

My name is Sarah Root. I was a primary level teacher for 14 years in VT and NH, a UniServ Director for NEA-NH for 6 years and an Organization Specialist for the National Education Association for 11 years. I am now the Vice Chair of the White River Valley Supervisory Board and Chair of the Strafford School board. I live in Strafford VT where I grew up.

The WRVSU is a district made up of 10 towns and 6 districts along with a Supervisory Union Board. We have 6 elementary schools, 3 middle schools and one high school. Many of our towns are choice towns for HS and we send our students predominantly to The Thetford Academy White River Valley HS, the Sharon Academy, Hartford High School and Hanover High School. We have recently gone through several mergers, we merged Orange Windsor SU with Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union. Along with the SU merger several of our towns merged together in districts. We have just completed votes over the past 15 months to keep two of our districts merged and believe we are set to move forward. Throughout all this change the SU board and the district boards have worked diligently to come together, to work together to coordinate policies and procedures, calendars, staff, curriculum and many other things. We have just negotiated a 3 year contract with our professional staff and will enter into negotiations with our paraprofessional staff this fall. Bringing all these separate contracts together took many tries and was a long and difficult yet rewarding process. We now are at a place where we feel our relationships with our unions are productive and work for quality education of our students.

We have been able to hire a Superintendent who is dedicated to this district. He in fact comes out of this district under his leadership. We have hired high quality administrative staff for our schools and because of this leadership we have few vacancies. We believe it is because people want to be part of our SU. The work and learning environment are such that people want to be part of it.

Our SU staff is outstanding and they work long hours, attend an unknown number of meetings during the day and night. Our financial office has taken us out of the red and we are now on good financial footing.

When as a SU board we were told that there is a possibility that the State board would merge Lincoln VT with us our hearts and our heads dropped in disbelief. We fear that all the hard work we all have done will need to be restarted, we fear that the top notch administrative team we've put together will be stretched too thin and we worry that the high expectations we have of them will be unattainable. We fear that this merger will cause us to have to hire more SU employees and that our towns will have to bear the cost of that and the explanation we will have to give is that we now have Lincoln Vt in our SU. Lincoln, while I'm sure is a wonderful town, is not one that people in the Upper Valley identify with. We have no connection with it.

Lincoln borders Granville, the non operative Granville/Hancock district in our SU. Employees from Lincoln would have to drive a minimum of an hour and 10 minutes to reach the SU to bring in employment papers, documentation etc. the distances between our schools is not conducive to sharing, mentoring and team building which is a huge part of our working in the WRVSU. As a SU board we can not think of one benefit this brings to us. We see higher taxes, harder negotiations as we try to bring in a district that more closely aligns with Addison and Chittenden

counties not Orange and Windsor. Hurdles around professional development, transportation, special Ed to name a few.

It is our understanding that the town of Lincoln voted to leave their Supervisory District because there was fear of their K-6 school closing. All the district boards in our SU understand this. It is also our understanding that under the merger agreement with Mount Abraham and Addison NW that school closure would have to be affirmatively voted on by the town and therefore would resolve that issue. It makes sense to put them into this proposed merger or let them stand alone as a district. We do not see any good reason to put them in WRVSU.

Thank you for your time and consideration.