and assessments in each school.*

3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- “enrollments in excess of 900 for the foreseeable future” (p. 5; Appendix C)
- “WNESU outperforms State averages in the area of student to staff ratios, evidence that the current governance structure is achieving economies by staffing its schools wisely.” (p. 5; Appendix D (broken down by school))
- Athens and Grafton exploring merger (joint committee that prepared Sec. 9 proposal not making a recommendation on merits of potential proposal) (p. 6)
- Pursue additional opportunities to achieve economies of scale –
  - already: “bulk purchasing in a number of areas” and some sharing of staff (p. 7)
    - additional staff sharing opportunities “may emerge in the future, particularly in the areas of data management, art, music, PE, and after-school programs” (p. 7)
  - Instituting in-house food service FY2019 in all schools (p. 7)
  - SU management and funding of staff development programming (largely completed) (p.7)
  - Bi-monthly joint meetings of town and union high school boards
  - Boards will use the “Goal-Setting Activities/Actions Checklist” to improve collaboration and the sharing of goals” (p. 7; Appendix G)

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #3:

WNESU has achieved many efficiencies of scale as described in detail in the grid sheet in APPENDIX F. As noted below, the establishment of bi-annual meetings of the town boards and union high school boards will facilitate the identification of future areas where economies of scale might be realized. Part 4 of WNESU’s AGS outlines how the districts in WNESU intend to achieve the efficiencies called for in Act 46. The bullet points from that section are:

- The Athens, Grafton, and Athens-Grafton Joint Contract Board will explore the possibility of changing their governance structure
- The SU administrators and school district administrators continue pursuing potential economies of scale that might be possible.
- WNESU will be instituting a district-wide in-house food service in school year 2018-2019.
- All staff development programming will be managed and funded through the SU.
- The union high school board and town boards (i.e. Athens, Grafton, Rockingham, and Westminster) will convene bi-annual meetings to identify synergies that could result in improved academics and efficiencies
- The boards serving grades K-8 will create External Program Task Force to consider the viability of establishing equitable before and after school programs, and summer programs.
- The WNESU member boards will utilize the “Goal-Setting Activities/Actions Checklist to improve collaboration and the sharing of goals
- The boards will commit to the full review and timely implementation of recommendations included in the IFR report issued in December 2017.

4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?

- See above – bi-monthly joint meetings, e.g.

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #4:

The coordinated cycle of meetings described in APPENDIX G will facilitate clearer goal setting and budget development making it easier for the public to track spending and academic progress.

5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #5:

*As illustrated in APPENDIX D, WNESU compares favorably to the state average in student to staff ratios and it’s overall cost-per-student is not out of line with other comparable districts in Vermont. The SU-wide Act 46 Committee views this as clear evidence that the communities not only value the schools, they value the local oversight over the school budgets afforded by the current structure of boards. APPENDIX B provides a sign off sheet from each WNESU board indicating their support for the actions they need to undertake in response to this proposal.*

6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then

a. Why is merger not “possible”?

b. Why is merger not “practicable”?

- Merger of Westminster with Athens or Grafton or with a unified Athens-Grafton is “not feasible or desirable” (pp. 4-5):
  - Geographically challenging to travel between schools – “at least 25 minutes on curvy secondary roads in good weather”
  - Differences in debt and tax rates – Westminster built a new gym/renovated (\$970K – through 2025); Athens/Grafton has no long-term debt
  - Towns voted overwhelmingly against merger
    - Westminster adopted goals based on follow-up discussions with voters – e.g., importance of town meetings, 7-8 grade tuitioning, community connections, etc.
    - “Taken together these goals recognize the relationship between healthy communities, healthy democratic institutions, and well-educated children.”
- “The SU-wide Act 46 Joint Committee acknowledges that Athens and Grafton are exploring a merger to create one board that would operate the Grafton Elementary School but does not see that potential change in governance between those two towns having an impact on the obstacles to a merger with Westminster cited above.”

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #6:

*Part 2 of the WNESU AGS outlines the reasons a merger is neither possible or practicable. The bullet points from that section are:*

- Incompatible operating structures
- Neighboring districts were exempt from Act 46, had recently completed mergers, or were in the midst of merger studies
- None of the districts from neighboring SUs were part of Bellows Falls Union High School’s agreement and all were committed to other high schools
- A merger between the two towns with compatible operating structures- Athens-Grafton and Westminster-- is not feasible or desirable.

7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then

a. Why not?

b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #7:

*The reasons for not enlarging and/or merging are embedded in the responses above. The member districts in WNESU believe that because of the idiosyncrasies of the operating structures within the district, the fact that all member districts are the exclusive signatories of the Bellows Falls Union High School agreement, and the SU is functioning effectively and has addressed the goals of Act 46 within the existing governance structure that no boundary changes are needed in this region.*

## 12. The Hazen Union High School District AND the Lakeview Union Elementary School District and All Member Districts (Greensboro; Hardwick; Stannard; Woodbury)

### Snapshot

SU: Orleans Southwest SU

Date of Conversation: March 8, 2018

#### Participants:

- Craftsbury Board Members: Mary Lou Rylands-Isaacson (Vice Chair)
- Hardwick Board Member: Jennifer Fliegelman (Chair)
- Woodbury Board Member: Patrick Flood (Chair)
- Hazen Union Board Members: Steven Freihofner (Chair)
- Lakeview Union Board Members: Victoria Von Hessert (Chair; Greensboro); John Miller (Stannard)

#### Current O/T Structure:

- Craftsbury –PK-12 operating
- Wolcott – PK-6 operating / 7-12 tuitioning
- (Greensboro – member Lakeview Union PK-6 and Hazen Union 7-12)
- Hardwick – PK-6 operating (member Hazen Union 7-12)
- Stannard – 7-12 tuitioning (member Lakeview Union PK-6)
- Woodbury – PK-6 operating (member Hazen Union 7-12)
- Hazen Union – 7-12 operating (Greensboro, Hardwick, Woodbury)
- Lakeview Union –P K-6 operating (Greensboro; Stannard)

#### Governance Proposal:

No Change – remain as six single-town districts (two PreK-12; two PreK-6; one 7-12; one “ghost”); one union elementary school district; and one union middle/high school district in same SU

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Orleans Southwest SU – 1,003.18  
Craftsbury (K-12 o) – 136.25  
Wolcott (K-6 o / 7-12 t) – 241.89  
Hardwick (K-6 o) – 217.84  
Stannard (7-12 t) – 12.25  
Woodbury (K-6 o) – 48.74  
Hazen Union (7-12 o) – 285.21 (Greensboro 50.03, Hardwick 199.77, and Woodbury 35.41)  
Lakeview Union (K-6 o) – 61 (Greensboro 43 and Stannard 18)

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

Process included:

- *“three years of thorough study and deliberation”* of potential merger options 2011-2014 (p. 10)
- *“formed a discussion group in November 2015 to discuss collaboration possibilities and any possible mergers”* (p. 10)
- *“formed Act 46 Exploratory Committee on March 23, 2016”* – *“worked with a grant-funded consultant over the course of ten meetings ... to develop specific proposals for review and discussion within each community”* (pp. 10-11)
  - Several financial models – minimal impact
  - *“impasse over issues surrounding tuitioning vs non-tuitioning of students”*

- “reservations that they would have adequate representation on any larger SU [sic] board”

### School Boards’ Written Analysis and Conversation– Overview:

Beginning on page 98, each district has an individual narrative that lays out what each currently does and what it intends to do in general terms; the information below is from the written discussion of all districts within the SU, how they work together, etc. and from the Conversation.

- March 8, 2018 Conversation
  - Working together now in ways haven’t done in the past because of: Act 46 conversations; increase in the number of children who have experienced trauma throughout the OSSU; and universal prekindergarten laws
  - “everything that you would expect to happen under Act 46 is happening or is beginning to happen”

#### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Current offerings - Appendix D, pages 79-85
- 2017 - OSSU Leadership Team developed new strategic plan and identified areas for improving quality, student performance and equity (p. 18) – possibilities include, e.g.:
  - One lead coordinator at SU level for Library/Media services with team of support staff at each school
  - Centralizing AP classes for Hazen and Craftsbury students and offering them on a yearly rotation between the two schools
  - Offer language classes at elementary schools on quarterly or semester basis and share language teachers among schools as for music, art, and PE
  - Year round / Flex school option
  - Sustainable agriculture, environmental, and outdoor learning programs
  - Specialized programming (e.g., Craftsbury Outdoor Sports Academy; Hazen Arts Academy)
- March 8, 2018 Conversation
  - Hazen has “J” Term – work-based opportunities with local businesses
  - Craftsbury and Sterling College have dual enrollment relationship – SC even changed schedule to accommodate Craftsbury
  - Three Craftsbury girls on Hazen Union basketball team
  - Transportation issues for rural and poor communities inhibit ability to work collaboratively after school – so e.g., bringing all students together during the school day for a day of music

#### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

- In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Currently:
  - Teachers and administrators “collaboratively developed a comprehensive set of learning outcomes ... in each content area” PreK-12 (p. 15)
  - Developed common curriculum for all schools aligned with standards – released for public comment and study August 2017 (p. 15)
  - Mentoring team in each building, rather than one-to-one (p. 16)
- To Do, e.g. (pp. 17-18):
  - “Conduct a ‘needs assessment’ for each school focused on improved implementation of curriculum, formative assessments, embedded technology, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and career pathways”
  - “Implement social development curricula”
  - “Develop proficiency-based instructional and assessment practices”



- “Develop staff expertise in modelling and teaching culturally competent and social emotional behaviors”
  - Assessments (Appendix B, pp. 47-75)
  - March 8, 2018 Conversation
    - Meeting with local health and mental health professional to determine ways to intervene earlier with families
    - Special Ed – working to keep students with IEP in schools and not out-of-district placements
- 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- Currently, *e.g.* (pp. 20-21):
    - Single busing contract
    - Special ed services
    - One master teacher contract
    - One master support staff contract for three districts
    - Centralized IT support and management
    - Large-scale purchasing
  - Future opportunities for centralization, *e.g.* (p. 21):
    - Food service
    - Facility management
  - Ratios set out by school, 2016-2017 (Appendix C, p. 78)
  - March 8, 2018 Conversation
    - Have/working on unified food service contract – farm to school
    - New time management system by next fall
- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Currently, *e.g.* (pp. 22-23):
    - SU Executive Committee receives monthly financial reports, superintendent reports re: each department, and compliance reports on Executive Limitations Policies.
    - SU EC receives academic reports 3/year
    - Redesigned budget development process to better accommodate public input
    - Local newspapers, postings at stores, Front Porch Forum, Facebook
- 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- ADM / enrollments (pp. 12-13)
    - “mild decline in enrollments in the last 10 years of about 5%” SU-wide
    - Hazen UHSD “has been fairly steady in the last 10 years, but with a roughly 10% drop in the last 3 years”
    - Craftsbury increased about 20% in the last 4 years (not including PreK)
    - Hardwick “mostly steady enrollments, and is currently about 5% down from its 10 year peak”
    - Lakeview “steady the last 7 years and is up about 15% from 10 years ago”
    - Woodbury has same ADM as 10 years ago, and up 40% from lowest point
  - Demographics – Appendix C, page 76
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. Why is merger not “possible”?
  - b. Why is merger not “practicable”?
- 7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. Why not?
  - b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?

### 13.The Lake Region Union High School District and its Seven Member Districts (Albany; Barton; Brownington; Glover; Irasburg; Orleans; Westmore)

#### Snapshot

SU: Orleans Central SU

Date of Conversation: February 23, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Neil Urie (Albany Chair); Fred Latour (Barton Board Member); Amy Leroux (Irasburg Chair)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Bev Davis

**Current O/T Structure:**

- Albany, Barton, Brownington, Glover, Irasburg, and Orleans – PK/K-8 operating, all are members of the UHS
- Westmore – PK-8 tuitioning
- Lake Region UHS – 9-12 operating (all districts)

**Governance Proposal:**

The districts created a new § 706 study committee with the expectation that the committee will present a proposal to the State Board in May 2018, the voters will vote on the proposal on November 6, 2018, and – if approved – the district will assume operations on July 1, 2019.

**Other Resources:**

- [Letters submitted as proposal under Act 46, Sec. 9](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Orleans Central SU – 1,003.29

	<u>K-8</u>	<u>9-12</u>
Albany	76.06	36
Barton	135.90	85.85
Brownington	106.80	46
Glover	110.40	55
Irasburg	119.05	58
Orleans	99	45.23
Westmore	26 (tuition)	<u>4</u>
<i>[Total Lake Region Union High</i>		<i>330.08]</i>

**February 23, 2018 Conversation:**

- Many factors contributed to the voters’ failure to approve the prior proposal, *e.g.*:
  - Rapid timeframe
  - Vote warned for July – low voter turnout
  - Negative feeling that “Montpelier” was imposing its will on districts
  - Belief that the Legislature would repeal Act 46
  - Don’t want to give up local boards
  - Difference in outstanding debt among the districts (noted that there is isn’t much difference and that all buildings are well-maintained)
- Study Committee will revise and review previous Articles – responding to concerns by, *e.g.*, including requirement for local advisory boards
- Proposed timeline:
  - Take draft to community and legal counsel for feedback and revise as necessary
  - State Board in May
  - Summer / Autumn for educating communities about proposal’s contents

- Voters in November (last vote was low turnout – purposely chose November because people typically vote then)
- Districts in SU already do a lot together – *e.g.*, have unified full day, 5 days/week, full year PreK in two school locations
- Want to preserve what they have while taking advantage of opportunities a unified structure affords

**If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be? With what other communities are there natural affinities?**

- Orleans SW SU has expressed an interest in sharing SU resources

## 14. The Mount Anthony Union High School District and its Five Member Districts (Bennington; North Bennington; Pownal, Shaftsbury; Woodford)

### The Bennington School District, the Shaftsbury School District and the Woodford School District – Snapshot

SU: Southwest Vermont SU

Date of Conversation: April 5, 2018

#### Participants:

- Bennington Board Members: Chaila Sekora (Vice Chair); Dan Monks; Meridy Leibrock-Capella
- Shaftsbury Board Members: Ed Molloy (Chair); Dave Durfee; Tony D’Onofrio; Jeffrey Leake;
- Woodford Board Member: Dick Franz (Clerk)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Jim Culkeen

#### Current O/T Structure:

- Bennington – Operates PK-6; own is member of UHS for 7-12
- Shaftsbury – Operates PK-6; town is member of UHS for 7-12
- Woodford – Operates PK-6; town is member of UHS for 7-12
- Mount Anthony UHS – Operates 7-12

#### Governance Proposal:

Create a UUSD per study committee’s proposal approved by the SBE on 9.20.17

#### Other Notes:

Results on local votes on proposed UUSD

- Bennington – 965 yes / 338 no
- Shaftsbury – 322 yes / 176 no
- Woodford – 36 yes / 38 no (not reversed on reconsideration: 4 vote spread)
- Pownal – 210 yes / 214 no (no reconsideration vote)
- North Bennington – school board did not warn the vote

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposals](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Southwest Vermont SU – 2,803

	<u>K-6</u>	<u>7-12 (union)</u>
Bennington	903.43	812.9
N Bennington	135 (tuition)	88.27
Pownal	219.65	208.70
Shaftsbury	205	186.7
Woodford	21.35	22

[Mt A Union total (7-12) 1,319]

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

§ 706 Study Committee process; Board discussions

#### April 5, 2018 Conversation:

- Makes sense to model structure, especially board structure, on what has been successful for union high school for a long time
- Woodford is a very small school with a very small budget – it can serve as an incubator although it doesn’t have ratios State would like to see
  - Board supported merger and proposed Articles – Board understands there is more safety for the small school in a merger

- Merger vote failed both times by a very small margin (2 votes and 4 votes) – board believes it was because of fear of tax rate increases, especially due to dilution of federal forest impact aid
  - Less impact on forest impact aid if union elementary school district
- Some of Shaftsbury is part of the North Bennington ID School District and so some Shaftsbury residents were not allowed to vote on merger (because NB ID didn't warn the vote)
- Shaftsbury school as capacity for NB ID students if NB decides to become part of an operating district again
- Brattleboro approved 3-to-1 even though would not have town-by-town proportionality and had accepted the Mount Anthony UHSD hybrid model

## The North Bennington ID – Snapshot

SU: Southwest Vermont SU

Date of Conversation: April 5, 2018

### Participants:

- Board Members: Ray Mullineaux (Chair); Kim Krall; Maria Scully; Tim Schroeder
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Jim Culkeen

### Current O/T Structure:

- PK-6 tuitioning
- Member of Mount Anthony Union School District (7-12)

### Governance Proposal:

- NB would withdraw from Mt Anthony Union Middle/High School District and become a PreK-12 nonoperating district. (p. 14)
- Then it would join Battenkill Valley SU as a third district (Arlington – PreK-12 operating; Sandgate – PreK-12 tuitioning; North Bennington = PreK-12 tuitioning) (p. 14)
- Supports Arlington’s request for “a five-year extension as a newly configured SU” (p. 15)

### Other Notes:

- North Bennington ID includes Village of North Bennington and “a section of the Town of Shaftsbury commonly referred to as the Shaftsbury ID District” (p. 6)
- North Bennington school board did not warn the UUSD vote
- Results on local votes on proposed UUSD
  - Bennington – 965 yes / 338 no
  - Pownal – 210 yes / 214 no (no reconsideration vote)
  - Shaftsbury – 322 yes / 176 no
  - Woodford – 36 yes / 38 no (not reversed on reconsideration – 4 vote margin)

### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

See Bennington-Shaftsbury-Woodford Snapshot above for the K-12 ADM in FY 2018 for the region

### April 5, 2018 Conversation:

- “Plan [to withdraw from UHSD and become PK-12 tuitioning district] is unique because it provides a sustainable way to give vast opportunities to our students and allows other districts to move forward to clean things up in the area”
- “If we were out of the [union high school district] and moved out of the SU then it would simplify matters for the other districts”
- “Synergy” in discussions with Arlington and Sandgate”
- North Bennington high school students probably would continue to enroll primarily in Mount Anthony, but would also have access to Arlington and Burr and Burton
- Would want to leave MAUHSD and SU even though high school students would probably go to MAUHS because it allows other SWVT SU districts to consider their options more easily
- At least one NB student attends Arlington through public high school choice program
- Steps taking towards withdrawal from MAUHSD:
  - No plans for a vote – but if do vote, then it will begin the statutory time frame for the others to vote whether to approve withdrawal
  - Believes other districts not likely to approve withdrawal of NB
  - Have spoken with representatives about legislation similar to the Vernon exception in Act 49 (2017); legislature has no particular interest in it for NB; Senators not likely to get involved because they have so many other things to do
  - Thinks AOE can help to “clean things up”

## The Pownal School District – Snapshot

SU: Southwest Vermont SU

Date of Conversation: April 5, 2018

### Participants:

- Board Members: Cynthia Brownell (Chair); Angie Rawling; Tammy Sohl
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Jim Culkeen

### Current O/T Structure:

- PK-6 operating
- Member of Mount Anthony Union School District (7-12)

### Governance Proposal:

- Proposing that the SBE create an MUUSD with Pownal (and NB) as an NMED
- April 5, 2018 Conversation: Another option is to merge the elementary districts –
  - don't believe that one board can manage PreK-12
  - issues are different in elementary and secondary
  - couldn't accomplish everything in meeting once/month
  - this would allow PreK-6 to have its own board

### Other Notes:

- Results on local votes on proposed UUSD
  - Pownal – 210 yes / 214 no (no reconsideration vote)
  - Bennington – 965 yes / 338 no
  - Shaftsbury – 322 yes / 176 no
  - Woodford – 36 yes / 38 no (not reversed on reconsideration – 4 vote margin)
  - North Bennington – school board did not warn the vote
- April 5, 2018 Conversation:
  - Pownal's elementary school is near the MA border; good relationship with Williams College – P's children work with education and cultural resources there
  - 75 miles of road

### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

See Bennington-Shaftsbury-Woodford Snapshot above for the K-12 ADM in FY 2018 for the region

### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- § 706 Study Committee process
- Board discussions

### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

#### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- “Pownal has always agreed to students having school choice”
- April 5, 2018 Conversation: clarifies that Pownal would be open to possibility if statutes allowed a district to both operate and pay tuition for the same grades

#### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- *“Pownal Elementary School has received (for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row) the PBIS School Improvement Award which is earned by having increased test scores and decreased behavioral referrals.” (p. 4)*
  - *“Pownal has reached their educational goals for the last two years and has similar goals for this year.”*
  - *“Donna Leep, the Assistant Superintendent of the SU, told our Board that Pownal Elementary School is used as the example for the other elementary schools in the district.”*
- 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- *“Because of our unique governing structure, PESD already shares educational responsibilities for their prek – grade 12 students” – e.g.:*
    - Unified purchasing / contract – oil, supplies, books, food services, “copier contract support”
    - Common language on teacher contract and support staff contract
    - Computer support
    - Teacher training
    - As well as other tasks, including those required by law to be performed at the SU level (e.g., special ed services, transportation)
  - *“The districts are currently working on contracts for teachers to be assigned across schools”*
    - April 5, 2018 Conversation: clarifies that has no details, but Pownal Board is open to this possibility
- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- *“Given the fact that the savings [expected in the merger proposal] would be minimal, at best, PESD maintains that our current alternative structure works for the State of Vermont and the residents of our district” (p. 3)*
  - April 5, 2018 Conversation:
    - Federal impact aid has kept tax rate low
    - One fewer teacher and combined two classes
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- *“We have the smallest number of member school districts, one district per town for Woodford, Shaftsbury and Pownal. Bennington has an elementary district and the Middle School and High School.” (p. 3)*
- 7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**



**15. North Country Union High School District and its Member Districts (Brighton; Charleston; Derby; Holland; Jay; Lowell; Morgan; Newport City; Newport Town; Troy; Westfield)**

**Snapshot**

SU: North Country SU

Date of Conversation: February 16, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Member: Gaston Bathalon (Troy)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent John Castle; Liz Butterfield (Administrative Assistant)

**Current O/T Structure:**

	K-6		7-8			9-12	
	O	T	O	USD	T	USD	T
<b>Brighton</b>	X		X			X	
<b>Charleston</b>	X		X			X	
<b>Coventry</b>	X		X				X
<b>Derby</b>	X			X		X	
<b>Holland</b>	X			X		X	
<b>Jay</b>	JOINT			X		X	
<b>Lowell</b>	X		X			X	
<b>Morgan</b>		X		X		X	
<b>Newport City</b>	X			X		X	
<b>Newport Town</b>	X				X	X	
<b>Troy</b>	X		X			X	
<b>Westfield</b>	JOINT				X	X	
<b>(Ferdinand)</b>		(X)			(X)		(X)

**Governance Proposal:**

- No Change
- Westfield voted March 7 to be 7-8 member of North Country Union School District in FY 2020

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

- North Country SU – 2,374.35
- Brighton – 108.52596
- Charleston – 127.82
- Coventry – 169
- Derby – 128.45
- Holland – 85.62
- Jay – 92.96
- Lowell – 128.45
- Morgan – 63.40
- Newport City – 548.98
- Newport Town – 187.36
- Troy – 212.96
- Westfield – 52.75

Included in Numbers above:

Total Union Middle School – 196.26

Total Union High School – 686.93

### School Boards' Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

#### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

#### What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Commitments and Design for Learning: “After a year-long process and review during the 2014-15 school year, the NCSU Leadership Team ... recommended the NCSU Commitments and Design for Learning” for SU approval in September 2015 (Narrative, p. 7)
- Convening “‘Learning Design Council’ (comprised of a wide range of stake holders, including parents and students) to assess the implementation ... and to make recommendations on the next iteration for board approval next September.”
- Beginning second year of working with Great Schools Partnership of Portland, ME
  - Have “established cross-curricular standards/‘Transferable Skills’ that are K-12”
  - Will continue “defining content proficiencies” and will define “clear learning progressions”
  - In “second year of having a ‘Pathways Coordinator to support a wide range of on-line, self-designed academic study, early college and external; learning opportunities”
    - \$267,000 planning grant to “reflect on our current status and plan thoughtfully to ensure we gain traction on a full implementation” of non-CTE co-ops (pp. 7-8)
    - Would like to “expand to include community based learning and service learning opportunities at all schools” (p. 8)
- Have “provided training for PBIS, Responsive Classroom, Mindfulness and Restorative Justice” and “expanded professional and technical assistance ... in being trauma informed”
- “continually strive to create common structures, systems, opportunities, and supports so that we meet the needs of each child and provide equitable learning opportunities”
  - “curriculum content coaches, special education instructional specialists, behavior specialists, interventionists, and special educators all support teachers and students using common frames”
  - “Literacy, math, and science coaches ... ensure continuity of curriculum, assessment, and instruction”
  - “Trained peer mentors and designated teams of teacher leaders also learn and implement common means to support teachers and students to succeed, all supported by the SU”
- Also have implemented (p. 9):
  - Instructional Frameworks
  - Common Assessment Calendar
  - Continuum of Instruction
  - Common Instructional Practice
  - Part-time Instructional Innovation Coordinator
  - Encore Program – after school and summer programming open to all
- “Although there are differences in programming and delivery, we believe we are providing students with substantially equal access to quality education”
- “have established an Annual Report that highlights a wide range of indicators to help us be data informed. In a number of cases, providing local boards with data trends has helped them to understand what adjustments they should make to provide more equitable situations.” (p. 12)
- In September, hosted a Fall Forum on Understanding Poverty in Education with support of Public Assets Institute and Voices for Vermont’s Children –
  - “affirm[ed] commitment to equity and providing the right disposition and capacity to support students and families from poverty”
  - “developed a resolution intended to encourage the Vermont Legislature to increase the weighting for poverty in the state funding formula”

- *“committ[ed] to other investments to ensure our capacity to support children and families in need”*
  - Will *“review and monitor participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to ensure we are providing substantially equal access for students”* (p. 13)
  - *“Continue to look at differences in middle school programming and identify collaborative ways to provide access to curricular opportunities that may be limited.”*
  - Disparities are not just because of poverty but also culture, teacher ability, etc. (p. 11)
  - February 16, 2018 Conversation:
    - *“question of how much of this is a forced march and how much is everyone getting on board”*
      - e.g., several years ago there was a battle over having one math program; eventually did so because committee explored and decided they’d do so
    - Dedication of resources in a more common way – lit coach, math coach, etc – nurse leader working with all nurses
    - Increasingly more cohesion and willingness to move ahead
- 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**
- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
  - b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- *“Our data demonstrates that there are mixed outcomes for students, that includes an achievement gap for students from poverty and those on” IEPs, -- “achievement gaps between sub-groups, between schools and to some extent between” SU and other SUs/districts (p. 11)*
  - Gaps are influenced by many variables including *“school culture, quality of staff, quality of instruction or design of learning, fidelity of curriculum or program implementation, and in some cases access to services”*
  - *“we are not a ‘data driven’ supervisory union. We are data informed. There remain concerns about assessing learning, and therefore schools, solely based on quantifiable outcomes on statewide assessments in two or three subject areas. We recognize, and welcome Vermont’s shift to a more comprehensive shift to ‘accountability,’ yet remain cautious about data collection and how it may be used.”*
  - Recommendations:
    - Continue to be data informed
    - Continue to implement the Design for Learning and review / revise as necessary
    - Establish a NCSU Learning Design Council – in past years SU has convened ad hoc group of teachers as *“conduit for information around SU wide initiatives”* – expanding group to include parents and students and shifting to having *“a voice and influence in shaping the initiatives generated from our Design for Learning”*
    - *“Ensure equity around wages and benefits: Continue to look at wages and benefits for support staff [who are in] four distinct bargaining units with four distinct agreements” – “likely to take another bargaining cycle or two to reach a level of equity that is appropriate”* (p. 13)
  - February 16, 2018 Conversation:
    - Hard time attracting and retaining quality teachers – due in part to geography, collective bargaining agreement (salary, health care)
    - Worked hard to make benefit and (to lesser extent) salary closer to each other for paras across SU
    - Problem filling SpEd positions
- 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- *“This fall, we hired a School Nurse Leader to provide supervision and support”* to all schools (p. 8)
  - *“established the position of Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist and Wellness Coordinator”*
  - *“Common NCSU-wide and school based professional development”* (p. 10)

- *“The NCSU Leadership Team, comprised of building administrators and central office staff, is the main group that works collaborative [sic] across the supervisory union” – plus steering committees with faculty representation “guiding the work on proficiency based learning and feedback/grading practices”*
- February 16, 2018 Conversation:
  - SU employs common staff and assesses out the cost to the schools based on time – e.g. PE teacher

**4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Cites Paul Costello re: existence of *“two Vermonts – separated often by level or education and income”* (p. 16)
- *“Working class and poor parents generally are not engaged, nor do they participate at the same level as their more educated and wealthy neighbors”*
  - *“need to establish a more inclusive and more participatory process for authentic engagement of all members of our school-community”*
  - *“believe strongly that a multi-district supervisory union is the best option for maintaining access and trust with our communities”*
- Individual budgets are more transparent than a centralized budget
- Low turnout at NCUHS meetings
- Participated in AOE Integrated Field Review in 2016
- *“Many of our schools use surveys for parent feedback and we are working on more comprehensive approach using perception surveys and qualitative data”*
- Recommendations (pp. 16-17)
  - *“Enhance opportunities for student voice and engagement in governance”*
  - schools *“will explore the development and enhancement of student leadership”*
    - *“interest in developing a model”* for high school board member and student to attend local school board meetings
  - *“Support active and effective parent organizations at all levels ... There is a need for training for parent leaders and principals on developing effective strategies to help these organizations be a positive example of social capital to lend a voice and active support to the direction of schools”*
  - Provide training for board members, administrators, staff, students and community partners on *“public engagement”*
    - *“Town Meetings, Fall Forums and Community Conversations”* – expand upon traditional Town Meeting and include students
    - *“Expand Community Partners”*
    - *“Voter registration and participation”*
- February 16, 2018 Conversation:
  - SU employs common staff and assesses out the cost to the schools based on time – e.g. PE teacher
  - Believes there is more transparency because even though this is an SU expense they talk about it as a town meeting to discuss

**5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

- *“we are continually looking at and expected to demonstrate efficiency. Our communities tend to hold local boards’ feet to the fire when it comes to spending.”* (p. 13)
- *“In many respects, we do demonstrate an economy of scale given our size as a supervisory union and likely surpass some Unified Union Districts”* (p. 14)
- Historically most NCSU schools spend below state average – *“recognize that this is in part due to low wages”*
- Per pupil spending has increased *“mainly due to declining enrollment”* but also due to *“growing needs for students, increased expectations for outcomes and educational quality standards”*
  - NCUHS decreased teaching staff from 68 to 54 teachers in five years
  - NCUHS proposing FY19 budget lower than FY18

- *“Schools do share staffing in many cases such as physical education, art, music, and nurses.”*
  - Eliminated *“cost of approximately \$ 90,000 annually for two stand-alone facilities”* for PreK and no operated in each elementary school
  - Human Resources Coordinator and Assistant support all schools
  - Multiple SU-wide financial services personnel – also *“Specific bookkeeping services are provided either as a fee for service or, in five cases, retained by the local district”*
  - IT: have consolidated all under one domain and consolidated nursing, PowerSchool, InfoSnap, DocuSped, VCAT, Google, Office 365, and SchoolMessenger into one database (p. 15) – have realized cost savings and savings in time
  - Discusses other items (Special Ed, etc) required to be at SU level
  - Recommendations:
    - *“Monitor staffing ratios and adjust accordingly”*
    - *“Ongoing assessment of transportation services”*
    - *“Maximize grant funds and consider additional funding sources”*
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- *“It is believed that [NCSU] has the smallest number of school districts practicable, at present, to provide a competent number of schools for convenient instruction and learning opportunities for our children. Depending on demographic developments in the years to come and the disposition of our communities, there may be reasons to consider fewer districts within a supervisory union model.”* (p. 18)
  - *“we believe for our community members to remain fully vested and committed we must maintain the local democratic decision-making process that determines the direction of our schools”*
  - In summary:
    - centralized government doesn’t make sense when the state expects personalization at the student levels
    - they have real world experience that decentralized PreK is better than their earlier, centralized model
  - February 16, 2018 Conversation:
    - Grades 7-8 – Joining North Country Union Middle School District:
      - Brighton and Charleston had dip in #s and have had discussions about joining MCUMSD – not enough public interest
      - Troy considered when discussing PreK options – a lot of interest, but the cost was too much

## 16. The Pittsfield School District

### Snapshot

SU: Windsor Central SU

Date of Conversation: March 20, 2018

**Participants:**

Board Members: Kristin Sperber (Chair); A.J. Ruben

**Current O/T Structure:** Single-town, PK-12 tuitioning

**Governance Proposal:**

Proposes to remain as it is currently structured: the sole single-town PreK-12 tuitioning district in the Windsor Central SU, an SU with a MUUSD and its related Non Member Elementary District (NMED)  
*Note:* References to pages of written materials below are to Pittsfield’s 3-by-1 proposal submitted to the State Board for consideration at its November 15, 2017 meeting – No other written Sec. 9 Proposal was submitted

**Other Notes:**

- Windsor Central MUUSD and Barnard Elementary School District (NMED) are also in the WCSU
- MUUSD and WCSU boards support Pittsfield’s request to stay in WCSU
- Nearest nonoperating district is the newly-formed Granville Hancock USD in the White River SU

**Other Resources:**

- [3-1 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Windsor Central SU: 872.14

Pittsfield (K-12): 56.30

Windsor Central MUUSD (K-12 and 7-12): 753.84

Barnard Elementary (K-6): 62.00

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

*“Over the past ten years Pittsfield has investigated many options to change our governance structure. The most exhaustive study specifically looked at designating elementary and/or secondary school for our students. At the annual school district meeting in 2008 money to fund the study was approved by the voters. A governance committee authorized by the school board worked with a private consultant and analyzed several options. A report was completed in December 2009 and made available to the voters. An informational meeting was held in late February. At the annual meeting in March, voters overwhelmingly chose to maintain K-12 school choice for our district.” (p. 1)*

**School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:**

*“majority of our students attend WCUUSD schools, specifically Killington Elementary (FY18 anticipated: 27 students) and Woodstock Union Middle and High School (17 students). We also have students who attend Stockbridge Elementary (4), Bethel Elementary (1), Rutland High School (1), and Whitcomb Jr/Sr High School (1), and independent schools (7)” (p. 1)*

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

*“Pittsfield has determined that continuing the ability of parents to choose the appropriate school for their students is the most effective way to provide access to quality educational opportunities.” (p. 2)*

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

**b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?**

*"Pittsfield has determined that maintaining school choice is the best way to assure that students have the opportunity to attend schools that they and their parents have determined will most effectively help them meet or exceed standards." (p. 3)*

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to "maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?"**

**What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?**

- *"The school board felt that our district could improve educational services (specifically special education services) and achieve economies of scale by joining the SU that contained the schools the majority of our students attended. In 2015 Pittsfield voters agreed to leave the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union and join the Windsor Central Supervisory Union." (p. 1)*
- *"Pittsfield has demonstrated through reductions in administrative overhead at the SU level as well as a reduction in tax rates that being a part of the WCSU is maximizing operational efficiencies and retaining school choice governance structure will also provide Pittsfield with additional flexibility to manage our students' educational expenditures and access" (p. 3)*

**4. How does the proposal support your ability to "promote transparency and accountability" in a "sustained" manner?**

*"Pittsfield will be able to maintain our town's own school budget and accounting system as part of the proposed 3:1 governance structure, thereby assuring that local citizens have access to clear information about our town's expenditures. This information will be discussed at Town Meeting and the Annual School District Meeting, as well as at monthly School Board meetings, further allowing for accountability." (p. 3)*

**5. How does the proposal support your ability to "deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value" in a "sustained" manner?**

- *"tax rate declined from \$2.0156 in FY2015 to \$1.2989 in FY2018" (p. 1)*
- *"Pittsfield has experienced a reduction in tax rates and increased efficiencies since joining the WCSU and maintaining choice. The Pittsfield School Board is confident, based on prior, lengthy discussions with townspeople, that joining with the WCUUSD has the support of parents, voters and taxpayers in Pittsfield." (p. 3)*

**6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**

**a. Why is merger not "possible"?**

**b. Why is merger not "practicable"?**

- Granville Hancock USD is the only / closest nonoperating district in the region
- Because it recently formed under the "Side-by-Side" program of Act 156, the State Board can require Pittsfield to merger with it only if the USD agrees

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

- Wishes to remain in Windsor Central SU
- SU Board and MUUSD Board support this

## 17. The Sandgate School District

### Snapshot

SU: Battenkill Valley SU

Date of Conversation: March 29, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Jeanne Zopel (Chair); Celeste Keel (Vice Chair); Alan Tschorn
- Also in attendance: Superintendent Bill Bazyik

Current O/T Structure: Single-town, PK-12 tuitioning

#### Governance Proposal:

- Proposes to remain a single-town, PreK-12 tuitioning district in the same SU as Arlington
- District wants to retain the current membership in the Battenkill Valley SU, but would accept moving to another SU if Arlington moved as well
- May 2018 letter – reassignment to Bennington Rutland SU is acceptable, but asks not before 2021

#### Other Notes:

- Closed elementary school in 1956; never operated a high school
- Two districts in BVSU – Arlington and Sandgate
- Winhall (Bennington-Rutland SU); Stratton (Windham Central SU); and Searsburg (Windham SE SU) are also PreK-12 tuitioning in the region and are not exempt from the SBE’s Statewide Plan

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Battenkill Valley SU: 374.90

Sandgate: 64.90

Arlington: 310

Searsburg (Windham Southeast SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 18.40

Stratton (Windham Central SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 47.00

Winhall (Bennington Rutland SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 179.95

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- Exploratory Committee with Arlington to consider options and talk with others in region
- § 706 Study Committee with Winhall and Stratton in June 2017 – see #6 below

#### School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

##### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- District states that, through the current tuitioning structure, “they have achieved an equitable system that provides a variety of educational opportunities” (p. 2)
- “Just over half of the Sandgate students attend Arlington schools and geographically they are by far the closest option” (Sec. 9 Report, p. 3)

##### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

District states that it “does not operate any schools therefore they tuition their students to schools where educational quality standards are being met” (Sec. 9 Report, p. 2)



3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

District states that the Battenkill Valley SU employs: superintendent, business manager, special education director, special education secretary, and administrative assistant to the superintendent (BVSU Exploratory Report, p. 1)

4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

*“Although the district does not operate any schools they still hold public school board meetings, provide an annual report to town’s people and have a web presence providing regular updates.” (Sec. 9 Report, p. 2)*

5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

*“The district does not operate any schools therefore they have little control over the tuition costs. However they historically have always been under the yearly set excessive spending threshold.” (Sec. 9 Report, p. 2)*

6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**

**a. Why is merger not “possible”?**

**b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**

- § 706 Study Committee with Winhall and Stratton in June 2017
- Disbanded because (Sec. 9 Report, p. 2):
  - Little in common except that are nonoperating
  - *“Stratton and Sandgate both appropriated their tuition monies to students different than Winhall.”*
  - *“By merging with Winhall, [Stratton and Sandgate] would have seen tax increases.”*
  - *“All study committee members felt overwhelmingly their constituents would vote down the proposal.”*
- See also “Committee Findings” in draft merger proposal (pp. 5-7)
- Sandgate and Arlington’s Exploratory Committee considered possibility that North Bennington and Shaftsbury would leave Mt Anthony USD and North Bennington would merge with Sandgate (and Shaftsbury would merge with Arlington) (BVSU Exploratory Report, p. 3)
- March 29, 2018 Conversation:
  - Sandgate pays tuition at statutory rates; Winhall has voted to pay higher rate to Burr and Burton
  - Sandgate students attending Burr and Burton, Long Trail, and other independent schools:
  - Parents pay difference in tuition and/or students receive scholarship
  - *“Transportation is the biggest problem”*

7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

Discussed moving into Bennington-Rutland SU in the context of the § 706 discussions with Winhall and Stratton (BVSU Exploratory Report, p. 3)

*“Just over half of the Sandgate students attend Arlington schools and geographically they are by far the closest option.” (Sec. 9 Report, p. 3)*

*“If supervisory union boundaries were changed at any point it would imperative for the equity of students and educational continuity that Arlington and Sandgate be incorporated together within the new boundaries” (Sec. 9 Report, p. 3)*

## 18. The Searsburg School District

### Snapshot

SU: Windham Southwest SU

Date of Conversation: April 27, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Jacki Murano (Chair)
- Also in attendance: Rep. Laura Sibia; Superintendent Chris Pratt

Current O/T Structure: Single-town, PK-12 tuitioning

#### Governance Proposal:

- Proposes to remain a single-town, nonoperating district
- Wishes to remain in same SU as Southern Valley UUSD (Halifax; Readsboro) and is not opposed if Windham Central SU boundaries are redrawn to include districts in Windham Southwest (Conversation)

#### Other Notes:

- 21.6 square miles / “geographically separated in the center by a steep mountain range” (p. 1)
- Travel over mountain range (east-west) and along mountain top (north-south) on state routes “known to be ... dangerous ... in the winter”
- Current population of 109 residents is stable

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Windham Southwest SU: 638.02

Searsburg – 18.4

Southern Valley UUSD – 151.22 (Halifax 72.22; Readsboro 79.00)

Stamford – 98.00

Twin Valley UUSD – 370.40 (Whitingham 164.00; Wilmington 206.40)

Sandgate (Battenkill Valley SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 64.90

Stratton (Windham Central SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 47.00

Winhall (Bennington Rutland SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 179.95

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- September 2015 informational meeting with town – three choices discussed:
  - Consider merger with the three K-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning districts in SU
  - Consider merging with Twin Valley – K-12 operating
  - Consider merging with another nonoperating district in another SU - **CHOSEN**
- Subsequent conversations with other districts, study committees, and community meetings – see #6 below

#### School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

- 11 students in *PreK*- 6; 10 students in grades 7-12
- 9 different schools in 8 districts and 2 states
- “17 of which attend public schools, 3 attend private schools with 1 student attending a vocational high school”
- April 27, 2018 Conversation:  
Geography creates three primary points of reference:
  - Residents to east of mountain – a large majority of students live here and primarily attend schools located to the east, e.g., in Wilmington and Brattleboro
  - Residents to west of mountain – small number of students who primarily attend schools to the west, e.g., Bennington, Manchester, and Woodford

- Residents along crest of mountain – small number of students who primarily attend schools to the south in North Adams, MA
  - (Green Mountain Forest is to the north)
1. **How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**
    - a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
    - b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

    - Currently: *“Many different factors contribute to the wide range of educational choices made by Searsburg families, [including]: Geography and travel distance, winter travel difficulties, the location of parents’ jobs, academic opportunities, extracurricular and after school programs offered, sports programs, music and arts programs and internships with job placement opportunities.”* (p. 2)
    - Pays tuition in statutory amounts (p. 2)
  2. **How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**
    - a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
    - b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

*“Parents and families are able to make the choice tasking into account each individual students strengths, needs and interests with the full support of an actively involved school board. Thus allowing students to meet and exceed the [EQS] in whichever environment is best suited for the individual.”* (p. 2)
  3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

Communication between the board and SU offices is *“frequent and productive”* and that board feels *“it is heard loud and clear and [its voice is] received fairly with equal attention”* on the SU-level boards. (p. 2)
  4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
  5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
    - District *“concluded through multiple study committees, active involvement with many surrounding districts, participation and or guidance by [State Representatives and superintendents in the region], and by review of the information provided by the [AOE] that there is no benefit to our students or taxpayers through any possible merger at this time.”* (p. 5)
    - *“Students are afforded every opportunity to excel and exceed the Act 46 goals under our current structure and we are still able to be cost effective with an average per pupil spending of \$10,706 in PreK through 6 and \$13,621 for 7 through 12.”* (p. 5)
  6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
    - a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
    - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
    - Approached Stratton in October 2015 – Stratton *“was in the very early stages of processing the ACT 46 information [and] had no further interest in pursuing merger.”* (p. 3)
    - Exploratory committee with Granville, Hancock, and Pittsfield – *“concluded that there was no benefit to our town or students and in fact the distance would make a merger difficult”* (p. 3)
    - Attended study committee meetings for what led to Southern Valley UUSD (PreK-8/9-12) (p. 4)
    - April 27, 2018 Conversation: Considered merger with these two districts that operate elementary, but concerned that transportation would be hazardous
    - Considered merger with Somerset until learned this is not possible because Somerset is an unincorporated town and not a school district (p. 4)
    - April through August 2016 (p. 4)

- Approached by Winhall to join study committee with Sandgate, Stratton, and Winhall
- Discussed with the WSSU and BRSU superintendents, Stratton board, and Searsburg and Stratton/Winhall State Reps
- By August, Searsburg concerned that no meeting yet scheduled
- *“Searsburg began to seek out information from the BRSU directly to have a preliminary idea of what a merger would mean for Searsburg. Searsburgs requests for information were denied under the pretext that the information would be shared once the committee began their study. The response only amplified Searsburgs concerns over joining with a much larger SU that we had no previous relationship with.”*

September through November 2016 (pp. 4-5)

- Entered study committee with Stratton and drafted articles of agreement
- Similar size and both nonoperating
- During public meeting with AOE staff *“learned two pieces of information that were pivotal to our merger discussion”*
  - *“no 5% tax penalty would be applied for School Boards that chose not to merge”*
  - *“the state was not requiring boards to merge and that they could in fact remain standalone under an alternative structure”*
- Information removed *“the only two benefits seen by the committee to merge”*
- Stratton *“immediately withdrew from the formal study committee”*
- Searsburg community meeting – agreed not to pursue merger
- Although does not believe there is much/any benefit, is not opposed to merger with Stratton because similar size, etc. (Conversation)

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

- Is not opposed to redrawing SU boundaries so district is within Windham Central SU (4.27.18 Conversation)
- Would like to stay with Southern Valley UUSD because declining enrollments and increasing student-to-teacher ratios may prompt UUSD to close schools and become a PreK-12 nonoperating district

## 19. The Stratton School District

### Snapshot

SU: Windham Central SU

**Date of Conversation:** April 10, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Thomas Montemagni (Chair); Lorraine Weeks-Newell
- Also in attendance: Rep. Kelly Pajala; Rich Werner (SU Chair)

**Current O/T Structure:** Single-town, PreK-12 tuitioning

**Governance Proposal:**

Proposes to remain a single-town, nonoperating district.

**Other Notes:**

- 46.4 square miles – “very low population density” (p. 1)
- Mountain range separates students from Stratton Mtn Resort and from Winhall (p. 1)
- 216 residents

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Windham Central SU: 868.76

Stratton: 47

Marlboro: 119.15

River Valleys UUSD: 234.70 (total of combining districts; UUSD operational 7.1.19)

West River MUUSD: 452.91 (total of combining districts; MUUSD operational 7.1.19)

Windham Elementary: 15 (K-6)

Sandgate (Battenkill Valley SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 64.90

Searsburg (Windham Southeast SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 18.40

Winhall (Bennington Rutland SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 179.95

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

- Stratton School Board members “explored among themselves and with directors from other school districts ways to promote improvement in the five Goals of Act 46 and the possibilities to form a different governance structure that would contribute to achievement of the five goals.” (p. 3)
- See #6 below

**School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:**

- “student population in steady in the mid thirties with about 70% of the families choosing area independent schools” (p. 1; see also p. 2) – but note that ADM is 47 in FY 2018
- April 10 Conversation: Believes spike may be due to “attractive schooling system” offered to parents – pays full amount of tuition to schools that accept all Stratton students and provides transportation (see #1 below)

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Currently –  
Tuition Payments:
  - The district has “a history of paying the full announced tuition for any area [independent] school that agrees to enroll any Stratton resident choosing to attend that school. The most

*frequently chosen schools are the Mountain School at Winhall and Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester, VT” (p. 2)*

- District pays the statutory rate for *“independent schools that do not agree to enroll any Stratton student, for example the Stratton Mountain School for skiers” (p. 2)*
- District believes that the limits Sandgate and Winhall place on tuition payments *“would reduce the ability of some families in Stratton to access schools that best fit their children’s needs and academic interests unless the family could afford to pay a portion of the tuition” (p. 5)*

Transportation:

- District provides transportation, *“to the greatest extent possible for students to attend [the] open enrollment schools” (p.5)*
- District concerned that more limited transportation options would negatively affect Stratton students.
- Future actions:
  - School Board will *“continue to look for ways to assist families in choosing educational opportunities that meet the needs and academic interests of their children. ... Informing and supporting families and they navigate”* the increasingly available opportunities for less traditional students (p. 9)

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“A merged district with more students has the potential to be more influential in establishing a system for monitoring choice students, but [a] merged district [of Sandgate, Stratton, and Winhall] would have only about 240 students K-12, too few to establish a more elaborate or thorough system beyond existing monitoring by the Agency of Education” (p. 6)*
- Detailed future actions:
  - School Board will *“look for ways to evaluate and communicate the success of regional schools attended by Stratton children” (p. 9)*
  - *“With a low poverty rate and a close to even split between elementary and secondary students, the calculation of equalized pupils is close to the student enrollment” (p. 2)*

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Merger of Sandgate, Stratton, and Winhall would *“consolidate the functions”* related to a nonoperating district from three SUs to one (p. 7)
- *“It is not clear that the merged structure maximizes operational efficiencies, but it does change the operations”*
- *“The workload for special education, transportation, and preschool services [in a merged S-S-W district] would be increased to the point of requiring increased personnel .... None of the three superintendents involved ... saw an effective and efficient way to provide services to a merged district.” (p. 8)*
- Future actions:
  - School Board will *“continue to work with the [SU] to improve the provision of special education, transportation, and preschool for all the schools in the [SU]” (p. 9)*

**4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

- *“development of the supervisory union budget and assessments would be simplified” with merger, but that merger would not “create increased transparency and accountability for residents” – and that Stratton’s relatively small size would result in a “reduced voice” in the SU (p. 7)*

- Future actions:
    - School Board will “continue to provide information to Stratton citizens about ... examining regional school tuition rates, the [SU] budget, and the process for collaboration with the [SU] on student transportation” (p. 9)
5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Referencing FY2012 – FY2016, the District states: “Per pupil spending ... has remained under the excess spending penalty for four of the last five years,” exceeding the penalty in FY 2014 (pp. 2-3)
  - See #6 below for concerns about increased tax rates in a Sandgate-Stratton-Winhall merger
  - Future actions:
    - School Board will “continue to work toward controlling educational spending and communicating their progress to Stratton residents” (p. 9)
6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- Considered (pp. 3-4):
    - Joining Bennington-Rutland SU
    - Possible merger with Winhall, Ira, Sandgate, North Bennington, and Searsburg
    - Possible merger with Searsburg
    - Possible “3-by-1” involving merger of Sandgate, Stratton, and Winhall and where Arlington would be the “1” – met four times Summer 2017
      - Modelling showed increased tax rates for Sandgate and Stratton residents and decreased tax rate for Winhall residents, both with and without tax rate reductions
      - Arlington chose not to participate, meaning there would be no tax rate reductions for the potentially merged district “to mitigate the increased tax rates for Stratton and Sandgate”
      - Committee disbanded
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
- April 10, 2018 Conversation:
    - Reached out to Bennington-Rutland SU last year, but B-R not interested
    - Happy to stay in current SU – good relationships, good special ed services

## 20. The Winhall School District

### Snapshot

SU: Bennington-Rutland SU

Date of Conversation: April 9, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Dean Gianotti; Meridith Dennes; Jennifer Samuelson
- Also in attendance: Representative Kelly Pajala; Assistant Superintendent Randi Kulis

**Current O/T Structure:** Single-town, PK-12 tuitioning

**Governance Proposal:** (Proposal, p. 4)

- Remain as PreK-12 nonoperating within BRSU
- Merge with any PreK-12 nonoperating district that will allow it to remain in BRSU

**Other Notes:**

- Only nonoperating district in BRSU (Proposal, p. 3)
- Assigned to BRSU in connection with creation of Mtn Towns RED and dissolution of Windsor SW SU (p. 3)

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Bennington- Rutland SU – 2,083.27

Winhall – 179.96

Taconic and Green UUSD – 1,613.54 (total of combining districts; UUSD operational 7.1.18)

Mettawee UUSD – 289.78 (total of combining districts; UUSD operational 7.1.18)

Sandgate (Battenkill Valley SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 64.90

Searsburg (Windham Southeast SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 18.40

Stratton (Windham Central SU; PreK-12 tuitioning) – 47.00

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

- Informal merger discussions
- Formal § 706 Study Committee with Sandgate and Stratton

**School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:**

Board believes § 706 study committee’s draft report was comprehensive and includes it as its self-study for Act 46, Sec. 9 in an Appendix to its Sec. 9 Proposal (p. 4)

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- “maintaining school choice at all grade levels would support the Act 46 policy goal in terms of providing equitable access to a quality and variety of educational opportunities” (Appendix to Proposal, p. 6)
- April 9, 2018 Conversation:
  - In FY2018, the district began paying the statutory rate to independent schools
  - Burr and Burton Academy is granting it “sending town status” for tuition rates
  - Winhall offers transportation to Burr and Burton Academy

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**



*“Merging into a single school district will give the new school board oversight over a larger number of students at receiving schools in the region. The [3-by-1 Merger Study] Committee believes this will allow the new school board to better monitor patterns of student achievement over time.”* (Appendix to Proposal, p. 6)

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

*Merger as discussed by the study committee would “reduce the number of non-operating districts in the region from three to one ... and will also allow the new district to better share resources among the three communities. These non-operating districts do not currently employ instructional staff so the district-level ratio of students to FTE staff will not be affected by this merger.”* (Appendix to Proposal, p. 7)

**4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

*“By reducing the number of non-operating districts in the region ... the supervisory union budget and related assessments will be greatly simplified.”* (Appendix to Proposal, p. 7)

**5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Merger *“will preserve school choice in grades K-12 among these communities. These communities value school choice, and school choice has proven to be an important means for economic development in the region.”* (Appendix to Proposal, p. 7)

- April 9, 2018 Conversation:

- A community group is exploring what tax rate are people willing to pay to preserve tuitioning structure – understanding that tuitioning is the more expensive option
- Exploring whether there could be an enrollment deadline that must be met for district to pay full tuition

**6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**

**a. Why is merger not “possible”?**

**b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**

- Informal merger conversations with Sandgate (Battenkill Valley SU) and Stratton (Windham Central SU) in fall 2015 – little incentive to merge at that time (not tax rate reductions, etc.) (p. 3)
- Act 49 and 3-by-1 created possibility for tax rate reductions etc. for a merger of W, S, and S (with Arlington as the “1”) – formed formal § 706 Study Committee (pp. 3-4)
  - Committee ultimately determined not advisable to merge because:
    - Arlington chose not to participate – so no tax rate reductions available to the three nonoperating districts for creating unified district – determined that reductions necessary to soften tax rates as moved to unified rate
    - Stratton: (1) sent different representatives to the meetings and so no clear formal representation of the district; (2) hired own consultant to support the district; and (3) drafted language for Articles that the others could not support
- Both Winhall representatives to Study Committee and the Winhall Board supported the merger (p. 4)
- Winhall Board believes study committee’s draft report was comprehensive and includes it as its self-study for Act 46, Sec. 9 (p. 4)
- April 9, 2010 Conversation:
  - Sees the benefit in merging – stability of larger student population leads to stability of tax rates
  - There is some consideration of joining the Taconic and Green UUSD

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

Wants to stay in BRSU – students primarily attending schools located there

## 21. The Blue Mountain UUSD (Towns of Groton, Ryegate, and Wells River)

### Snapshot

SU: At its May 2018 meeting, the State Board moved the district into the Orange East SU

**Date of Conversation:** March 15, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Brent Abare (Groton); Paul Hazel (Ryegate); Judy Murray (Wells River); Bruce Stevens (Ryegate)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Emilie Knisely

**Current O/T Structure:** PK-12 operating

**Governance Proposal:**

Retain current structure – a unified union school district that is its own SD

**Other Notes:**

- Voted to form in 1964; didn't begin operating until 1970 b/c of lengthy court action (pp. 1-2)
- Collaborations with SAU 23 in Haverhill, NH (pp. 2-3)
  - Interstate transportation agreement – share routes; both boards negotiate contract
  - Contracts for some high school SpEd programming enabling BMU students to attend King Street School in Woodsville, NH
  - Students can take courses at either campus, scheduling permitting
  - Share foreign language staff
  - Discussed closing NH high school and operating joint high school BMU – on hold
  - NH considering closing high school and paying tuition – “it could have a positive impact on BMU's enrollment”

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

380.25 in district (and in SU)

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

- Conversations and ongoing collaboration with SAU23 in Haverhill, NH (see above)
- Exploratory Committee with all districts in Orange East SU - fall 2015 (p. 3)
- Reached out to Danville – which was then focusing on Cabot and Twinfield (p. 3)
  - See #1 and #6 below for more
- § 706 Study Committee April 2016 – April 2017 with Bradford, Newbury, Oxbow (pp. 3-4)
  - See #6 below for details
- Conversations with one member of Peacham Board

**School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview**

*“Although the existing size of the preferred governance structure is not meeting Act 46 enrollment guidelines, we have found after extensive study that the alternatives open to BMU at this time are not better ways to meet the goals of the law.” (p. 1)*

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“Danville and BMU are both interested in working together to find ways to offer more opportunities for students through a series of contractual relationships.” (p. 7)*
- Interested in working with Newbury to increase educational opportunities

- BMU is “open to having Newbury join our USD as a separate district, as our operating structures don’t allow a merger”

[AOE Note: The Newbury Elementary School District cannot be moved into a different SU independently of the Oxbow Union High School District]

- Currently meeting this goal (pp. 8-9) – for example:
  - “By having articulated curriculum, vertically aligned grades . . . , with established benchmarks, we are ensuring that all students have equitable access to curriculum.”
  - Several local assessments across grade levels as well as SBAC and Science NECAP – data is used to determine Tier II interventions
  - Full-time Director of Curriculum and Instruction
  - Prerequisites removed so students can enroll in dual enrollment classes even if no college credits are earned
- Preliminary discussion with River Bend Career and Tech Center about program on BMU grounds (pp. 10-11)
  - “By partnering with River Bend we would have access to over \$100,000 in innovation and other grant funding, as well as access to transportation through the tech center. We could use current staff to run the program, current transportation routes, and would likely see an increase in tuition revenue from school choice students in the region.”

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- “One noted area of need in the region is a quality special education / alternative placement program for students in the elementary and middle grades. BMU is interested in partnering with Danville to create a regional center to better serve students.” (p. 7)
- Currently meeting this goal (p. 9) – for example:
  - See #1 above
  - “made an investment in curriculum and instruction and has created the conditions for [the achievement] gap to begin to lessen... Preliminary data from this academic year shows that we are seeing an improvement.”
- One of first districts to participate in EQS review (p. 10)
  - “received high marks”
  - Areas for improvement being addressed in continuous improvement plan – Appendices C, F, and G
- “continuous improvement plan aimed at increasing educational outcomes for our students” (p. 12)
- *Overcoming the Achievement Gap* by Anthony Muhammed is this year’s “district-wide read” (p. 12)
- Teacher turnover – 2.50 (2017) and 3.00 (2016)

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- See above re: collaboration with SAU23 in NH
- Notes that BMU is already an SD
- Notes that BMU is larger than Rivendell, which “has been exempted from the statewide plan” (p. 6) –
- Developing MOU with Little Rivers, “local federally qualified health center . . . [to provide] a school social worker, mental health counselor, and a home/school coordinator in exchange for office space” (p. 10)
- Exploring regional SpEd program (p. 10) – see also “Other Notes” re SAU23 above and bullets re: Danville under question #2
- See River Bend Career and Tech Center under #1 above
- Will “continue to analyze ratios and per pupil spending to increase efficiencies as our population expands” (p. 11)

- Founding member of Vermont Rural Education Cooperative with Cal North SU and North Country SU, which are *“working together to increase educational opportunities and raise the quality of education in our region through a variety of strategies, such as”*
    - *“Strengthening operations by sharing costs, resources, and expertise”*
    - *“scaling up and sustaining effective programs and best practices”*
    - *“Providing professional development”*
    - *“Advancing economic development”*
    - (and others listed on page 11)
  - Ratios – 8.64 (student/teacher); 46.26 (student/admin); 4.86 (student/adult)
- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Already an SD – becoming one member of a multi-district SU *“would add unneeded levels of bureaucracy to an already streamlined structure”* (p. 6)
  - Created community relations committee (p. 12)
  - Audits and detailed annual report released to community
  - Achievement data shared with the board
- 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- *“current operating structure is financially efficient when compared to other merger options”* (p. 6)
    - No savings if part of Cal Central SU
    - *“merging with OESU would increase taxes”*
  - Collaboration with SAU23 in NH saves money
  - See River Bend Career and Tech Center under #1 above
  - *“per pupil spending will decrease in 2019 as a result of growing population”* and increases have been small in recent years (pp. 11-12)
  - At end of FY2019 will have no debt (p. 12)
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- Oxbow, Bradford, and Newbury - § 706 study committee (pp. 3-4)
  - Bradford tax rate would increase as projected in unified district
  - *“In order to control those costs it would require the closing of a school in the district or a change in the grades that schools operated.”*
    - BMU Board and community did not support closing / grade change
    - *“Newbury also intends to keep their community school.”*
    - Majority of § 706 Study Committee did not support closure or grade reconfiguration
    - BMU members didn’t support because:
      - BMU students already travel > 1 hour –
        - *“Additional bus time for students who would live up to 30 miles away from Oxbow High School was deemed to be inappropriate ... and would limit their participation in extracurricular activities.”*
        - Spaulding is closer to some Groton students than Oxbow (p. 6)
      - *“feasibility of a continued interstate bussing agreement”* with SAU23 not certain – currently saves BMU \$77,000 annually
      - *“minimal educational opportunity increases”* especially in light of public school choice [note: they’re not thinking outside the box like Bethel and Royalton]
      - *“as a result of these school closure conversations the BMU Board ... made the decision that if BMU did not operate a high school at BMU, they would hold community votes to become”* PK-8 operating/9-12 tuitioning.
      - *“Should BMU close, more opportunities would be available for high school students via school choice than merger.”*
  - Danville (p. 5):

- Series of conversations facilitated by Peter Clarke
  - Danville decided it was not interested – wants to explore opportunities with SJA and SJA  
*“made it clear to Danville that those relationships would not extend to students at Blue Mountain”*
  - BMU and Danville interested in sharing resources contractually
  - Creation of BMU *“resulted in the closure of five local schools, the elimination of high school choice in Ryegate, and the dissolution of three school districts. Blue Mountain feels that it has already met the spirit of the law for school consolidation.”* (p. 7)
  - *“over 70% of students and community members”* want BMU to remain PK-12
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**  
Some discussions with Peacham and Danville (pp. 4-5)

## 22. The Cabot School District

### Snapshot

SU: Washington Northeast SU

Date of Conversation: March 9, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Chris Tormey (Chair); Sharon O'Connor; Lisa Olson; Rory T. Thibault
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Mark Tucker; Jackie Folsom (recent Board member); Patrick Healy (Twinfield UUSD Board Chair)

Current O/T Structure: Single-town, PK-12 Operating

#### Governance Proposal:

Stay as single town, PreK-12 operating district

#### Other Notes:

June 20, 2017 merger vote:

Cabot – 163 Yes; 356 No; 1 Blank/Spoiled

Danville – 112 Yes; 239 No

Twinfield – 160 Yes; 103 No

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Washington Northeast SU – 457

Cabot – 150.43

Twinfield – 306.74

Montpelier-Roxbury USD – 1,099.42

Barre SU – 2,130.07

Danville School District – 287 (SU – 948)

Washington Central SU – 1,350.21

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

Process included (pp. :72-83)

- § 706 study committee and proposed merger plan with Danville and Twinfield
- Conversations with the Orleans Southwest SU (especially Craftsbury), the Washington Central SU, Montpelier, Caledonia Cooperative, Twinfield; Danville

#### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

##### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- “Every student has the opportunity to access our programs, one of the most positive aspects of our size” (p. 3)
- “Targeted Enhancements of the High School Curriculum” – e.g.,
  - “Present (FY 18)” (pp. 2, 88, 90)
    - “continued integration of [the PBL] model will add flexibility to the student experience”
  - “Near Term (FY 19 and FY 20)” (pp. 88-90)
    - “Feedback from our community engagement and outreach efforts supports several internally focused changes to the status quo of programs and staffing in the near term.”

- “reintroducing design/technology curricular opportunities and hiring a faculty member to support such a position”
  - “hiring or identifying a current faculty member to oversee the expansion administration of experiential learning opportunities”
  - “develop assessment measures and build strategic relationships with employers and partners to develop a career ready workforce”
  - “returning the social studies and language arts positions to full time equivalent or adding adjunct educators to offer specialized classes.”
  - “The Board also supports the return of a capstone program for graduates [which] is a guided culmination of high school studies ... that will oftentimes be interdisciplinary and entail a community presentation.”
  - “For FY 19, the Board intends to budget for and emphasize the expansion of experiential programming in the community. This may be achieved through bringing a currently less than FTE position to 1.0 FTE.” (p. 89)
  - “Long Term (FY 23 and Beyond)” (pp. 89-90)
    - “As enrollment allows, expanding the high school foreign language program to include an additional language” and “expand foreign languages to elementary grades”
      - “Prime opportunity for a shared position with another district”
      - “Support a curriculum that enables a focus on this area of national, regional, and local relevance”
  - “Work with “Advantage Cabot” – a “private non-profit organization” that “has developed an independent boarding program targeting out-of-state high school students who will attend Cabot School and be housed with local host families. Advantage Cabot is collaborating with the Board and administration to develop and deliver enrichment programs, academic and extracurricular, available to all high school students attending Cabot School.” (pp. 2, 92-93) – see also #5 below
  - “Emphasiz[e]” CTE and Early College (p. 2)
  - “We also intend to continue offering a predictable number of [public high] school choice slots” (p. 2)
  - Hopes to enter into partnerships with other districts to share programs and resources (pp. 95-96)
2. **How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**
- a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
  - b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- See above
  - “Sharing of part-time equivalent instructional interventionists” with other districts (p. 73)
  - Survey of last 10 graduating classes: (p. 4)
    - 98.8% of respondents in school or currently employed
    - 95.2% of respondents were accepted into a post-secondary education program
      - More than 90% still enrolled or successfully graduated
  - Poverty and students in crisis (p. 3)
    - 27% FRL
    - “high ... number of state placed students”
3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- Plan to address this goal through “‘right sizing’ our direct teaching staff at the high school level and focusing upon professional development ... to encourage innovative programmatic and curricular offerings” (pp. 2, 91)
  - Ratios (p. 3)
    - 12.62 FTE (excluding PK and K)
    - 12.69 to 1 student to teacher

**4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

*“To us, transparency and accountability is about more than dollars and cents. Accountability entails a school board that is engaged with teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and students – good governance starts with good access, good information, and good relationships. Act 46 presents an inherent friction – we do not envy the newly minted consolidated school boards, most with fewer overall members, and the charge of attending to more with less.” (p. 99)*

**5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Advantage Cabot (p. 93) – see also #1 above:
  - Goal of enrolling first two students in FY19; adding four more per year until reach 20 students in FY25
    - Maximum projected enrollment is 32 students in FY29, with max of 8 students per grade (average 30% increase)
  - *“An infusion of students and funding on this scale will add an estimated \$350,000 of revenue to the budget in FY 23.”*
- Join a larger SU *“to enable the effective sharing of administrative costs among a greater number of communities”* (pp. 2, 97-98)
- Long-term capital improvement plan, *“in cooperation with the Town ... and other community based entities”* (pp. 2, 94-95) – exploring *“multiple paths to improve our infrastructure for the long term”* including, e.g., *“Exploration of budgeting in a single year, up to \$150,000 for critical repairs, most notably to the gymnasium and its facilities;”* review of funding opportunities from non-profit entities; and exploring joint funding/bonding initiatives with the Town

**6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**

**a. Why is merger not “possible”?**

**b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**

- 2017 proposal to unify with Danville and Twinfield – key concerns included (pp. 5-6, 78-83):
  - Diluted power on school board *“would not ensure the adequate resourcing or prioritization of the Cabot School’s remaining PK-8 program”*
  - Articles of Agreement *“could be rewritten to hasten restructuring or the eventual closure of the Cabot School”*
  - Closure of Cabot high school resulted in intradistrict choice, not full choice
    - *“potential loss of property value”*
- *“Throughout the Act 46 process, Danville has been a natural and logical partner to explore options. Geography and a similar educational culture have been repeatedly recognized as strong starting points for scenarios encompassing merger or collaboration.”* (p. 80)
- *“In the absence of legal and financial challenges associated with cross-supervisory union collaboration, we believe Danville would be a logical partner to form a close and cooperative relationship.”* (p. 82)
- Barriers to merger with only Danville include:
  - Wouldn’t be large enough to be a preferred structure
  - *“The disparity between Cabot’s present per pupil expenditures and debt load are also seen as impediments based upon Danville’s current financial situation and absence of debt”* (p. 82)
  - *“we believe the anticipated costs of renovating the Cabot school campus as one of the leading financial impediments to merger with Danville.”* (p.82)
- *“Under a direct merger scenario, we anticipate Cabot would retain approximately 40% of voting power on a consolidated board – likely enough representation to mitigate concerns of involuntary restructuring of grades, although based upon the 706b process we believe closure of Cabot high school would be predicate to a proposed merger.”* (p. 82)

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

- Potential benefits from being added to an SU as a stand-alone district to: (pp. 97-98)



- Washington Central SU – same CTE; contracts with same mental health services; U32 and three elementary schools located within 20 miles away
- Barre SU – further away (30-35 min drive) and *“the supervisory union has not previously been responsible for education of students outside of the Barre City-Barre Town community”*
- Both are *“anchored by comparatively large high schools versus Hazen Union, Danville, or Twinfield.”* Cabot Board is *“not convinced that ‘bigger is better,’ however, [it recognizes] that a larger program necessarily entails more areas to focus cooperative or collaborative efforts”*
- March 9, 2018 Conversation:
  - Believes Washington Central is the best option if there is an SU boundary change
    - CTE region would remain the same
    - Contracts with Washington County Mental Health Services, so no disruption of services
    - Presence in SU would give more exposure to project-based learning opportunities in Cabot and might result in more WCSU students taking advantage of the public high school choice program to enroll in Cabot High School

## 23. The Danville School District

### Snapshot

SU: Caledonia Central SU

Date of Conversation: March 7, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Bruce Melendy (Chair)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Matthew Forest; Peter Clarke

**Current O/T Structure:** Single-town, PK-12 operating

**Governance Proposal:** No Change – remain a single-town district in CCSU

**Other Notes:**

- June 20, 2017 merger vote:  
Cabot – 163 Yes; 356 No; 1 Blank/Spoiled  
Danville – 112 Yes; 239 No  
Twinfield – 160 Yes; 103 No
- Region’s O/T Structures  
Caledonia Central SU:  
    Cal Coop UUSD (Barnet, Walden, Waterford) – PK-8 o / 9-12 t  
    Peacham – PK-6 o / 7-12 t  
St Johnsbury – PK-8 o / 9-12 t  
Kingdom East UUSD – PK-8 o / 9-12 t  
Washington NE SU  
    Cabot – PK-12 o  
    Twinfield – PK-12 o  
Blue Mountain (Groton, Ryegate, Wells River) – PK-12 o

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Caledonia Central SU – 948

Danville – 287

Caledonia Cooperative UUSD (Barnet, Walden, Waterford) – 570

Peacham – 91

Other districts in the region:

Washington Northeast SU – 457

(Cabot – 150.43)

(Twinfield – 306.74)

Montpelier-Roxbury USD – 1,099.42

Barre SU – 2,130.07

Washington Central SU – 1,350.21

Blue Mountain – 380

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

- § 706 study committee with Cabot and Twinfield (18 months)
- Exploratory discussions with Blue Mountain after failed merger vote
- Self-study and preparation of Sec. 9 proposal
- Public Meetings / Surveys / etc. – See list at Appendix D (p. 67)
- Student reps on school board (p. 36)

## School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview

*“community has sent three key messages” – “The importance of:” (p. 36)*

1. *“Maintaining and strengthening the quality of our school programs – in particular the vibrancy of our high school.”*
2. *“Ensuring the long-term financial stability and sustainability of our school’s core operations. “*
3. *“Pursuing educational partnerships with our neighbors, where possible and practicable, that lead to greater educational opportunity for our students.”*

### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“continuing to access the unique cultural and entrepreneurial resources available in Caledonia county – schools, businesses, non-profits – in direct support of our educational programs” (p. 11)*
- *“expanding our existing school/community partnerships – as in our newly established cooperative agreement with St. Johnsbury Academy” (p. 11) – beginning 2018-2019:*
  - Danville HS students *“will be able to access a select group of academic and co-curricular programs currently offered at”* SJA, particularly in world language and the performing arts
  - Danville School District pays for academic opportunities (no more than \$1,700 per student) - cost of materials included in this amount
  - Transportation:
    - Danville School District *“and/or parents”* for non-athletic extra-curricular
    - SJA for field trips and competitions
  - See p. 55 and Appendix A (p. 61)
- *“look to partner with other organizations wherever practicable as evidenced by our exploratory conversations with BMU over establishing a regional alternative program” (p. 11)*
- narrative overview of *current* academic programs and activities (pp. 14-18), including, e.g.:
  - Grades 1-2 Wednesday afternoons = Outdoor Learning
  - 7-9 in-house Dual Enrollment courses annually through partnership with Community College of Vermont and Southern New Hampshire University
  - New courses: Robotics and Coding; Engineering Sustainable Solutions
  - New graduation requirement: Performance Based Portfolio
  - Senior Service Learning Project
- Tables of current offerings (pp. 19-24)
- FY2018 – 17/22 seniors in Dual Enrollment and/or AP; 50%+ juniors (p. 32)
- See also Strategic Plan goal #1 – *“Student will engage with high quality and rigorous core instruction”* (pp. 45-47)
- March 7, 2018 Conversation:
  - The Board is committed to flexible pathways
  - Has been working on its Strategic Plan – includes a marketing plan and possible collaboration with SJA

### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Narrative overview of *current* advisory and academic supports (p. 17) including:
  - Middle and high school mentoring program
  - Tutorial system built on MTSS
  - *“integrated Restorative Circles into our Advisory curriculum to facilitate having tough conversations”*

- Based on VSAC follow-up and parental feedback, have implemented or are continuing (p. 32), e.g., weekly visits from VSAC rep, college and career planning in Advisory, college app guidance webpage, plus:
    - *“Professional development and staff meetings around rubric and learning scales to norm our expectations of rigor”*
    - *“Increased walkthroughs and observations using the Danielson Model of teacher evaluation, which includes indicators around planning, outcomes, and engagement”*
    - Increased graduation requirements, including requirement to *“take advanced level courses in each subject area”*
  - Implemented / in process of implementing (p. 35, 38-39):
    - ELA:
      - *“goal of 90% of our 3rd graders reading at or above proficiency. ... committed a number of physical and human resources towards reaching this goal [plus resources] to our middle school in order to ensure readiness for high school, and also to our high school, specifically at the 9th and 10th grade levels”*
      - Implementing two new reading programs K-8
      - *“added an additional Special Educator in the K-3 grades in order to offer extremely personalized reading instruction through the Orton Gillingham program to each student for whom this approach is appropriate”*
      - Hiring additional staff to implement four Language Labs in the middle and high school, *“where small groups of students engage in word attack and vocabulary skills”*
      - *“Facilitating conversations with teachers throughout the grades concerning reading and writing stamina, which will likely become a school-wide effort in the 2018-2019 school year”*
    - See also Strategic Plan goal #2 (pp. 48-49)
    - Strengthening MTSS system *“as teachers work in teams to analyze data, create targeted intervention groups (particularly in Math), and design benchmark assessments to measure growth”* – see also Strategic Plan goal #3 (pp. 49-51)
    - Expanding entry-level math and reading/writing options to provide more assistance with the transition to high school skill expectations
    - *“Including funding in Danville’s FY18 budget, a proposal for an in-house curriculum coordinator and coach to help teachers design universal, Tier I approaches to learning that allow all students to access material”*
    - Elementary: Small class sizes *“to provide as much personalization as possible”*
    - Middle: Dedicated ELA teacher for grades 7 and 8
    - High school :
      - *“Returning to two 1.0 FTE English teachers”*
      - *“Maintaining full-time FTEs in Global Citizenship, Math and Science has allowed multiple sections of lower level courses to run at different paces”*
      - 30% students *“design Independent Studies, take online courses or engage in internships”* – see also Strategic Plan goal #5 (pp. 53-54)
  - Assessments (pp. 26-29):
    - Graphs of SBAC, Fountas and Pinnell, and SAT scores
    - FRL disaggregated – SBAC Graph
    - Summary findings (p. 32-33) – primarily at or above state average in proficiency and/or improving
- 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- Ratios (p. 34): table; above state averages
  - *“History of Cooperation”* in SU (p. 56) – e.g.,
    - districts worked together to set educational goals

- adopted MTSS
- Math/Science and Literacy/Humanities Instructional Coordinators
- Two supervisors oversee all maintenance services
- Food service are employees of SU
- SU Finance Dep't restructured after purchased new software
- Centralized delivery of technical support and purchase
- Consolidated contractual services - garbage, plowing, maintenance
- Action Plan (pp. 58-59):
  - *"Initiate a more robust process of ongoing strategic, board-level discussions across our SU"*
    - *"Continue the practice of [board members meeting] jointly to assess demographic trends and student performance data"*
    - *"Directly engage all board members in creating short and long-term SU action plans and aligning district budgets"*
    - *"Mutually develop multi-year capital plans"*
    - *"Continue ... undertaking joint, annual program reviews"*
  - *"Develop a more coordinated approach" to implement Act 77*
  - *"Develop new strategies for acquiring and reviewing student performance data" from high schools outside SU who are enrolling SU students*
  - *"Continue work on the providing equitable and effective delivery of student support systems"*
  - *"Initiate a joint school climate survey"*
  - *"Plan and develop coordinated professional development opportunities"*
  - To foster shared mission and identity:
    - Enhance web presence
    - Develop SU communication strategy
    - Initiate SU functions
    - *"Explore ways to encourage PTA/booster groups to coordinate activities and programs"*
    - *"Schedule community forums on issues of concern"*
- Blue Mountain – exploratory conversations after C-D-T vote (p. 7 and Appendix B, pp. 62-64)
  - *"overall enrollment [is] comparable ... and similar educational philosophy"*
  - *"At this point ... there was no time for our districts to work together to complete a detailed cost/benefit analysis for any potential merger."*
  - *"potential areas for establishing some regional cooperative agreements"*
    - *"the creation of a jointly funded and administered regional alternative program to serve the special needs of students in both districts, as well as, those of neighboring districts who could tuition their students to the program" – e.g., students suffering from trauma, "on severe end of autism spectrum," etc.*
    - Jointly contract for services to be employed at SU level, such as dual enrollment instructors, health, PE, music, arts, support staff
    - Reorganize/consolidate school administrative positions at SU level
    - Expand full time instructional coaching positions to provide professional support
    - Reciprocity agreements to permit student choice opportunities between schools
    - Real time virtual learning opportunities
    - June/January terms to offer *"intensive specialized learning opportunities"*
    - Joint program to enable *"credit recovery"*
    - Joint professional development
    - Joint operations for, e.g., food service, IT support, etc.
  - Distance / travel time for student transport = *"to provide them real and meaningful access to additional program opportunities, remains problematic at best"*
  - *"open to exploring cooperative regional agreements with its most immediate neighbors, including BMU, to enhance its core programs, particularly for students in need of alternative placements, but contemplates no additional merger discussions at this time." (p.7)*

- March 7, 2018 Conversation: Board is committed to “beefing up” ways in which the SU’s districts work together
- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Strategic plan goal #4 (pp. 51-52) – *“Engage families in positive and supportive relationships to strengthen student engagement”* with tasks such as: *“Develop strong systems for reporting student progress”* (complete) and *“Parents invited to Open House, field trips, [etc.]”* (ongoing)
- 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- *“efforts over the past three years to communicate the quality of its educational programs to local families [has increased numbers of tuitioning students,] stabilizing and improving Danville’s financial picture, ensuring the breadth of Danville’s academic and co-curricular offerings, and enriching the diversity of student life at the high school.”* (p. 13)
  - 5.8% decline PK-12 in FY 2012-FY 2016 (p. 12)
  - Increase in 7-12 students tuitioning into Danville (p.12):
    - 26 students – 17.3% (FY 2013)
    - 52 students – 27.8% (FY 2018)
  - *“As a result of the school’s efforts over the past three years to communicate the quality of its educational programs to local families, Danville has seen a dramatic increase in the number of students choosing to attend its high school.”* (p.13)
  - Spending per Equalized Pupil (p. 34, incl table): increased 21% from FY 2013 to FY 2017  
03.07.18 Conversation:  
 Does not know profile of tuitioning students – e.g., level of FRL, SpEd , etc.
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- Cabot / Twinfield – 706 study committee; 18 months; D and C voters did not approve  
*“... Cabot, is struggling with declining enrollments. It is clear that merger discussions failed, because the search for operational efficiency among the Cabot, Danville, and Twinfield school districts led the 706b committee to recommend the closing of Cabot High School – a key obstacle in our region to a preferred merger under Act 46.”*  
*“Despite that recommendation, Cabot’s fundamental cost structures – education spending per equalized pupil and the cost of renovating their core facilities – became a clear obstacle to any merger for the citizens and taxpayers of Danville.”* (p. 34).
  - March 7, 2018 Conversation: Danville didn’t like the idea of a proposal that would result in closing another district’s school
- 7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. Why not?**
  - b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
- SEE #3 above re: Blue Mountain – many ideas listed in Appendix B based on one SU
  - March 7, 2018 Conversation: Having another PK-12 o in SU would be good for teachers and for communities to begin to build relationships  
*“Danville citizens are committed to maintaining a high school in their community. Danville High School is the last reasonably accessible public high school left in Caledonia/Essex Counties! Therefore, should cost pressures lead Danville to close its high school, serious questions would arise as to where regional high school students could actually attend school without inordinately long bus rides and increased transportation costs. ... Succeeding in [increasing # of tuitioned students] will benefit not only the students of Danville, but students across the region who need and deserve a quality educational program to attend. We believe that our AGS proposal is key to the success of this effort.”* (pp. 34-35)

## 24. The Twinfield UUSD (Towns of Marshfield and Plainfield)

### Snapshot

SU: Washington Northeast SU

Date of Conversation: March 9, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Patrick Healy (Chair; Marshfield)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Mark Tucker; Mark Mooney

Current O/T Structure: PK-12 Operating; two-town UUSD

#### Governance Proposal:

- TU *“is not proposing that [it] should simply be ‘left alone’ to operate as it is now”* (p. 1; emphasis in original)
- *“opposed to the closure of the Twinfield Union High School”* (p. 2)
- *“merger with one or more like-structured school districts is in the best interests of TUS”* (p. 10)
- Possibilities include (“in no particular order of preference”)
  - Reassignment to Washington Central SU – *“as a standalone district, with the [possibility of] potential restructuring and merger”* as long as Twinfield High School is not closed (pp. 13-14)
  - Partnership with Cabot or Danville – requests that SBE doesn’t require merger at this time because financial impacts would be different now than when originally proposed – but willing to reopen merger discussions with C and/or D (p. 14)
  - Merger/Reassignment to Barre SU – *“open to exploring combining with the Barre Supervisory Union under a structure that would allow Twinfield High School to remain open”* – perhaps assign TUS to SU as stand-alone district *“which would not initially change the governance structure of TUS, but would at least make it clear who are partners in education are as we move forward.”* (p. 14)

#### Other Notes:

June 20, 2017 merger vote:

Cabot – 163 Yes; 356 No; 1 Blank/Spoiled

Danville – 112 Yes; 239 No

Twinfield – 160 Yes; 103 No

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Washington Northeast SU – 457

Cabot – 150.43

Twinfield – 306.74

Other districts in the region:

Montpelier-Roxbury USD – 1,099.42

Barre SU – 2,130.07

Danville School District – 287 (SU – 948)

Washington Central SU – 1,350.21

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

(pp. 1 and 10-13):

- Merger discussions and proposal with Cabot and Danville; related public forums
- Discussions of other options with C and D
- Discussions of merger with Montpelier; the Paine Mountain UUSD (Northfield, Williamstown); and the Barre SU
- *“Soliciting interest”* in working with the Washington Central districts on their Proposal

## School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Current offerings - Appendix D, pages 79-85
- *“The current enrollment in the high school of 112 students ... presents a challenge in terms of offering the fullest possible range of high school programming opportunities”* (p. 2)
- But the district *“currently provides a rich educational opportunity”* – such as the high school's personalized “Renaissance” program; an *“80-acre environmentally diverse campus”* (p. 2)
- PLPs starting in 7<sup>th</sup> grade; early college; integrated curriculum opportunities (e.g., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Survival Unit; 9-10 Synapse program); highest percentage of non-resident enrolled students in the Central Vermont Career Center (pp. 3 and 5)
- All HS Students receive MacBook for use 24.7 during school year (p. 6)
- Conversation with Barre Districts about a *“satellite”* campus at Twinfield for *“eco-studies”* as *“extension to or replacement of small program already hosted at the Central Vermont Career Center”* (p. 12)

### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)

b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- *“What I Need”* (WIN) - Tier Two intervention program in elementary grades – examines current performance data and provides both intervention blocks four times weekly *“to address areas where students are struggling”* and also enrichment time for students *“who need exposure to higher grade-level material”* (p. 2)
- A PBIS School of Distinction (p. 2)
- *“a pioneer in understanding, defining, and implementing Proficiency-based Graduation Requirements”* – FY2018 12<sup>th</sup> graders = first with proficiency based diploma and transcripts (p. 4)

### 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

### 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?

### 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?

*“Currently, as a member of a two-[district SU, Twinfield] is carrying approximately 66% of the cost for operating the Supervisory Union and its many consolidated functions -- Superintendent, Curriculum, business office, special education, transportation, etc. (A significant contribution to the projected overall savings in the failed merger [was from the] three districts being moved underneath a larger Supervisory Union.) Were TUS to be placed in a larger Supervisory Union, its proportional share of Supervisory Union fixed overhead costs would be expected to decrease.”* (p. 2)

### 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then

a. Why is merger not “possible”?

b. Why is merger not “practicable”?

- See *Process by Which Reached Conclusion* above
- *“open to appropriate partnerships with other schools that improve educational opportunities ... while maintaining and continuing to build upon the school's hard work ... to bring the school up to Agency-*



*directed 21<sup>st</sup> century learning standards – PBGR, Act 77, Trauma-Informed school environment, etc. – overlooked or ignored by potential partners” (p. 2)*

- *“asks the Agency of Education and the State Board of Education to be mindful of how much this small school has accomplished on its own as they think about placement and partnership opportunities” (p. 2)*

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

Is open to considering assignment to another SU – including Washington Central and Barre

## 25. The Craftsbury School District

### Snapshot

The member districts of the Orleans Southwest SU submitted a single joint proposal under Act 46, Sec. 9 and were jointly represented at the Sec. 10 Conversation.

For information regarding the Craftsbury School District and its proposal, see #12 *The Hazen Union High School District AND the Lakeview Union Elementary School District and All Member Districts (Greensboro; Hardwick; Stannard; Woodbury)* above.

## 26. The Elmore-Morristown UUSD and the Stowe School District

### Snapshot

SU: Lamoille South SU

Date of Conversation: March 7, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Stephanie Craig (EMUU Chair); Cara Zimmerman (Stowe Chair)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Tracy Wrend; Peter Clarke

#### Current O/T Structure:

- Elmore-Morristown UU - PK-12 operating
- Stowe - PK-12 operating

#### Governance Proposal:

Retain current governance structure; prefer to retain current SU boundaries

#### Other Notes:

- The voters created the Elmore-Morristown UUSD after the enactment of Act 46
- EMUU was not eligible to receive tax rate reductions or other transitional assistance under any of the voluntary merger programs created in Act 153 (2010), Act 156 (2012), Act 46 (2015), or Act 49 (2017)
- 2016-2017 = first year of EMUU's unified structure

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [EMUU's § 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- Board's Responses to Common List of Topics, Appendix G
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Lamoille South SU – 1,480.94

E-M UUSD – 776.51

Stowe – 704.43

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

Nine Years – have reviewed three structures – multiple studies:

- 2009 (Appendix A)
- 2010 (Appendix B)
- 2011-2013 – Act 153 “RED” study (Appendix C)
- 2013-2016 – Elmore-Morristown Unification Study (Appendix D)
- 2015 – Act 46 “Accelerated Program: Study (Appendix E)
- 2016-2017 EMUU/Stowe Sec. 9 Self-Study

#### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation

1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?
  - a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
  - b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Key Findings – Program Overview – (p. 32, and Appendix H)
- During last nine years, e.g. (p. 13):
  - “Increased access to technology ... in underserved schools”
  - Cooperative teams for some sports
- Recommendations for action, e.g.,:

- Continue new practice of joint board meetings *“to assess demographic trends and student performance data in order to maintain a shared understanding of emerging needs [and to build] shared solutions”* (p. 29)
  - Continue joint, annual program reviews (p. 37)
  - Revisit and approve common set of graduation proficiencies (p. 37)
  - *“Continue work to create a flexible system of supports for both academic and social emotional learning”* (p. 37)
  - *“Study options to ensure enriching learning opportunities in all schools”* (p. 37)
  - *“Developing a proposal for a joint Chinese Studies Program for middle and high school students ... the first of what we hope will be a number of coordinated educational initiatives”* (p. 69)
- 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**
- a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
  - b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- Special needs: (pp. 26-28)
  - Poverty (pp. 26, 28)
    - Tables (pp. 38-40) and Key Findings (p. 41) – e.g., both have achievement gap between non-FRL and FRL recipients; E-M UUSD has nearly 2x as many students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (p. 41)
  - During last nine years, e.g. (p. 13):
    - *“Common supervision and evaluation system and new teacher mentoring program*
    - *“Common needs-based professional development”*
  - Recommendations for action, e.g.:
    - Continue practice of joint meetings to examine student performance data and revise action plan – and attending each other’s meetings (p. 42)
    - *“Identify additional specific strategies ... to ensure a shared, collaborative focus on closing the achievement gap”* (p. 42)
  - Postsecondary data and analysis (pp 43-48) – e.g., postsecondary enrollment and completion higher for Stowe grads than for E-M grads
    - Strategies will be different (due to, e.g., higher percentage of parents without degrees in E-M) but *“collaboration between schools can assist with identifying, improving, and scaling successful strategies into the other school”* (p, 48)
- 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- During last nine years, e.g. (p. 13):
    - Single master agreement with competitive salaries
    - Restructuring use of school and admin space - \$150K savings
    - SU-wide model for, e.g.,
      - Food service admin
      - Health services
      - IT administration
      - ELL supports
      - Wellness curriculum and coordination
    - Common Learning Management and Student Information Services
    - Cooperative contract for high speed internet access
    - New accounting software – fully integrated financial management system (p. 65)
  - Data and overview (pp. 49-65)
  - Recommendations for action, e.g.,:
    - Continue practice of joint meetings and attending each other’s meetings (p. 66)

- *“Identify additional areas of key board work where collaboration may enhance efficiency”* (p. 66)
  - Review SU board structure and meeting schedule *“and consider options to increase cooperation and coordination, including the possibility of having all board members on the SU board with weighted voting”* (p. 66)
4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Nine years of shared self-analysis have led to, e.g.,:
    - *“effective coordination and implementation of targeted instructional improvement plans”* (p. 68)
    - *“Unified program of educator recruitment, support, and professional development”* (p. 68)
  - Action items, e.g.:
    - *“Coordinating LSSU school websites and communications strategies”* (p. 69)
    - *“Coordinating community activities”* (p. 69)
    - *“Scheduling community forums on issues of concern to all our parents and citizens”* (p. 69)
5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Recommendations for action:
    - *“Continue work to develop multi-year capital plans and address short-term needs”* (p. 29)
  - ADM/enrollment (pp. 22-23, 28): – tables and analysis; Stowe = upward; E-M unified unit = slight upward
  - county population expected to grow 3.6% v. 1.1% statewide (and other co. data)
6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- March 8, 2018 Conversation:
    - Teachers / students / Boards work well together
    - Need to go slowly with communities – socioeconomic and cultural issues are very distinct – the SU is moving in a direction to bridge those distinctions and so potential merger may happen naturally
    - EMUU is still working on bringing together the Elmore and Morristown communities – and making progress because the greater community wants to do what’s best for students – not upset that no longer talking about schools at Town Meetings, but few people present for the EMUU annual meeting on a different night
    - Opportunities with sports and extracurricular now where EMUU and Stowe parents are brought together (EMUU – baseball, softball, spring track; Stowe – hockey)
    - Have *“parallel systems”* – but are talking, seeing that they have the same issues, sharing best practices
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
- March 8, 2018 Conversation:
    - Have spoken with Wolcott about joining SU and about merging with EMUU
    - Don’t want to be so large an SU that it becomes difficult to sustain quality and connectedness

## 27. The Enosburgh School District and the Richford School District

### Snapshot

SU: Franklin Northeast SU

**Date of Conversation:** February 15, 2018

**Participants:**

- Enosburgh Board Members: Rick Bartholomew; Suzanne Hull-Parent; Polly Rico
- Richford Board Members: Kevin Blaney; Wallace Steinhour
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Lynn Cota; Business Manager Morgan Daybell

**Current O/T Structure:**

- Enosburgh - PK-12 operating
- Richford – PK-12 operating

**Governance Proposal:**

No Change – remain as two, independent, single-town PK-12 districts

**Other Notes:**

Five school buildings – Enosburgh: PreK-5; 6-8/9-12; CTE and Richford: PreK-5; 6-12

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [Two § 706 Study Committee Reports and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- Boards' Responses to Common List of Topics (integrated in full below)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Franklin Northeast SU – 1,465.12  
Enosburgh – 473.46  
Richford – 365.72  
FNE PK-8 USD – 453.94 (Bakersfield; Berkshire)  
Montgomery – 172.00

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

Two § 706 Study Committees, informational meetings, discussions at bakeries, etc. (pp. 38-42)

**School Boards' Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview**

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

- In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
- In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“ideas of virtual learning and complimentary schedules have been proposed”* so that high school students in both districts can take advantage of opportunities offered by other (p. 45)
- Enosburgh-Richford School Council (ERSC) – not yet formed, pending Secretary's consideration of Sec. 9 Proposal (pp. 46-47)
  - To be created and disbanded only through supermajority vote (80%) by both boards
  - Each school board will appoint two school board members and one community member for a six-member council
  - Superintendent de facto member – advisory, non-voting
  - Open meeting law
  - Five Act 46 Goals = standing agenda items
  - Both boards will present budget proposals to the ERSC
  - Advisory function
  - Meet at least quarterly

- Report annually to public
- Continued actions (pp. 48-50):
  - “contribute and cooperate with FNESU centralizations opportunities and ... make other decisions with advice ... from the ERSC”
  - “receive the benefits of centralized superintendent-level services”
  - single mission statement / unified vision / strategic plan
  - “ongoing consistency in Common PK-12 Assessment plan”
  - “ongoing consistency in delivery of student support systems” – see table showing Interventionists and Instructional Coaches etc. by school (p. 28)
  - “ongoing commitment to preserving the character and unique culture of each school”
- Proposed new actions (pp. 49-50):
  - “Heightened expectation and accountability for administrators ... to attend to visionary and collaborative leadership”
  - “heightened potential for collaborative agreements (i.e., increased program options in specialized courses ...)” and in “extracurricular and extended year programming and activities”
  - Through the work of the ERSC:
    - “heightened emphasis on the sharing of resources and staff expertise”
    - “flexibility for the movement of students between” the two communities can become a “focal point”
    - Advice regarding merging sports teams
- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
  - Evolution in board relationships in last few years – how one school impacts the other – very committed to working together and making sure that equitable / more opportunities
  - Not going to be able to get a 0.4 French teacher for one school – so by working together can hire full time – AP Math etc.
  - Online offerings from one HS might allow students in both schools to, e.g., take classes at CTE

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #1:

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

*As stated in the plan, “The Enosburgh and Richford Town School District boards will continue to contribute and cooperate with FNESU centralization opportunities and will make other decisions with advice and counsel from the ERSC”(49). The development of the ERSC will allow members of both boards to examine and develop systems to enhance equity for educational opportunities, i.e. aligning schedules for shared course offerings, looking at inconsistencies with instructional time and intervention supports. With the committee identifying gaps, both boards can work to close those gaps. The ERSC would work to hold the boards accountable for meeting the goals of Act 46.*

*“With increased partnership between the two school districts, there is heightened potential for collaborative agreements (i.e., increased program options in specialized courses such as World Languages, Algebra, Coding, etc. At the high school level this can include increased access to AP courses, Dual Enrollment courses, World Languages, etc. Students could potentially participate remotely or staff could travel to offer courses in any of the schools) “(50).*

*There is a high level of poverty in both the Enosburgh and Richford communities. Many students have limited access to opportunities because their families lack the means for transportation. Without a strong public transportation network in our region, many of our students are at a disadvantage in terms of access to opportunities like early college or taking CCV courses. However, strengthening the partnership between the two communities will provide for greater shared opportunities for local and/or remote advanced course offerings and dual enrollment courses taught in our communities.*

**b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

Both districts are already closely align with shared resources, such as allowing students from either district to participate in educational opportunities (see page 44), as well as sharing a technical center (see page 44-45).

Flexible pathways will allow us to personalize additional opportunities for our students. Many of our students do not have access to opportunities outside of our region. Geographically, our schools are further away from supports, services and opportunities than schools in other parts of the state. Our location sometimes serves as a barrier for students and families.

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

*“The Enosburgh and Richford Town School District boards will continue to contribute and cooperate with FNESU centralization opportunities and will make other decisions with advice and counsel from the ERSC.” (49). The SU has created multiple systems already, for instance district leadership days, Academy time to ensure equity across the district. This will continue in order to sustain this vision of collaboration. As stated before, the districts will use the ERSC to examine further places to bring equity and variety as well as looking at shared resources and staffing to support this.*

*Also, we will continue to work collaboratively with community partners like NOTCH, NCSS, the Department of Health and the Department of Children and Families to bring services, supports and opportunities to disadvantaged students and families in our region..*

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Continued / expanded / increased actions (pp. 51-52):
  - “consistency in curriculum development”
  - “consistency in the development of” MTSS
  - “focus on maximizing the cross-utilization of interventionists and instructional coaches between the districts”
  - “opportunities ... for accelerated learning opportunities”
  - “collaborative agreements, [providing] heightened potential for increased program options in specialized courses”
  - “well-coordinated high-quality professional development opportunities through access to in-house expertise”
  - “Advancing alignment of Proficiency Based Graduation requirements ... and Transferrable skills”
- Proposed new actions (p. 52)
  - “Enhance the ability to recruit and retain skilled teachers with shared staffing”
  - “Ensure consistency of Proficiency Based Graduation requirements”
  - “Complete development of a joint system of building [PLPs] for all 7-12 students”
  - “Advance towards a Proficiency Based Learning system”
  - “Ensure consistency of technology access for all students”

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #2:

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

*The ERSC would examine an “increased focus on maximizing the cross-utilization of interventionists and instructional coaches between the districts” (52). This will enable students within both districts to access supports that would help achieve the EQS in regards to MTSS. Through guidance from the SU, there already exists strong coordination regarding cross district professional development. This proposal commits to “continue well-coordinated high-quality professional development opportunities through access to the in-house expertise that exists between the districts” (53).*



**b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?**

*Through collaboration through the ERSC and the two districts' boards there will be more opportunity for shared resources, both educationally and fiscally. Each district already utilizes intervention supports and staff, but with fluctuating needs, the ERSC and the two boards will work to share these resources. The SU will continue to develop needs based professional development and deliver to both districts equally.*

**3. How does the proposal support your ability to "maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?"**

**What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?**

- The two school districts already work together – e.g., have common K-5 math program, have regular meetings of grade level and content level teams, "share curriculum work in a Learning Academy model" (p. 37) and, e.g., provide collaborative in-service training, share "Innovation Coaches," invite students from both districts to participate in enrichment activities (p. 43) (also lists SU-wide activities required by statute – p. 53)
- Elementary schools are 9.4 miles / 15 minutes apart (p. 21)
- Middle/high schools are 106 / 18 minutes apart (p. 21)
- Two communities have long history of shared services and activities, cross-town employment, and easy automobile access (pp. 17-19)
- Proposed new actions (p. 54):
  - "Current State" = "Constrained ability to share staff"
  - "Future State under Proposed [AGS]" = "Enhanced ability to share staff"
  - "leveling class sizes may be possible through reviews by the ERSC"
  - "examination of other supervisory union's successful school choice policies ... can be considered for possible applicability" – cites Mount Mansfield, a union school
  - "Fresh opportunities to efficiently share operational services can be considered" – e.g., buildings and grounds; increased centralized purchasing
  - "New possibilities for better scaled "breaks" for subscriptions and other instructional materials"
  - "potential savings and economies of scale" may arise from ERSC's recommendations
  - "seek new opportunities for grant sharing" through work of ERSC
- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
  - All on same contract / benefit structure
  - SpEd costs based on student population so that they are shared by all districts

**Boards' written response to conversation topic #3:**

*"As you can see our student to staff ratios are within State recommendations, but we are committed to ensure maximization of resources. The development of the ERSC and the collaboration of the boards would "enhance the ability to share staff, and the districts would consult with one another prior to independently hiring part-time staff." (55). "Fresh opportunities to efficiently share operational services can be considered; examples include buildings and grounds needs and increased centralized purchasing (cleaning supplies, fuel, supplies and technology)" (55).*

**What "detailed actions" will you take to "continue to improve" in re: this goal?**

*As needs fluctuate, by working together, we are able to obtain positions collectively. For instance, it is often difficult to fund .5 positions with well-qualified educators, but through the collaboration of the boards, we have hiring capacity to bring in quality services.*

**4. How does the proposal support your ability to "promote transparency and accountability" in a "sustained" manner?**

- Proposed new actions (p. 55):

- ERSC will “look under the hood’ ... in search of new opportunities and efficiencies”
- Maintaining local budget development and current (differing) voting methods serves these goals

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #4:

*The existence of the ERSC will serve to “look under the hood” of each district in search of new opportunities and efficiencies. Such would further the boards’ transparency and accountability for voters. (56). The forming of the ERSC will act as an accountability measure for the boards in meeting the Act 46 goals. “Maintaining budget development and execution at the town school district level will keep voters closely attuned to school districts’ budgets, their educational investments and associated related tax implications” (56).*

**5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Through ERSC’s efforts, “some additional budgetary savings may be achieved” (p. 56)
- Maintaining current (differing) voting methods (p. 56)

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #5:

*By working together and developing the ERSC, both districts will create budgets that are informed on a deeper level with input from across districts. By having the capacity to bring interventions and a varied curriculum will have value for parents and students, while sharing resources will have value for taxpayers. By remaining separate, voters value the budgets that do not saddle with additional debt.*

*In our proposal, we are listening to our parents, voters and taxpayers and how they value their students, school, and their money. We continue to be a low spending Supervisory Union. Merging might burden one district or the other, wherein each board evaluates needs and budgets and keeps expenses low. Enosburgh’s current level of transparency resulting from a local school budget report and discussion on the floor at our school budget meeting maintains a level of control at the town level. Further, a local community-based board engages the voters and develops a budget in the closest manner possible to the taxpayer. We believe that budget decisions made away from the taxpayer level are often desensitized to the communities needs. Due to our current centralization efforts we do not see further cost savings that would benefit both communities.*

*Some voters are seeing negative impacts of Act 46 from neighboring merges. Enosburgh has lost more than \$500,000 in tuition as a result of that merge.*

**6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**

- Why is merger not “possible”?**
- Why is merger not “practicable”?**

- Voters rejected merger twice
  - 5 FNE SU districts form PK-12o – E: 82 Yes / 158 No; R: 60 Yes / 207 NO  
*“vote failed for reasons including loss of high school choice by the three preK-8 districts, fears of local control being lost, smaller towns fearing undue power potentially being wielded by larger towns, a mistaken belief that Act 46 would soon be repealed, inadequate additional financial savings, opposition rhetoric and a lack of specific detail on how a new single consolidated district would operate” (p. 39)*
  - Enosburgh and Richford form PK-12 UUSD – E: 157 Yes / 65 No; R: 99 Yes / 108 No  
*“failed for reasons including debt sharing, a belief that the same outcomes could be achieved without formally consolidating, concerns over future school closures, town-based boards are valued and ought to be retained, loss of local control of town school district budget items/facilities/policy/facility management and concerns over the common tax rate which would have resulted in an increase for one town” (p. 41)*
  - “Strong public sentiment that significant additional efficiencies are unlikely to be achieved” (p. 4)

- Unified tax rate will result in “winner” and “loser” – which “would only serve to unnecessarily divide the two communities” (p. 4)
- All other schools distant and/or difficult travel (p. 21)
- CTE region = SU (pp. 21-22)
- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
  - Honor voters and also achieve goals of Act 46 and continue to work together
  - Remaining separate will allow them to move forward rather than “get mired down in the muck”
  - Forced merger will create animosity and with that much animosity will cause things not to move forward – but will focus on differences – their Council is middle-step
  - If to be merged, SU wouldn’t be eliminated so there wouldn’t be that sort of big savings
  - Enosburg no capital debt because just paid it off – R bonded slightly later so has a bunch – have let them – know this is point in time and will shift, but it is a real concern for E voters to take this on
  - Concern that going to Australian ballot because people don’t come to informational meeting. Talk about issues and get feedback through actual TMD meetings.
  - Concern that if R and E merge then Richford HS will close and that it provides so much community and social services support – concerned that the poverty gap will increase

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #6:

**a. Why is merger not “possible”?**

*Richford has voted NO to two merger proposals and forcing a merger with a community who does not want a merger is not respecting the citizenry of that community, their voice or interests nor do we believe it will achieve anything tangible that cannot be achieved under this current proposal. **In addition, forcing a merger will increase animosity between the towns making advances in equity and excellence more difficult to achieve.***

**b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**

*We feel that gains and positives are attainable under this current proposal while respecting the wishes and values of our local communities.*

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
  - Sheldon - a lot of kids go to Enosburgh HS
  - (Maybe Missisquoi Valley UHSD – but big distance)
  - Currently have lots of really good systems in place to support new and experienced teachers – concern about how to incorporate other districts – such as districts from FNWSU
  - Also pay structure very different

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #7:

**a. Why not?**

*If our Supervisory Union had to merge with a Supervisory Union that we have no working relationship with, the alignment work we have already focused on would be negatively impacted.*

*Our current Supervisory Union has worked tirelessly to develop well-established systems and partnerships within our organizational structure. Our schools use common resources/programs, a common SU Local Assessment Plan, well developed Curriculum Maps across grade levels and content areas. In addition, our SU grade level and content teacher teams work collaboratively on a regular basis to move this work forward in areas like: curriculum, instruction, assessment, proficiency based learning, proficiency based graduation requirements, personalization, etc. We have a collaborative and focused trajectory and a merge with another Supervisory Union would hinder our progress. Putting FNESU and FNWSU together would be far too*

*large and too far from one another to help provide more substantial equity, efficiency, or opportunity. The efforts to achieve this would be substantial and take away our focus and resources which are currently dedicated to our current growth and initiatives, thus not be beneficial for our students.*

*FNESU is one of only six Supervisory Unions in the state with two high schools. It would not be practicable for a merge with a neighboring Supervisory Union (FNWSU) for several reasons. If the state were to consider a large merge and join the two Supervisory Unions into one large SU with a PK-12 and a PK-8 side by side structure, a system with three high schools and six towns would exist on the PK-12 side and a PK-8 district with four towns would exist on the other side. The two Supervisory Unions have done very little collaborative work with one another and would be starting from very different places in terms of curriculum, instruction, policy, master agreement, salary, professional development, mission/vision and strategic goals. The Richford community would be more at risk with a large merge. It is imperative to the students of Richford that we continue to find ways to provide them with opportunities within their local community. Any merge that would risk a closure of the Richford High School would further disadvantage these students. Without regular regional public transportation, not only would students be disadvantaged, but parents would be much less likely to be able to be active participants in their child's education.*

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

*Respecting our voters who have spoken and have demonstrated a resistance to merging, we feel a strong support for our current structure proposal and offer no other suggestions. Merging otherwise would simply be for the task of doing so, we are fully committed to incorporating all tangible improvements through our current structure proposal.*

## 28. The Fairfax School District, the Fletcher School District, and the Georgia School District

### Snapshot

SU: Franklin West SU

**Date of Conversation:** February 15, 2018

**Participants:**

- Fairfax Board Members: Elaine Carpenter (Chair); Scott Mitchell
- Fletcher Board Members: Diane Dayvie; Betsy Lesnikoski
- Georgia Board Members: Ben Chiappinelli; Carl Laroe Jr (Chair)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Ned Kirsch

**Current O/T Structure:**

Fairfax – PK-12 operating

Fletcher – PK-6 operating / 7-12 tuitioning

Georgia – PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning

**Governance Proposal:**

No change – remain as three single-town districts in same SU

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Franklin West SU – 1,751.52

Fairfax – 753.37

Fletcher – 197.50

Georgia – 800.65

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

- Act 153 Study Committee in 2011 re: merger of Fairfax and Fletcher – voters did not approve; led to commitment to work together as an SU and creation of FWSU Action Plan (p. 3)
- Act 46 Study Committee to evaluate merits of merging into one system – 10 months; 18 meetings; open to public; taped; broadcast (p. 2)
- Each district continued to explore and self-evaluate and all reached same conclusion

### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
  - Still very interested in having tech center changed – give a better opportunities for students, but also less expensive

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Awards (e.g., Apple Distinguished School) and initiatives (e.g., Innovation Labs) within last few years (pp. 10-11)
- Poverty – 22% SU-wide (Attachment A; p. 12)
- Special Needs – 16% IEPs and 3.5% 504 plans SU-wide (Attachment A; p. 12)

3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Six years ago the districts “adopted a system-wide vision-based action plan to guide our schools into the future” that targets “proficiency-based personalized learning, leadership, engaged community partners, and flexible learning environments” (pp. 1-2)
- Strategies and targets have won national awards and recognition (p. 2)
- Has maximized “learning management systems, data systems, student information systems, maintenance, and technology” and shares “human resources, payroll, facilities manager” and other services required by 16 VSA § 261a (p. 5) plus more examples (pp. 8-10)
- Identified issues facing schools as “hiring and recruitment of special educators and SLPS, maintaining ... aging buildings, and combining our custodial staffs” (p. 10)
- Ratios – SU-wide (pp. 4-5)
  - 10.45 – 1 (student – teacher)
  - 5.49 – 1 (student – adult)
- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
  - Took Act 153/156 consolidation of duties at SU-level seriously
  - Had made a commitment to work together to improve equity of opportunity and control costs before Act 46 enacted
  - Followed recommendations from DMS study – decreased special ed costs and improved results
  - Unified curriculum – SU curriculum coordinator works with all districts – continuous stream / coordination as Fletcher transition to high school in Fairfax
  - Consolidated IT department under the SU – employed at SU level
  - Looking forward to doing same with custodial and grounds staff – director is currently at the SU level, and eventually move others to SU employment
  - SU wide counselor – to try to avoid subcontracting
  - Have done a lot together – work well together as an SU

4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Boards meet in carousel fashion three times/year
- Continued use of daily blog (p. 11)
- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
  - Four carousel meetings annually where all district boards s meet – to “interlock governance” – may increase number of times meet this way per year
  - More insight into what SU does – and makes districts more likely to move along together when they are meeting with each other

5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver[ education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Currently, three districts are “among the lowest spending in Vermont” (pp. 4 and 18)
- Participated in DMC study re: special education trends and “considered more effective service delivery models, better management of staffing and gave us the opportunity to create common guidelines for service delivery” (pp. 6 and 10)
- Tuitioning:
  - Fletcher 7-12 – pays tuition primarily to list at Attachment B, p. 12
  - Georgia 9-12 – pays tuition primarily to list at Attachment B, p. 12
  - Fairfax had 7 outgoing and 7 incoming students through Public High School Choice program in 2018 – “FRL is the only demographic not met” (Attachment A, p. 13)
- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
  - Fletcher – enrollment down but then up again

- More young families moving into all three because more affordable than Chittenden Co
  - New home building in Georgia
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. Why is merger not “possible”?**
- b. Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- Last six months: Georgia met with South Hero; Fairfax met with Maple Run and Milton; Fletcher met with Champlain Islands UUSD; Essex –Westford declined to meet with Fairfax and Fletcher (p. 3)
  - *“Some of the other systems presented barriers and some had no interest in schools from FWSU. Some of the barriers included losing school choice, losing specific grade levels, and travel distance.”* (p. 7)
  - *“Virtual merger”* with Franklin Central SU and Chittenden Central SU 6 years ago that lasted for 3 years – sharing and consulting – other partners caused disbanding (p. 7)
  - February 15, 2018 Conversation:
    - Georgia Board gave presentation to voters – no interest in merger – committee saw viable option for merger, but Georgia voters wanted to retain tuitioning structure
    - Fairfax and Fletcher voted down RED – no in both communities 2 to 1
      - Fletcher – maintaining independence and choice
      - Fairfax – didn’t see any benefits
    - Act 46 – potential F and F merger
      - Not eligible for incentive
      - Fletcher would have gone down even if incentive available, Fairfax would have approved regardless of incentive
    - Maple Run and Essex-Westford want to see where they settle out before they think about increasing size
- 7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. Why not?**
- b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
- February 15, 2018 Conversation:
    - The three districts don’t want to be split apart
    - Hard to know how other districts would fit in – do they care about the same things (feels South Hero has similar values) – worried about central office losing ambition because so spread out, what would have to be built to accommodate taking care of other districts
      - Champlain Islands UUSD/South Hero
      - Maple Run UUSD
      - Other Franklin SUs – and CTE might work better – but commuting patterns are towards Chittenden County

## 29. The Hartland School District and the Weathersfield School Districts

### Snapshot

SU: Windsor Southeast SU

Date of Conversation: March 15, 2018

#### Participants:

- Hartland Board Members: Bettina Read (Chair); Nicole Buck; Scott H. Richardson; Sarah S. Taylor;
- Weathersfield Board Members: Sean Whalen (Chair); Laura Cody McNaughton; Heidi Remick
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent David Baker; Laura Bergstresser (Act 46 Committee); Hartland Principal Christine Bourne; Peter Clarke; Patty Kelly (Act 46 Committee); Anthony French (Act 46 Committee)

#### Current O/T Structure:

- Hartland - PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning
- Weatherfield – PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning
- Both members of Windsor SE SU

**Governance Proposal:** stay as single-town districts in same SU

#### Other Notes:

- On March 6, 2018, the voters of West Windsor and Windsor, the other two districts in Windsor SE SU, approved creation of a unified union school district that will operate PK-12 beginning on July 1, 2019. After a period of grandfathering for currently tuitioned students, students living in West Windsor will begin enrolling in the district-operated high school.
- March 15, 2018 Conversation: H and W have different regional planning councils, news sources, commuting patterns, tuitioning directions

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- Board's Responses to Common List of Topics (integrated in full below)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Windsor Southeast SU – 1,307.14

Hartland – 430.48

Weathersfield – 311.54

Windsor-West Windsor UUSD – 565.12

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- § 706 Study Committee formed by all 4 WSESU districts in September 2015
- Met bi-monthly in open session for 20 months
- Considered multiple governance structure involving different mergers and no merger

#### School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Currently:
  - See table comparing elementary programs (p. 20)
  - “substantial variety, quality, and equality of opportunity comparable to the best schools in Vermont” (p. 21)



Boards' written response to conversation topic #1:

*We have an ongoing commitment with the districts in our SU to collaborate and strategize. The opportunities afforded to all students in all our districts are substantially similar. A Hartland/Weathersfield merger would not provide additional equity, either between the two towns or with neighboring districts.*

*In terms of equity with other students in our region, Hartland and Weathersfield offer similar opportunities to many of our neighboring schools and exceed them in some cases. For example, Hartland's K-8 Spanish immersion program will be a unique opportunity for our students. We also offer a full complement of arts enrichment programs that compare favorably with other schools in our area.*

**2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- Tables of staffing patterns, professional study, and years of service (pp. 41-43)
- *“During the first three years of SBAC administration, Hartland has endured inconsistent leadership. After three principals ... the school has finally hired a strong instructional leader who is beginning a school-wide discussion of student performance.” (p. 37)*
- *Siloed approach to instructional leadership ended in 2009 with “appointment of one Superintendent and a Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and the introduction of strategic planning process at the SU level to chart objectives, or design a path for continuous instructional improvement.” (p. 37)*
- **Poverty as measured by eligibility for FRL – FY 2013-FY 2017 (p. 18):**
  - Hartland: varied 36% (FY 2016) to 42% (FY 2014 and FY 2017)
  - Weathersfield: varied 38% (FY 2016) to 48% (FY 2014) – 43% in FY 2017
  - *“Trend lines for students receiving [FRL] at WSE schools over the last 5 years have made a dramatic and uneven shift” – West Windsor up 11%; Hartland up 4%; Weathersfield down 3%; Windsor down 8% – “Sociologically and demographically, something is happening ... 2012 pretty much marks the beginning of a trend that appears to be continuing.” (p. 19)*
- **Assessments:**
  - SBAC results (pp. 22-27)
  - Scaled score comparison 2015-2017 (pp. 28-29)
  - Students not eligible for FRL in both districts meet or exceed state standards in English and Math
  - Students eligible for FRL Weathersfield *“consistently out-perform students in similar cohorts throughout Vermont that underscores Weathersfield’s strong aggregate performance results. In addition, Weathersfield has the smallest performance gap between these two economic cohorts.” (p. 37)*

Boards' written response to conversation topic #2:

*Please refer to the bottom of page 7 of our proposal and continuing on to page 8 of our proposal. We have an ongoing commitment with the districts in our SU to collaborate, strategize and constantly review data. The administrative team meets regularly to strategize and collaborate. We are aware that Hartland students lag behind Weathersfield students on standardized test scores and we are investigating the causes, and taking steps to improve Hartland's scores. Our plan for an enhanced SU structure will allow us to see where we may be able to learn from the other schools in our SU and we are committed to making the changes necessary to improve our instruction where needed. Now that Hartland has a strong principal, we believe that we will be able to address these issues in a timely and proactive manner.*

3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Siloed approach ended / SU collaboration began in 2009 (pp. 43-44) – e.g.:
  - Centralized mgmt. grants and federal funds
  - Curriculum coordinator
  - Centralized leadership of support services and core operations to, e.g.,
    - Tech infrastructure and purchasing
    - Centralized website
    - Chrome books in all schools’
    - One student information system
  - Single telephone/communications infrastructure
  - Food service management
  - Transportation services
  - Goal of maximizing sole of current SU board “in setting, implementing, and assessing district policy and educational operations” by, e.g.: all members of district boards sit on SU board; local board members attend and participate in SU board meetings (pp. 73-75)
- Ratios – five-year trends (pp. 39-40):
  - Student to Teachers: Hartland 13.57 (FY 2017); Weathersfield 13.15 (FY 2017)
  - Student to Administrator: Hartland 121.43 (FY 2017); Weathersfield 234 (FY 2017)

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #3:

*Our SU already collaborates in many ways to maximize operational efficiencies. See page 6 of our proposal for a detailed list. By reviewing our local budgets as part of the SU meetings, we believe we can find more ways to support one another and share resources. We are proud of the collaborative work we have done together and the areas we share which have resulted in money saved for our towns. Our student/teacher and student/staff ratios are better than the state average and we have taken proactive steps to make sure they stay that way. For example, Hartland has combined kindergarten classes next year to maximize operational efficiencies. Weathersfield has done the same when needed.*

4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?

- Currently (p. 45), e.g.,
  - “A sustained emphasis on analyzing common data points across all schools, programs, and students”
  - “An emphasis on clear and transparent vertical curriculum alignment”
  - “The communication, beginning with this report, of a more integrated picture of the work being undertaken in our schools, including yearly updates on academic progress formally presented in every community”

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #4:

*We work hard to communicate with our communities about what is going on in our schools and with our budgets. Attendance is not high at either of our school board meetings, but we believe that is due to trust. If something controversial is happening, such as a program cut, the community shows up and is heard at our meetings. If we were to merge and swap the location of meetings each month, it would be more difficult for community to attend the meetings due to the travel time between the towns. We have school websites, a SU website, a social media presence, and community Listservs all which are utilized to communicate with our communities. Our meetings are taped and televised on local access stations in both towns. We have community forums on hot button issues.*

5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?

- Pass all of their budgets
- Tuitioning data – see Appendix G (pp. 134-35)

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #5:

*All of our school budget votes have passed in the last decade. We have cut positions and programs when necessary to deliver a budget that we feel our communities will support, and we will continue to do that. In the future, we will discuss our local budgets as part of our supervisory union meetings in effort to see where our common struggles are and look for additional ways to share and help each other.*

6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then

- a. Why is merger not “possible”?
- b. Why is merger not “practicable”?

Discussion of Hartland – Weathersfield merger (pp. 57-61)

- Similar spending, staffing, tests scores, educational values etc.
- Unification probably would not involve laying off teachers or significantly increasing taxes
- Opportunities included:
  - “Could work together to create shared enrichment and gifted/talented programs at the middle school level”
  - “Could share staff or use online teaching to improve middle school programs”
  - “Could result in greater instructional and program collaboration”
- Challenges included:
  - Distance between schools “makes sharing staff or resources, programming, reconfiguring schools, introducing school choice, closing a school, etc. difficult” –
    - Between schools: 11.5 miles, 15 minutes by car; 20 minutes by direct bus (p. 60)
    - Furthest borders: 30 miles; 46+ minutes by car; longer by bus
    - “Currently, some students who live 10 minutes from school already face 45-minute bus rides to school”
  - “Hartland has slightly higher average tuition costs”
  - “Little overlap in the high schools that students attend, making follow-up studies on graduate performance more difficult to produce”
  - “Financially, a merger wouldn’t free up much money for improvements at either school”
    - “Program ‘equity’ between the two schools would need to be discussed and defined”
- Key Obstacles:
  - “Unclear Educational / Operational Benefits” (p. 59) – see above
  - Projected Tax Impact (pp. 59-60) – see above
  - Debt (p. 60) – “Weathersfield would bring substantive debt to any merger” – estimated balance on 7/1/2018 = \$2.855 million
  - “Controlling Costs Through Tuition Designation” (p. 60) – current law allows up to 3 designated schools and the “geographic distance between the schools ... complicate[s] any possibility of choosing to settle on just three schools” – see also Appendix G
  - “Geography, Transportation, Educational Programming, and Culture” (pp. 60-61) – see above
- March 15, 2018 Conversation: At least one board member believes that H and W aren’t as separate as they think and that owe it to communities to think holistically

Boards’ written response to conversation topic #6:

*There are no other nearby K-8 districts other than Hartland and Weathersfield, which are non-contiguous towns. Due to geographic distance, differing levels of indebtedness, and the fact that due to our similar cost per equalized pupil, very little tax savings would be realized; therefore we determined that a merger between Hartland and Weathersfield was not in our best interests. After careful study and consideration, we were not able to identify educational or financial benefits from merging.*

7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
  - a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

Boards' written response to conversation topic #7:

*The committee looked at surrounding districts and SUs to determine if breaking off and joining another group would be the best idea. All of the districts surrounding us were either exempted from Act 46, had different operating structures, or indicated they did not wish to enter into conversation with us. We found it would cost considerable money to rebuild things that were part of the supervisory union, such as special education, technology support, internet connectivity, transportation, food service, and curriculum. For instance, we recently spent tens of thousands of dollars to unify our curriculum. If we joined another district or SU and had to change our curriculum again, it would result in a large expense and time in teacher training. See page 6 of our proposal for the many areas in which the districts work together in our SU. We would strongly urge you not to divide our SU by redrawing boundaries.*

## 30. The Montgomery School District

### Snapshot

SU: Franklin Northeast SU

**Date of Conversation:** February 15, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Mary Niles (Chair), Christina Suarez-Pratt
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Lynn Cota; Jay Denault

**Current O/T Structure:** PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning

**Governance Proposal:**

No Change – remain a single-town district in FNESU

**Other Notes:**

- FNE PK-8 UUSD (Bakersfield and Berkshire) – same O/T structure as Montgomery
  - Advance acceptance of Montgomery if Montgomery votes to join by 7.29.18
  - Advance acceptance of any like district in or adjoining FNESU if SBE requires merger
- Sheldon (FNW SU) – same O/T structure (FNW SU Districts' joint proposal includes Sheldon)

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [Two § 706 Study Committee Reports and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Franklin Northeast SU – 1,465.12

Montgomery – 172.00

FNE PK-8 USD – 453.94 (Bakersfield; Berkshire)

Enosburgh – 473.46

Richford – 365.72

Sheldon (K-8 o / 9-12 t) – 338.60

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

Participation in two study committees / both proposals presented to and rejected by voters

**School Board's Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:**

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district's students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“comparatively low per pupil spending in some ways limits our ability to provide more opportunities for excellence like additional physical education, a technology integration specialist or language immersion teacher. These shared resource opportunities will be explored with other districts in the region in the future.” (p.7)*
- *Currently, “there is substantial equity in the type of course offerings and the amount of instructional time offered in math and literacy instruction” in comparison to what is currently offered by the Bakersfield and Berkshire Town Districts prior to unification. (pp.7-10)*
- *Length of day shorter in M than in B and B. (p.7)*
- *Where, instructional time is less than in B and B (science, social studies, PE), the “administration will continue to be mindful of equity when developing future master schedules.” (p.7)*
- *Student support services: Currently offers “substantially equitable interventionists in literacy and math and SpEd” given size differences and assessment results. (pp.10-11)*
- *Last year teachers had two-hour workshop to create “Code of Character” introduced at beginning of year (p. 14)*

- List of community enrichment activities, community partnerships, and unique programs currently available (pp. 15-17)
  - Current early ed opportunities at school building (p. 17)
  - February 18, 2018 Conversation:
    - Over 50% FRL but 67% of them meeting standard
    - Process of self-analysis illuminated gaps – offerings / male-female / poverty
    - In last 5-10 years:
      - BBB for littlest / Playschool for 3 year olds / PK for 4 year olds – hoping to see effect on kids living in poverty
      - Would like to expand PK and Playschool
      - Have PK at 19.5 hours now
      - No other childcare in area
- 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**
- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
  - b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- Grades 3-8 performing at high levels regionally and statewide (pp. 5, 13-14)
  - Achievement gaps exist between Boys/Girls; SpEd/Non-SpEd; FRL/Non-FRL (pp. 6-7)
    - Lower level of each category of gap still “relatively high level” and is “in many cases” higher than state average (p. 7)
  - Gender Gap (p. 6)- Principal is:
    - *“working on researching and providing teachers with resources for how best to engage male learners”*
    - *“identified researchers in the region to reach out to as a resource for future professional development options”*
    - *“several professional development books being considered for analysis by staff”*
  - Disability Gap (p. 6):
    - *“Analyzing how students are supported and the type and variety of targeted interventions and accommodations is, and will continue to be, an ongoing cycle within the established system of supports for students with disabilities.”*
  - Poverty Gap (p. 6):
    - *“Analyzing how students are supported and the type and variety of targeted interventions and accommodations is, and will continue to be, an ongoing cycle within the established system of supports for students with disabilities.”*
  - Teacher Retention and Training (pp. 11-12):
    - 46% of licensed teachers have <5 years’ experience
    - *“Bakersfield has substantially more new teachers”*
    - *“intend to keep new teacher support and training at the forefront of our priorities”*
    - Continue with:
      - annual New Teacher Training and New Teacher Mentor
      - SU-wide teacher cohort group for full or half-day professional development days
      - (no instructional coaches in M, but) teachers attend SU-wide instructional leadership team meetings
      - SU-wide Special Ed Coach for new SpEd teachers
      - Supports from SU
  - February 18, 2018 Conversation:
    - Teacher turnover – 46% with five or fewer years
    - Younger teachers moving because life changes / make more money in Chittenden County
    - Culture good – enjoy the relationships with each other, the community, parents, etc.
    - Young people moving there

3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- Already shares nursing, music, guidance with Berkshire District and Franklin District (p. 4)
  - “Future potential opportunities could include shared language immersion teacher, shared literacy, math, or behavior intervention instructional coaches, etc.” (p. 4)
  - Retention: Region “continue[s] to struggle with teacher retention and turnover.” (p. 11) See #2 above for how Montgomery plans to address this.
  - Already: Centralized purchasing at SU Level. (p.18) [AOE Note: Other examples listed, e.g., transportation, are required by statute]
  - District “believes it has demonstrated the ability to meet” Act 46, Goal 3 – and does not propose changes. (p.18)
  - FY16 (pp. 19-22) –
    - had “highest student/teacher ratio of all 33 schools in its cohort” of K-8 schools with enrollment <200
    - of 296 operating schools for those grades – ratio higher than 241
  - February 18, 2018 Conversation:
    - Already collaborating with neighbors including those in region with higher percent poverty
    - Montgomery members on SU board share the knowledge of what has been so successful in M to other districts in the SU
4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Lists ways it currently promotes transparency (e.g., school board meetings and annual budget meeting are open to public, three board members sit on SU board, audits are performed annually and are available to the public (p. 23)
  - It “promotes and will expand accountability” (p. 23):
    - Participate in SU Local Assessment Plan
    - Participate in analysis of SBAC results
    - “Ongoing development of FNESU standards based report card/proficiency based reporting documents”
    - Create email listserv and add to existing website with information re: agendas, policies, actions to increase community knowledge and understanding of board work and decisions
    - Improving website
5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Average 2% increase in enrollment per year since 1996; 1% decrease for state (pp. 19-20, 22)
  - \$10,596 Ed Spending per Pupil without SpEd; lowest in 33 school cohort – (pp. 20-22, 24-25)
  - February 18, 2018 Conversation:
    - Thinks could find a “palatable” tax rate increase to address the gaps if necessary because tax rate already so low
6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- Voters rejected merger twice
    - 5 FNE SU districts form PK-12o – 52 Yes / 219 No
    - Bakersfield, Berkshire, Montgomery form PK-8 UUSD – 137 Yes / 151 No
  - Voters voted at a special meeting on January 16, 2018 to “declare [the school district] an existing district in an alternative structure to meet the requirements of Acts 46 and 49 as outlined in Section 9 due to geographic and structural isolation” – 70 Yes / 21 No / 2 Abstain / 1 Spoiled
  - “Geographic Isolation” (pp. 26-30)

- Discusses roads serving town and effect of weather – e.g. two Class 1 roads; one Class 2 road that is closed for the winter; “highest snowfall in the state;” mud season difficult (pp. 26-27)
- Bus routes of 38 minutes, 27 minutes, and 75 minutes (p. 27)
- 12.20.16 – 12.20.17 – 85 crashes in Montgomery and neighboring towns
- Relies on same Agency memo prepared for discussion purposes regarding Small Schools Grants as two instances of evidence that M has been designated to be geographically isolated [AOE Note: The “2009 memo” and the “2011 memo” referenced by the SBE’s memo in 2017 are the same thing – the memo was required by Act 153 of 2009 issued in 2011; the State has never made a declaration that any district is geographically isolated; the State Board’s metrics, due July 1, 2018 will be the first to do so] (pp. 27-28)
  - Berkshire (p. 28) – distance between:
    - Schools – 10.7 miles / 17 minutes
    - Furthest points in M to reach B – 15.2 and 16.4 miles / 24 minutes
  - Bakersfield (pp. 28-29) – distance between:
    - Schools – 16.2 miles / 30 minutes
    - Furthest points in M to reach B – 21-30 miles / 30-46 minutes
  - Sheldon (p. 30)– distance between schools: 20.5 miles / 30 minutes
  - “Structurally Isolated” – Richford and Enosburg Falls are PK-12 operating; as are Lamoille N towns (pp. 29-30)
  - Cites Marlboro’s “3-by-1” status as precedent (p. 31)
- February 18, 2018 Conversation:
  - 2-2-2 membership on unified board – would lose ability to make decisions (change signs, build playgrounds, etc.) on its own; would acquire other schools’ debt
  - Don’t want to give up town meeting and moving to Australian ballot
  - People voted in favor of 2nd merger “out of fear” that Montgomery would be forced to merge and whatever is forced may be worse )
  - This is why they had the petition to vote on remaining a single-town
  - Trying to represent voice of voters – to remain a single-town district within the SU
  - Concern that will lose teachers because have to travel so far from school to school – and that even if have full time, e.g., mental health counselor and there is a crisis on Tues the person may be assigned to a different school

**7. If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**

**a. Why not?**

**b. If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**

- February 18, 2018 Conversation:
  - SU realignment would set them back – moving forward and have learned so much from this process
  - SU – realistic to have Sheldon join and would be relatively seamlessly
  - But full merger of FNWSU and FNESU would be difficult



## **31. The Sheldon School District**

### **Snapshot**

The member districts of the Franklin Northwest SU submitted a single joint proposal under Act 46, Sec. 9 and were jointly represented at the Sec. 10 Conversation.

For information regarding the Sheldon School District and its proposal, see #2 *The Missisquoi Valley Union High School District and its Three Member Elementary Districts (Franklin; Highgate; Swanton)* above.

## 32. The Stamford School District

### Snapshot

SU: Windham Southwest SU

Date of Conversation: April 9, 2018

**Participants:**

Board Members: Cynthia Lamore (Chair); Erika Bailey (Vice Chair)

**Current O/T Structure:** PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning

**Governance Proposal:** Enter into interstate compact agreement with the Clarksburg, MA school district

**Other Resources:**

- [Act 46 Report dated December 2017 submitted by the Board pursuant to Act 46, Sec. 9](#)
- [Southern Valley UUSD § 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Windham Southwest SU: 638.02

Stamford – 98.00

Searsburg – 18.4

Southern Valley UUSD – 151.22 (Halifax 72.22; Readsboro 79.00)

Twin Valley UUSD – 370.40 (Whitingham 164.00; Wilmington 206.40)

**Notes from Conversation:**

- Focus is toward Massachusetts (employment, healthcare, etc)
- Interstate school district with Clarksburg School District
  - Four miles – “easy commute” between schools
  - Both school districts use same oil company and maintenance company
  - Both districts have foreign language in Grades 7 and 8
  - Most 9-12 Stamford students enroll in Clarksburg HS
    - Helpful to have elementary curriculum aligned
    - Helpful to have elementary students begin taking same standardized tests
  - Possibility of K-5 in Stamford building and 6-8 in Clarksburg building
- Clarksburg voters approved pursuing interstate school district study
- 2018 VT Legislative Session: S. 257 statement in support of interstate compact and \$25,000 in Vermont Appropriations bill for study
- Have kept Sen. Sanders’ and Sen. Warren’s offices apprised of progress
- “Collaboration” with other WSW districts “would involve bussing” - 18-20 miles to Twin Valley HS

**If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be? With what other communities are there natural affinities?**

- One SU around Windham SW / Windham Central districts – makes the most sense in general
- Stamford would prefer to be in its own SU with Clarksburg

### 33. The Waits River Valley UUSD (Towns of Corinth and Topsham)

#### Snapshot

SU: Orange East SU

Date of Conversation: March 22, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Joseph Nolin (Chair); Stacy Emerson (Vice-Chair)
- Also in Attendance: Principal Carlotta Perantoni

Current O/T Structure: PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning

#### Governance Proposal:

- Remain as two-town unified union district that operates K-8 and tuitions HS
- Remain in Orange East SU *or* be placed in a different SU

#### Other Notes:

- Oriented to the East and to the South – for tuitioning, employment, recreation, services, etc.
- SBE voted at May 2018 meeting to move Blue Mountain UUSD into Orange East SU

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Orange East SU (with Blue Mountain) – 1,737.5 (1,343.5 without Thetford)

Waits River Valley UUSD (two towns; K-8 o / 9-12 t) – 332.42

Newbury (K-6) – 137

Bradford ID (K-6) – 221

Oxbow Union High (7-12) – 273.83

Blue Mountain UUSD (three towns; K-12 o) – 380.25

Thetford (K-6 o / 7-12 designating) – 394

Other Districts in the Region:

Echo Valley Community SD (K-8 o / 9-12 t) – 265.27 (147.92 Orange + 117.35 Washington)  
(Central VT SU – 1,241.60)

First Branch USD (K-8 o / 9-12 t) – 334.87 (167.17 Chelsea + 167.70 Tunbridge)

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- Community updated at, e.g., Annual Budget meetings in May 2016 and 2017; website postings, WRV “Board members proactively reached out to people in the community to get feedback and opinions, and created a standing agenda item for all WRVS Board Meetings” (pp. 5-6)
- Exploratory conversations with Orange, Washington, Tunbridge, (and Chelsea) (pp. 6-7)

#### School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

##### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Tables of current programs, staffing, etc. (pp. 13-21)
  - “historically and currently, WRVS meets the requirements of the” EQS

##### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Charts of proficiency and disaggregated data (pp. 22-26)

- *“OESU has yet to fully coordinate, implement and support the delivery of a unified approach to curriculum and instruction. Despite that absence of leadership, WRVS has forded ahead in addressing the [EQS] including a comprehensive plan for ensuring that its students meet or exceed state and national performance standards ...”* (p. 28)
  - SBAC 2017; met or exceeded standards: ELA grades 3 and 6; Math grade 3
  - *“overall record of student performance ... remains uneven from grade to grade”* (p. 28)
  - Examining cohorts over three years *“instances of steady progress, but more often the results are uneven”* (p. 28)
  - Disaggregated based on economic status, *“substantive performance gap ... though the only cohort large enough to examine was in grade 6”* (p. 28)
    - *“Clearly more work needs to be done to align the school’s curriculum with state standards and provide consistent instructional approaches across grade levels, as well as the required levels of instructional support ...”* (p. 28)
  - Universal Meals – *“allowing all scholars to eat breakfast and lunch at no cost”* (p. 30)
  - Continuous Improvement Plan (pp. 36-54)
  - Poverty as measured by eligibility for FRL – consistently ~55-58% (FY 2013-2017) (pp. 11-12)
  - Special ed services – fluctuated 19% to 23% (FY 2013-2017) (pp. 11-12)
- 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“WRVS maintains one of the most efficient K-8 operating districts in the state.”* (p. 30)
- Undertaken *“a number of operational initiatives, some in conjunction with OESU,”* (p.30) e.g.:
  - Food Service Company – has *“eliminated the need to supplement the program with local fund”* and any deficit; three other schools use same company
  - Fuel Oil – OESU bids
  - MMS Student Data System – OESU has adopted, which *“has allowed for a bank of information to easily be transferred into OESU level needs, as well as sending HS components”*
  - Restructured Admin Team – single administrator who *“is able to do both roles”*
  - Past 5 years has *“altered/added/improved,”* e.g., freezer, drainage, air handler, etc. (p. 30)
  - To do (p. 31):
    - *“Consolidate its tax anticipation notes with the other districts in OESU to acquire more favorable rates”*
    - *“Consolidate bids for core services ... – plowing, ground maintenance, etc.”*
    - *“Research the application of renewable energy sources”*
- Also - Will explore *“capacity of our current district partners in Orange East to improve the existing operations of our SU by strengthening the cooperation of member districts to develop and implement SU policies and programs ...”* between submission of Sec. 9 proposal and June 2018 (pp. 4, 55)
- *“WRVS is looking to foster in Orange East,”* e.g. (pp. 56-57)
  - Annual SU-wide reviews of student performance, PK-12
  - *“Annual reviews of program offerings and program effectiveness ... as a prelude to the budgeting process to assess the equity of access to quality instruction both in school and after school”*
  - *“Opening up access to after school programs across the schools”*
  - *“Coordinating some SU-wide celebrations of student performance”* etc.
  - *“A more coordinated approach to”*
    - *“Building leadership”*
    - *“Professional recruiting and teacher development”*
    - *Curriculum development”*
    - *“Program assessment”*
    - *“Financial management – scaling core operational needs”*

- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**

- Currently, e.g., parent handbook, website, direct involvement of parents in committees, etc. (p. 32)
  - Wayne Gerson provided overview of Act 46 in presentation to board as “kickoff of its Act 46 study” and “Act 46 has been a full topic of discussion at the last two annual school meetings” (p. 33)
5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Ed spending / equalized pupil (p. 30):
    - “well below state-wide average for similarly structured schools”
    - “has grown at an annual rate of only 1.1% from FY’13 to FY’17”
  - See #3 above
6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- Conversations with:
    - Orange and Washington – formed UUSD without WRV
    - Chelsea and Tunbridge – formed UUSD without WRV
 Neither new UUSD is interested in discussions now – WRV’s “proposal ... is not simply the ‘best means’ for the WRVS to meet the goals of Act 46, it is the only means!” (p. 3; emphasis in original; pp. 6-7)
  - “WRVS finds itself “structurally isolated” (p. 55)
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
- Will explore “assignment of the WRVS to another SU in our region whose member districts share an educational philosophy, instructional goals, and operating structures similar to our own” between submission of Sec. 9 proposal and June 2018 (pp. 4, 55)
  - March 22, 2018 Conversation:
    - Looking for engagement with new districts to help challenge them and move them to the next level
    - Speculates that if becomes member district in Central VT SU, might develop relationship and eventually merge with Echo Valley Community School District (Orange-Washington)
    - Tuition primarily to Oxbow and Thetford Academy

## 34. The Arlington School District

### Snapshot

SU: Battenkill Valley SU

Date of Conversation with Secretary: March 30, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Nicol Whalen (Chair)
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Bill Bazyk; Bob Zink

Current O/T Structure: PK-12 operating

#### Governance Proposal:

- Five-year pilot program to stay as BVSU – and create integrated program engaging community business, arts, and health care entities
- Arlington and Sandgate stay as is, and BVSU remain
- *May 2018 letter – reassignment to Bennington Rutland SU is acceptable, but asks not before 2021*
- North Bennington join BVSU as PK-12 tuitioning district

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Battenkill Valley SU – 374.90

Arlington – 310

Sandgate – 64.90

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

- July 27-28, 2017 – Arlington and Sandgate citizens created a vision and strategic plan for the Arlington SD (p. 8)
  - SWOT analysis
- School Board appointed a strategic planning subgroup to serve as the District’s study committee
  - Considered 3-by-1
  - Evaluated opportunities with BVSU, BRSU, SW VT SU, and SW VT Career Development Center

#### School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview

How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

(pp. 7, 11-14)

- Coalition of “existing teachers and staff, the town government, MACK Molding . . . , THE MILL (a new arts campus focusing on theater, art, film, music, and dance), The Battenkill Valley Health Center, and local leaders in the hospitality, health, technology sectors, as well as the trades” (p. 7)
  - Less than one mile away (p. 11)
- Five-year pilot program developed and implemented by BVSU – two parts:
  - “Our campus . . . will broaden far beyond our school buildings. Our new approach links students with men and women who work in fields of interest, giving each student a tailored, practical learning program geared to his or her interests, abilities, and aspirations.” (p. 7)
  - “practical work experience and a perspective that is grounded in a modern, changing economy” (p. 7)
  - STEAM teaching and learning

- Career Tech Center *“is an excellent resource for the community at large and we should continue dialogue with them in the future to create additional satellite programs in Arlington”* (p. 10)
    - But *“functions essentially as a stand-alone technical school”* and structure doesn’t *“appear to allow for an integrated curriculum”*
  - Propose to *“integrate core curriculum with corresponding practicums/training”* (p. 11)
  - Integrate *“labs”* on-site at MACK Molding, etc.
  - *“hypothetical examples of possible integrated curriculum”* for the collaboration, e.g. (p. 12):
    - Science of Sound – physics taught in collaboration with Grammy Award Winning sound engineer
    - Science of Optics – physics taught in collaboration with an NFL cinematographer and a physician
    - Medical coding – industry credentialed before graduation
  - Concepts for more advanced studies (p. 13)
2. **How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**
- a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
  - b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**
- What *“detailed actions”* will you take to *“continue to improve”* in re: this goal?
- Believes approach will, e.g., (p. 11)
    - *“increase youth retention, because their local future opportunities are apparent”*
    - *“decrease drug use ... through positive mentorship and opportunity”*
    - *“provide clear metrics ... on the success of the Flexible Pathways project”*
3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**  
What *“detailed actions”* will you take to *“continue to improve”* in re: this goal?
4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- Adding North Bennington to BVSU *“eliminates complexity on our neighboring SVSU”* and enables merger there (p. 9)
5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- *“more efficient to maintain the BVSU from a cost savings analysis when compared to the SVSU and BRSU”* (p. 9, including figure 1)
  - *“with the addition of North Bennington ..., there will be cost savings through economies of scale”* (p. 9)
6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
- Battenkill Valley SU created in 1986 – *“by concerned citizens”* in response to *“lack of attention and escalating costs in the SVSU”* (p. 8)
    - Costs decreased and Arlington and Sandgate students *“received increased attention”*
  - Proposes now to expand SU by adding North Bennington
  - See #5 above – believes no cost savings to join SVSU or BRSU; no transportation savings
  - *“The BRSU has no public 9-12 high school and has no experience administering one. Obviously, there would be a steep learning curve there.”* (p. 9)

Timeline (p. 13):

- 2017-2018 academic year –
  - Coalition works to *“identify leadership, coordinate integrated planning, and finalize governance”*
  - 7th-11th grade students *“outline their interests and their pathways”*
- Four subsequent school years – *“develop and provide educational programming”* and *“gather key metrics”*
- Next Steps (p. 14):
  - *“assemble a fresh group of community members to implement the vision outlines here”*
- School board research how to become *“full service”* school by integrating social services



## 35. The Canaan School District

### Snapshot

SU: Essex North SU

**Date of Conversation:** February 13, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Laurent Giroux; Dan Wad
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Karen Conroy

**Current O/T Structure:** PK-12 Operating

**Governance Proposal:**

- No written proposal submitted
- Exploring collaborative opportunities with nearby NH communities

**Other Notes:** NEK Choice District (operational July 1, 2018) is other SU member

**Other Resources:**

- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Essex North SU – 384.15

Canaan – 118

NEK Choice UUSD – 266.15

**February 13, 2018 Conversation:**

- Canaan:
  - HS teachers teaching junior high
  - does not have a program geared specifically to middle school
- Colebrook, NH:
  - high school building not good
  - have new elementary/middle school
- Canaan, Colebrook, and Pittsburg (NH) High Schools currently swap students
- Almost all current 8th grade students in Stewartstown (NH) School District, which tuitions its HS students, will be coming to Canaan
- Exploring Creating Interstate District with Colebrook NH:
  - Canaan initiated conversations several years ago – 18 months of study / discussions – report issued – Colebrook not interested
  - Colebrook initiated current conversations
  - Pittsburg School District not interested in interstate district at this time
- Community forum – 150 people from region – roundtable discussions about priorities – included students and educators as well
- Under consideration:
  - Canaan middle school students move to Colebrook campus
  - Colebrook's High School students move to Canaan
- Expect there will be some pushback from both communities – but not from the students
- Plan to talk with people involved in Rivendell Interstate District to understand complexities
- Won't need congressional approval due to Dresden's initial work and Rivendell's expansion of the law (PK-12 with campuses on both sides of river)

## 36. The Coventry School District

### Snapshot

The member districts of the North Country SU submitted a single joint proposal under Act 46, Sec. 9 and were jointly represented at the Sec. 10 Conversation.

For information regarding the Coventry School District and its proposal, see #15 *North Country Union High School District and its Member Districts (Brighton; Charleston; Derby; Holland; Jay; Lowell; Morgan; Newport City; Newport Town; Troy; Westfield)* above.

## 37. The Sharon School District

### Snapshot

SU: White River Valley SU

Date of Conversation: March 20, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Don Shaw (Chair); Steve Gagliardone; Karen Henderson
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Bruce Labs; Principal Barrett Williams; Nicole Antal

Current O/T Structure: single-town school district; PK-6 operating / 7-12 tuitioning

#### Governance Proposal:

Remain a single town school district with same o/t structure in the WRV SU

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

White River Valley SU – 1,494

Sharon – 234.

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

Proposal (pp. 6-7):

- Creation of WRVSU 2014-2015 – chair of Sharon School board, Don Shaw, was chair of the joint committee creating the SU and the Transition Board (18 months)
- Leadership and Governance Committee (Chair: Shaw) – “number of warned meetings between November, 2015 and February 2016 and fully explored a wide range of approaches to meeting the requirements of Act 46” (see also 03.17.2017 SBE agenda for proposal)
- PK-6/8 Study Committee (Sharon, Stockbridge, Strafford, Tunbridge) – 2016-2017
- Exploration with other districts/SUs – 2015-2017:

#### School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

##### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

(p. 12)

- *“Sharon Elementary School is anxious to collaborate”*
  - *“to bring world languages into the curriculum”*
  - *“to be able to combine part-time positions with others in the SU to be able to hire teachers as full-time employees”*
- *“Sharon will continue to work with the WRVSU and its member districts to expand student opportunity and reduce disparity”*

##### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Current:
  - Consistent leadership – one principal for 10 years, 2 teachers retired (p. 4)
  - PreK: serves “40 children from Sharon and the broader region” – 14.5 hours/week “and can include aftercare” (p. 10)
  - Elementary:

- Lists “specials” on p. 11
  - *“particularly proud of its food education and health and wellness programs”*
  - Secondary: tuitions 7-12; no interest in changing
  - *“Students, regardless of socio-economic status are able to attend excellent public schools and a very strong private independent school. The Royalton Schools and Hartford High School both provide a bus to facilitate access. The Sharon Academy is located in the center of Sharon and is easily accessible to all.”*
  - Poverty as measured by eligibility for FRL:
    - *“Socio-economically, Sharon, on the whole, [is] somewhat more affluent than the average Vermont community. School children, however, tend to be slightly less affluent than the average.”* (p. 3)
    - FRL 50% -- State average 44%
  - Special needs (p. 12):
    - Services are delivered through the SU
    - Number of students identified *“is slightly higher than the statewide average – 17.48% to 15.9%, the amount spent ... per capita in the SU is less than the statewide average -- \$3,418.07 to \$3,562.58.”* (p. 12)
  - **Assessments:**

*“Sharon is a small school with small cohorts being tested on standardized tests. Nonetheless, data available through the AOE shows that in four of seven testing areas, Sharon scores exceeded the state average, in some instances dramatically. In two areas Sharon scored the same as the state average, and in one grouping, the average statewide average exceeded that of Sharon students. Overall, one can conclude that Sharon performs reasonably well compared with other districts in the state.”* (p. 11)
- 3. How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**  
**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- See “Ratios” table on page 1
  - *“higher than average student-teacher ratios”* (pp. 13, 15)
  - Currently (p. 14):
    - Consolidated all statutorily required functions at SU level
    - Districts in SU *“consider themselves to be collectively responsible”* for their students as evidenced by, e.g., engaging in year-long strategic planning presented to the SBE at its February 17, 2017 meeting.
- 4. How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- SU is *“altering its structure and representation”* in response to creation of four new unified districts (p. 14)
- 5. How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- *“has maintained per-pupil spending at approximately the statewide average, without the benefit of any phantom students. In the past three years, it has not had the benefit of a small schools grant”* (p. 13)
  - *“Sharon will continue to work with the WRVSU and its member districts to find ways to collaborate and achieve greater efficiencies.”*
  - *“Sharon currently shares custodial services with Strafford.”*
  - It aspires to collaborate with others in the WRVSU to jointly hire teachers for various specials and for foreign languages.
  - Table with numbers of students enrolled in specific schools FY13-FY17 (p. 5)
  - (pp. 13, 15)
    - *“financial indicators are stable”*
    - *“average expenditures per equalized pupil”*
- 6. If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**

- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
- b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- PK-6/8 Study Committee (Sharon, Stockbridge, Strafford, Tunbridge) – 2016-2017 –  
*[which resulted in Chelsea-Tunbridge merger into First Branch USD, PK-8/9-12]*
- Doesn’t want to change o/t structure – *“Sharon is geographically isolated from any possible partners”*  
 (pp. 7-10) – e.g.,
  - Rochester-Stockbridge USD –
    - those two communities are *“isolated in the upper White River Valley”* and are *“close enough and similar enough to share leadership and programming”*
    - *“Sharon is geographically separated from this new district. Its primary commercial and social links are with the Upper Valley and Royalton.”*
    - Sharon Elementary 19 miles from Stockbridge school *“with a mountain in between”*
    - *“There are places in Rochester that are 35 miles from Sharon.”*
  - Mentions others, including Rivendell and Norwich, all with different o/t structures
  - Also mentions Barnard and Pomfret – which are members of MUUSD for 7-12 and so unavailable / not same structure
- 7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
  - a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
  - *“engaged in work, professional services, and commerce in the Upper Valley area (Hartford, Hanover, Lebanon) and to a lesser degree Royalton, Bethel, and Randolph”* (p. 3)
  - Exploration with other districts/SUs – 2015-2017 (p. 7):
    - New SU with Sharon, Strafford, Thetford, and Norwich
    - New SU with Sharon, Strafford, and Thetford – modeled costs = 2-3x more

## 38. The South Hero School District

### Snapshot

SU: Grand Isle SU

**Date of Conversation:** February 16, 2018

**Participants:**

- Board Members: Melanie Henderson; Timothy Maxham
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Don Van Nostrand

**Current O/T Structure:** PK-8 operating / 9-12 tuitioning

**Governance Proposal:**

No change – single-town school district in the GISU

**Other Notes:**

- Alburgh = same o/t structure; cannot be required to merge per 3-by-1 approval
- Champlain Islands USD = different o/t structure (K-6 o / 7-12 t)
- Georgia (Franklin West SU) = same o/t structure

**Other Resources:**

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- [§ 706 Study Committee Report and Proposed Articles of Agreement](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Grand Isle SU – 856.67

South Hero – 201.26

Champlain Islands USD – 384.16

Alburgh – 271.25

**Process by Which Reached Conclusion:**

- *“two and a half years of rigorous self-study evaluating [its] ability to meet and/or exceed”* the Act 46 Goals (p. 3)
- Including participation in GISU study committee (p.9)
- Non-binding referendum – with public information sessions preceding it (p. 9)
- Binding vote on merger proposal – with public information sessions preceding it (p. 9)
- Exploratory conversations with Alburgh and Georgia (p. 9)

**School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:**

**1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?**

**a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**

**b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

- *“able to maintain current, outstanding programming (including foreign language instruction”* without the risk of programs being cut due to fiscal concerns in neighboring towns (p. 11)
- NHES Health instruction not currently available – school board *“plans to accelerate the accreditation of the Folsom Physical Education teacher”* (p. 13)
- Currently - PLPs for 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders (pp. 13-14)
  - 7<sup>th</sup> graders *“integrat[e] new technology tools and transferrable skills”* into two content area goals (literacy and math) in the Fall, into two new goals (academic and personal) in the winter, and three new goals (literacy, math, and personal) in the Spring (p. 14)
  - 8<sup>th</sup> graders select a single interdisciplinary goal
- Currently available classes and extracurricular offerings – see pages 12-17
- February 16, 2018 Conversation:
  - Compared offerings to other GISU districts – South Hero has more options

- Compared offerings to larger off island communities
    - South Hero has fewer options – but well supported
      - Has only two sports but encourages all kids to participate
      - Activities bus and contact parents if bus isn't available – so no student is left out because of transportation
2. **How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?**
- a. **In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)**
  - b. **In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- K-8 system is “good for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders” and for the “K-6<sup>th</sup> graders” (details pp.10-11)
  - *“meets the EQS through our strong support of core academics, world language, physical education, art, music and theater education, guidance, and technology integration”* (p. 18)
  - Assessments :
    - Some results not reported because class sizes are too small - FERPA (p. 18)
    - Hard to see trends because of missing data
    - 2012-2016 (not all years) 30 of 37 tests > State Average
    - Results for middle grades and elementary grades similar to each other
    - see graphs on pages 19-23
  - *“demographics have changed in recent years, with a generally increasing percentage of children who qualify for”* FRL (p. 24)
  - Hard to assess achievement gap because of FERPA issues (p. 24)
  - Poverty as measured by eligibility for FRL: ~30% and relatively stable (p. 6)
  - Special needs: 14% and increasing (p. 6)
  - 02.16.2018 Conversation:
    - Seeing higher rates of need, will give more help/training to teachers
    - Can't fill SpEd positions – have 2 on provisional licenses
    - Turnover is a problem as well
    - Geography/salary/benefits
3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**
- What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**
- *“will be able to continue to share resources with our neighboring towns in the GISU”* (p. 11)
  - **Ratios:** Above state averages and growing – e.g., 11.67-to-1 teacher-student (p. 6)
4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
- *“Decisions ... will be made by the South Hero voters”* and decisions re Folsom won't be *“controlled by the large district’s voters”* (p. 11).
5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
- K-8 system is *“good for the South Hero taxpayers”* (p. 11)
    - Spent more money on tuition for 9-12 than on operating K-8
    - Merger with into Champlain Island UUSD would mean more tuitioning, over which the district has no control
  - *“able to analyze our budget, compare ourselves to similar districts, and engage voters in financial conversations more easily as an independent partner district”* (p. 11)
  - Birth rate increasing but is down; affordable housing being built (pp. 6-8)
6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
- a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
- Exploratory conversations with Alburgh and Georgia (p. 9)

- Alburgh concerned about tax rate increase following merger
  - Georgia values current partnerships and wants to stay as is
7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
- a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
- February 16, 2018 Conversation:
    - Colchester
    - Georgia



## 39. The Strafford School District

### Snapshot

SU: White River Valley SU

Date of Conversation with Secretary: March 19, 2018

#### Participants:

- Board Members: Erik Goodling; Hilary Linehan
- Also in Attendance: Superintendent Bruce Labs; Principal Greg Bagnato

#### Current O/T Structure:

- K-8 operating
- 9-12 designation to Thetford Academy
  - with exception for tuition payment to other schools (16 VSA § 827(e))

#### Governance Proposal:

- Retain current structure as single-town district
- Remain in WRV SU

#### Other Resources:

- [Sec. 9 Proposal](#)
- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

#### FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:

White River Valley SU – 1,494

Strafford – 234

#### Process by Which Reached Conclusion:

(pp. 2, 10-16):

- Worked with “townspeople to determine the educational and governmental goals of the town”
- District is “with and within the WRV SU” in re: “initial formation and internal realignment”
- § 706 study committee with Sharon, Stockbridge, and Tunbridge
- Talked with “several towns” in and outside SU “in an attempt to determine creative, new alignments”

#### School Board’s Written Analysis and Conversation – Overview:

##### 1. How does the proposal support the ability to “provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

##### What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Academic Enrichment, Encore Enrichment, Community Building, After School, and Athletic Programs (examples listed pp. 7-8)
- Also currently:
  - SU-wide contract with Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (p. 9)
  - SU’s Restorative Classroom program developed by SpEd leadership (p. 9; Appendix 3)

##### 2. How does the proposal support your ability to “lead students to achieve or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards” in a “sustainable” manner?

- a. In re: students within the district(s) (e.g., chronically underserved versus not cu?)
- b. In re: district’s students versus other districts in the region / State?

##### What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?

- Assessment data (pp. 5-6):
  - SBAC/NECAP – higher percent proficient or above than State % all grades 2014-17 (some suppressed)
  - Star 360, grades 3-8 –
    - Reading – 71% in 50<sup>th</sup> percentile and higher nationally; 73% at or above grade level
    - Math – 84% in 50<sup>th</sup> percentile and higher nationally; 90% at or above grade level

- Poverty: “socioeconomically stronger than the Vermont average” but with “almost 50% of its students” eligible for FRL (p. 3)
- Special needs (p. 8):
  - Number of students identified is “slightly higher than statewide average” – 17.48% v 15.91%
  - Spending per capita in the SU is less than statewide average -- \$3,418.07 v \$3,562.58

BUT:

*District “has historically spent more per pupil than the state average. However, the rate of increase, while trending with the state average, is often driven by changes in the size of tuition classes rather than spending” at the elementary school (p. 9; including graph)*
- 3. **How does the proposal support your ability to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff?”**

**What “detailed actions” will you take to “continue to improve” in re: this goal?**

  - SU has centralized SpEd, “transportation, grant acquisition, and financial services” (p. 9)
  - Ratios: “has been increasing its student to teacher ratio which has been higher than the state average for the past several years” (pp. 9-10, including graph)
- 4. **How does the proposal support your ability to “promote transparency and accountability” in a “sustained” manner?**
  - Consolidation of other districts / fewer in SU “will reduce the number of meetings, budgets, and points of contact” for Central Office, which “will provide increased access, transparency, and accountability for the residents of all member towns” (p. 8)
- 5. **How does the proposal support your ability to “deliver [education] at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value” in a “sustained” manner?**
  - See graph FY11-17 spending per equalized pupil (p. 9)
  - Decreasing spending and increasing student to teacher ratio
  - Tuitioning:
    - Designates Thetford Academy per 16 VSA § 827
    - Also pays tuition to Sharon Academy and Hanover High per exception in § 827(e)
  - ADM / Enrollment / EP (p. 3, including chart):
    - “slight growth trend over the past five years”
      - Equalized Pupil – 167.2 to 178.93 (+7%)
      - ADM 169.75 to 176.60 (+4%)
      - (Enrollment at K-8 school = 120 for 2016-2017 (p. 4))
- 6. **If there is another nearby district with the same o/t structure – then**
  - a. **Why is merger not “possible”?**
  - b. **Why is merger not “practicable”?**
  - N/A – does not want to change current structure
- 7. **If not proposing SU enlargement/merger – then**
  - a. **Why not?**
  - b. **If SBE redraws SU boundaries per 16 VSA § 261, where should boundaries be?**
  - Not addressed – WRV SU created recently

## 40. The Thetford School District

### Snapshot

SU: Orange East SU

**Date of Conversation:** March 14, 2018

**Participants:**

Board Members: Shannon Darrah (Chair); Julie Acker; Charlie Buttrey; Kristin Downey;  
Also in Attendance: Interim Superintendent Sandra Stanley

**Current O/T Structure:**

- PK-6 operating, designates Thetford Academy for 7-12

**Governance Proposal:**

- Retain the same governance structure
- Unclear about SU – sees pros and cons to WRVSU and OESU

**Other Resources:**

- AOE data regarding enrollment and ADM for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G
- AOE financial data for FY 2014 – FY 2018, Appendix G

**FY 2018 ADM for Kindergarten through Grade 12:**

Orange East SU – 1,357

Thetford – 394

White River Valley SU – 1,494

**March 14, 2018 Conversation:**

- Happy with operating elementary and with designating Thetford Academy
- No-one with same structure so merger isn't on the table
- SU assignment is the issue
- Isolated between two interstate districts
- Can see benefits and down-sides to both White River Valley SU and some configuration of Orange East SU
- WRVSU:
  - Players are people we are similar to, talk to, people would be good to be in a district with, would work well with
  - Share music teacher with Strafford
  - Bigger SU – economies of scale
- OESU:
  - Working with them for years and established relationships, professional development together
  - Know it needs to be bigger and so that's an unknown
  - Are in technical compliance with Act 153 (16 V.S.A. 261a) regarding SU services – but not leveraging the benefits that would have if truly worked together
  - Talk with OESU districts about Spanish teacher – but no sharing yet
  - Opportunities not pursued re programs for low incidence/high need SpEd
- Thetford:
  - Multi-age classrooms to equalize ratios / fluctuations some large (20ish)/ some small (13ish) – also brought on by trying to do some RIFs and restructure/reduce paras – going to deliver SpEd differently next year so SpEd teacher in  $\frac{3}{4}$  rather than paras
  - Cuts not as drastic as some in past years
  - Reduced Spanish and library – talked about cutting Spanish and nurse
  - Hard conversations
  - Would welcome guidance/expertise

## 41. The Vernon School District

### Snapshot

The Dummerston and Vernon School Districts submitted a single joint proposal under Act 46, Sec. 9 and were jointly represented at the Sec. 10 Conversation.

For information regarding the Vernon School District and its proposal, see the Dummerston and Vernon Subheading at #1 *The Brattleboro Union High School District and its Four Member Elementary Districts (Brattleboro; Dummerston; Guilford; Putney)* above.

## 42. The Windsor / West Windsor UUSD

### Snapshot

The Windsor / West Windsor UUSD, created after enactment of Act 46 and to be fully operational on July 1, 2019, did not meet eligibility requirements for any of the Legislature's voluntary merger programs. As a result, it is not automatically exempt from State Board-required merger under the final statewide plan. Windsor / West Windsor did not submit a Section 9 Proposal separate from its merger report (which served the dual function of a Sec. 9 Proposal for all of the SU's districts) or participate in a conversation, and the Agency did not prepare a Snapshot for the new UUSD. Instead, for more information, please see the Windsor / West Windsor Study Committee's Merger Report and proposed Articles of Agreement as approved by the State Board and the voters, which can be accessed through the [School Governance / Merger Activity webpage](#).

### **43. The Wolcott School District**

#### **Snapshot**

The member districts of the Orleans Southwest SU submitted a single joint proposal under Act 46, Sec. 9 and were jointly represented at the Sec. 10 Conversation.

For information regarding the Wolcott School District and its proposal, see #12 *The Hazen Union High School District AND the Lakeview Union Elementary School District and All Member Districts (Greensboro; Hardwick; Stannard; Woodbury)* above.