

January 19, 2016

Strategic Goals: (1) Ensure that Vermont's public education system operates within the framework of high expectations for every learner and ensure that there is equity in opportunity for all.
(2) Ensure that the public education system is stable, efficient, and responsive to changes and ever-changing population needs, economic and 21st century issues.

MINUTES

Present

State Board of Education (SBE): Stephan Morse, Chair; Sean-Marie Oller, Vice Chair; Peter Peltz; William Mathis; Mark Perrin; Stacy Weinberger; Krista Huling; Dylan McAllister, Student Member; Rainbow Chen, Student member non-voting.

Agency of Education (AOE): Rebecca Holcombe, Greg Glennon, Donna Russo Savage, Heather Bouchey, Jay Ramsey, Jessica Stein, Rebecca Plude.

Others: John Alberghini, Superintendent MMSU; Julie Longchamp, Vermont NEA; Ken Page, VPA; Bill Kimball, Superintendent of Washington Central SU; Rama Schneider; Joanne Canning, Superintendent, Addison Northwest; Chris Cahart Chairman of study committee; Chris Leopold, consultant study committee; Steve Dale, consultant to Act 46 implementation group; Tom Lovett, Headmaster of St. Johnsbury Academy and Mark Tashjian, Headmaster, Burr & Burton Academy; Ron Ryan, Superintendent, Addison Rutland, Laura Kavoski, Director of finance ARSU; Alison Eastman, Chair of Act 46 study committee; Edie Bailey, Superintendent Lamoille North; Marilyn Fredericks, Business Manager; Steve Sanborn, Consultant; Pierre LaFlamme, Co-Chair Act 46 committee, Peter Engvalstead, Co-Chair Act 46 committee; Pietro Lynn, Legal Counsel; Kevin Dirth, Superintendent Franklin Central, James Farr, Act 46 committee chair; Mike Deweese, consultant to Act 46 committee.

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call

Chair Morse called the meeting to order at 9:37 AM. He reminded those in attendance to sign the attendance sheet and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. The members of the SBE introduced themselves.

Item B: Public to be heard

Bill Kimball, Superintendent of Washington Central SU, introduced himself and welcomed the Board to U-32.

Rama Schneider spoke to the Board and requested prompt postings of the video recordings of meetings as the work of the Board is extremely relevant and important. He also addresses the school quality issues in relation to school staff being asked increasingly to perform non-teaching

duties. He asked that quality of staff be viewed from the angle of how well a school is doing regarding outcomes, and less attention paid to length of service and licensing as these detract from the school outcomes.

Ken Page, Executive Director of the VPA reminded all in attendance of an opportunity on January 28th to experience a presentation by Dr. Paul Mana a professor from the College of William and Mary. He will be speaking to his recent Wallace Foundation report titled "Developing Excellent School Principals to Advance Teaching and Learning Considerations for State Policy."

Item C: Consent Agenda

Motion: Oller moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Johnson-Aten.

Dylan McAllister corrected the spelling of his name in Item C2.

Oller made the following corrections: Vaughn Altemus' name is listed twice as present; general 'fun' should be 'fund', page 3 stakeholders will be replaced with journalists. She asked that the minutes reflect a summary of the discussion conducted prior to the votes taking place after the Act 46 presentations. This will maintain the record accurately.

Vote: The motion passed.

Specifically, the items approved were:

C1. Minutes of the December 11, 2015, SBE Meeting

C3. Independent School Renewals/Approvals

- a. Renewal of Kindergarten Approval: Green Mountain Montessori, Essex Jct.; Kindergarten
- b. Renewal of General Independent School Approval: St. Francis Xavier School, Winooski; Grades K-8
- c. Acknowledgement of an Approved School's Name: Vermont School for Girls, Bennington; Ages 8-18
- d. Initial Tutorial Approval: Helping Others Pursue Empowerment (H.O.P.E.) Program, Vergennes; females ages 13-17

Motion: Mathis moved to remove Item C2 from the consent agenda for further discussion. Johnson-Aten seconded.

Vote: The motion passed.

Motion: Mathis moved to approve Item C2. Oller seconded.

Mathis stated his concern regarding school demographics for the Huntington Town School District. Have they addressed the issue that the consolidation will not cause socio economic disparities?

John Alberghini, Superintendent of Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District and the Chittenden East Supervisory Union, spoke to the Board about the issue raised. School choice guidelines are being finalized, geographic zones are being formed that include transportation so students will not be influenced in a negative way.

Mathis asked if demographics, balance and distribution will be addressed in relation to school choice via Act 46 proposals, as the proposals are brought before the Board.

Holcombe clarified the question regarding intra-district public school choice. As this option is made available, Mathis is asking if districts will have considered how students will exercise school choice in regards to equity and proportionality, so that schools do not deviate from the districts socio economic distribution. The AOE will review how the districts will manage this.

Russo-Savage stated that all reports submitted to date mention that the new Board will develop a policy specifically addressing this. She will have conversations with districts so they understand that as they develop these programs they need to address the issue of socio economic access.

Vote: The motion passed.

Updates

Item D: Board Members Announcements and Student Representatives Emails

Peltz is a Board member for Up for Learning, he distributed a newsletter to the Board. The group is designing a new website which will be public shortly.

McAllister added that he is spear heading an Instagram campaign to encourage a positive culture for schools in Vermont. They are using the hashtag #Idreamofaschool.

Item E: Chair's Report

None.

Item F: Secretary's Report

Secretary Holcombe stated that Peter Burrows, Superintendent Addison Central Supervisory Union, submitted a correction to their report submitted and approved December 11, 2015 (Item J2). On page three within the narrative of the charter committees final report, the teacher's master contract expires in 2017 not 2016 as previously stated.

Holcombe presented to the Board updates on the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Comparisons were made as to how these new initiatives intersect with the Education Quality Reviews (EQR) process that is currently occurring. Currently three field visits have been conducted, and they are beginning five additional visits. The teams have found that one day is sufficient, overwhelmingly the response has been positive. Participants have noted that they have been validated to hear that the visiting team is able to identify the same

strengths and areas of growth in their systems- there have been few surprises; but several mentioned they hadn't yet raised them publically.

Since the passing of ESSA, the AOE has developed a timeline for drafting, a State Plan by October 2016. The plan will be distributed for public comment in December 2016 and formally submitted to the United States Education Department by January 2017 for approval.

Holcombe requested a liaison from the Board to serve on a stakeholder group which will provide input on the State Plan, the group will meet every 6-8 weeks. The group currently has liaisons from the VSA, VSBA, and NEA. Board members will indicate their interest in serving via email to Chair Morse.

Item: G – Committee Reports

Mathis distributed a revised draft Legislative agenda to Board members.

Huling added that Vermont's greatest educational problem is the opportunity/achievement gap. However, two-thirds of test score variation is due to outside the school factors. Thus, to be effective we must address the root causes of poverty and inequality.

Motion: Peltz moved to refer this memo to the Legislative Committee of the Board. The motion was seconded by Perrin.

Vote: The motion passed (5-3).

Item: H - Licensing Hearing Decision Greg Glennon

Motion: Peltz moved that the Board make a specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the Board's deliberations, while deliberating in a quasi-judicial role, will clearly place the Board and other parties at a substantial disadvantage. The Board needs to discuss matters with counsel that could implicate student identifiable information which is not permitted under federal law. Furthermore while engaged in quasi-judicial deliberations, the Board is reasonably entitled to maintain confidentiality of its deliberations under statute. Lastly, the Board is considering a final decision in a contested hearing under the educator licensing statutes. This is a case of first impression for the Board under these laws and confidential legal services are necessary as a result. In consideration of these factors, I move the Board enter into executive session to consider confidential attorney client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the State Board of Education (10:02 a.m.). The Board invited Glennon and Holcombe to remain with the Board for their discussion. The motion was seconded by Perrin.

Vote: The motion passed.

Motion: Peltz moved to exit executive session at 10:00 a.m.

Motion: Peltz moved that the State Board of Education vote to affirm Licensing Case number 2016-01. Johnson-Aten seconded.

Vote: The motion passed.

Item: I - Career and Technical Education Heather Bouchey & Jay Ramsey

Heather Bouchey and Jay Ramsey presented to the Board regarding Career and Technical Education in Vermont.

Holcome added that the AOE will ensure that they take a coordinated strategic response to the CTE redistribution, after the K-12 educational structure has settled in response to Act 46.

Huling asked if there are any statistics regarding the types of programs accessed by gender. Ramsey responded that this information is collected specifically for the Perkins grant.

Item J: Act 46 Update - Approval of Act 46 Study Committee Reports

Addison Northwest Supervisory Union – Joanne Canning, Superintendent; Chris Cahart Chairman of study committee; Chris Leopold, consultant study committee; Steve Dale, consultant to Act 46 implementation group.

The ANWSU Study Committee recommends creation of a unified union school district that will be its own supervisory district pursuant to the Accelerated Merger process and timeline created by Act 46, Sec. 6 (2015).

The ANWSU consists of the Towns of Addison, Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Waltham and the City of Vergennes. There are four active school districts within the SU, each governed by its own board. Each of these districts operates one school, two of which are union schools. The combined average daily membership of all districts within the ANWSU in FY2015 was 1,018.

The new unified union school district (New Unified District), to be known as the Addison Northwest School District, would provide for the education of all resident PK-12 students by operating one or more schools for each grade. If approved, the proposal would unify all existing school districts and their supervisory union into a single supervisory district responsible for operating three elementary schools and one secondary school. It would replace the five current governing bodies with one unified union board. All districts within the supervisory union are identified as “necessary” districts pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(1).

McAllister asked about the makeup of the Boards. McAllister responded that there would be the possibility for students to enroll in elementary schools not located in the town of their residence and potentially for the creation of what the proposal calls “theme” schools.

Oller asked about the substitute teacher contracts, will an SU wide contract be created? Canning responded that they are considering this in terms of efficiency. Currently there is a union wide teacher and support staff contracts in place.

Morse asked if the committee reviewed additional options in their area in order to increase the student population. Canning responded that they project a decline in enrollment, so unification will help them manage this decline over time. This will also assist the district in pursuing opportunities to extend their resources in the future to surrounding areas.

Mathis asked what the public relations campaign will be when this vote comes before the voters. Canning responded that they have an aggressive approach in place, consisting of a 'boots on the ground' approach.

Perrin stated that this community has previously pursued mergers twice before and been unsuccessful.

Motion: Oller moved that the State Board of Education accept the accelerated process of Act 46 proposal of Addison Northwest Supervisory Union. The motion was seconded by Huling.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was recessed until 1:00 p.m. for lunch.

Tom Lovett, Headmaster of St. Johnsbury Academy and Mark Tashjian, Headmaster, Burr & Burton Academy Presentation

Tom and Mark provided an overview of the Academies that they serve and the opportunities that the Academies provide for their students.

Independent Schools are mission driven. Independent Governance allows for: flexibility, stability, and community, as well as follow through on long range planning. They are creative and entrepreneurial.

Independent Schools working with public schools for what's best for Vermont.

Oller asked about their population of special needs students. Taskjian responded that there are approximately 100 students total with 45 in the most intensive level.

Oller asked how the free and reduced lunch program works since they have stepped out of the federal program. Burr & Burton still provides free and reduced lunch options. How do you determine poverty? Tashjian responded that they use the same statistics as the federal program.

Mathis asked about each schools entrance requirements. Lovett responded that all students welcome except if have felony. Tashjian responded that there is a myth of elitism in Vermont, however they do want a healthy enrollment. The School is founded on mission/purpose- who fits.

Peltz asked about transparency, sending districts have no governance or budgetary oversight of Independent Schools. Would it be healthy to create public access to how public money is spent? Tashjian responded that they are very transparent in the academic experience they are providing. Lovett responded that he gave a presentation on what goes into their tuition payments. Tuition is affected by the economy and not school spending.

Perrin asked if these schools need to have licensed teachers. Lovett and Tashjian both responded no. What is the percentage of licensed teachers? Lovett responded that all SPED teachers are licensed.

Mathis asked is their IRS documentation is a public document? Both responded that yes this is a public document.

Addison Rutland Supervisory Union – Ron Ryan, Superintendent of schools, Laura Kavoski, Director of finance ARSU; Alison Eastman, Chair of Act 46 study committee.

The ARSU Study Committee recommends creation of a unified union school district that will be its own supervisory district pursuant to the Accelerated Merger process and timeline created by Act 46, Sec. 6 (2015).

The ARSU consists of six towns/villages: Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, Hubbardton, Orwell, and West Haven. There are seven active school districts within the ARSU, including two union school districts, and six publicly-operated schools. (There is also one inactive district, Castleton, that is a member of both union school districts.) Together with the supervisory union board, there are a total of eight governing boards.

Ryan presented the committee's findings to the Board. The new unified union school district (New Unified District), to be known as the Slate Valley Unified Union School District, would provide for the education of all resident PK-12 students by operating one or more schools for each grade. If approved, the proposal would unify the existing school districts and their supervisory union into a single supervisory district responsible for operating three elementary-middle schools, one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. It would replace the eight current governing bodies (7 districts plus SU) with one unified union board. All districts within the supervisory union are identified as "necessary" districts pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(1), including the inactive Castleton School District.

Oller stated that the small schools grant for both schools is currently 200K. What is the plan to speak to the small schools? Eastman responded that they have been up front with the schools that savings will only be reached if the school is closed in the future. However, collaboration and resources are increased by the consolidation as well, especially in regards to opportunities for students. Orwell residents realize that small schools grants will not alone, keep the school running.

Peltz asked how Hubbardton reacted to the proposal, and the movement amongst elementary schools – was this approved. Ryan responded that Hubbardton is a choice town grades 9-12,

where a majority of their students attend Fair Haven Union High School, they felt comfortable moving ahead.

Perrin asked about the 'inactive' school Castleton, are they inactive because they are a member of two union school districts, and Hubbardton is not because they have choice 9-12? Eastman responded yes that's correct.

Motion: Peltz moved that the State Board of Education finds that the proposed formation of a new unified union school district by the member districts of the Addison Rutland Supervisory Union is "in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts" pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b); and that the State Board votes to approve the attached report of the ARSU Study Committee. The motion was seconded by Krista.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Lamoille North Supervisory Union – Edie Bailey, Superintendent; Marilyn Fredericks, Business Manager; Steve Sanborn, Consultant; Pierre LaFlamme, Co-Chair Act 46 committee, Peter Engvalstead, Co-Chair Act 46 committee; Pietro Lynn, Legal Counsel.

The LNSU Study Committee recommends creation of a unified union school district that will be its own supervisory district pursuant to the Accelerated Merger process and timeline created by Act 46, Sec. 6 (2015). Alternatively, it recommends creation of a modified unified union school district pursuant to the criteria, processes, and timeline created by Act 153 (2010) and Act 156, Sec. 17 (2012), as amended by Act 56, Sec. 3 (2013) and Act 46 (2015).

The LNSU consists of the Towns of Belvidere, Cambridge, Eden, Hyde Park, Johnson, and Waterville. There are seven school districts within the SU, each of which is governed by its own board. Five districts operate elementary schools. All six are members of the Lamoille Union High School District, which hosts the Green Mountain Technology and Career Center. The combined average daily membership of all districts within the LNSU in FY2015 was 1,784.

The new unified union school district (New Unified District), to be known as the Lamoille North Unified Union School District, would provide for the education of all resident PK-12 students by operating one or more schools for each grade and providing career technical education. If approved, the proposal would unify seven existing school districts and their supervisory union into a single supervisory district responsible for operating five elementary schools, one secondary school, and a career technical center. All districts within the supervisory union are identified as "advisable" districts pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(2).

The New Unified District would be governed by an 18 member school board that would include at least one member from each town. If a modified unified union school district (the Modified Unified District) is created, then the LNSU would continue its existence, with either two or three member districts – the Modified Unified District and either one or two town elementary school districts. The Modified Unified District would be a PK-12 district providing grade 7-12 education for students residing in all six towns and PK-6 education for each of the four or five towns that voted to approve the merger. The one or two town districts that did not

approve merger would continue to provide for the education of resident PK-6 students, elect representatives to its elementary school board, and adopt its own elementary school budget. The LNSU would continue to provide services on behalf of all two or three member districts.

Morse noted that the report allows for the possibility that not all towns will approve this proposal. The SBEs direction via the legislature is to ensure no towns are isolated. Engvalstead responded that any towns that reject the proposal would still have a seat on the Board, and their students would be able to attend the high school.

Perrin asked what the makeup of the union board would be if Belvedere votes no? Engvalstead responded that Waterville would maintain their three member board and join the larger union board, if they do not maintain a school, they would only maintain one vote regarding any decisions related to the high school.

Mathis asked if the technical center advisory board would remain. Engvalstead responded that the advisory Board would remain in place, the Union High School Board is the Technical Center Board.

Mathis asked about the slide stating that equity could decrease quality? Sanborn responded that in sharing an enrichment program, this may dilute the quality of the program given the increased distribution of staff.

Oller asked how they plan between now and the vote to address any challenges? It appears that structurally the district is the same, but there are many cultural differences within these towns specifically. Bailey responded that they are attempting to remain as transparent as possible through the process. Central office sees how this is in the best interest of all the students, and they will convey this to the voters.

Motion: Peltz moved that the State Board of Education finds: 1. that the proposed formation of a new unified union school district by the member districts of the Lamoille North Supervisory Union is “in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts” pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b); and, alternatively, 2. that the proposed formation of a new modified unified union school district within the LNSU is “in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts”, and that the State Board votes to approve the attached report of the LNSU Study Committee. The motion was seconded by Oller.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously. One abstention, Huling.

Franklin Central Supervisory Union – Kevin Dirth, Superintendent, James Farr, Act 46 committee chair; Mike Deweese, consultant to Act 46 committee.

The FCSU Study Committee recommends creation of a unified union school district that will be its own supervisory district pursuant to the Accelerated Merger process and timeline created by Act 46, Sec. 6 (2015).

The FCSU consists of four school districts: The Fairfield Town School District, the St. Albans City School District, the St. Albans Town School District, and the Bellows Free Academy Union School District #48 (USD #48). Each of the three town school districts operates a school to educate its resident elementary and middle school students. The USD #48 operates grades 9-12 for students in St. Albans City and St Albans Town, and operates the regional career technical center, the Northwest Technical Center. The Fairfield Town School District pays tuition for its students in grades 9-12. Together with the supervisory union board, there are a total of five governing boards.

The new unified union school district (New Unified District), to be temporarily known as the Franklin Central Unified School District, would provide for the education of all resident PK-12 students by operating one or more schools for each grade and providing regional career technical education. If approved, the proposal would unify the existing school districts and their supervisory union into a single supervisory district responsible for operating three elementary-middle schools, one high school, and a regional career technical center. The New Unified District would replace the five current governing bodies (4 districts plus SU) with one unified union board. All districts within the supervisory union are identified as “necessary” districts pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706b(b)(1).

The FCSU Study Committee proposal states that a majority of Fairfield students in grades 9-12 currently enroll in the Bellows Free Academy Union High School. If the New Unified District is created, Fairfield students enrolled in a different high school and for whom Fairfield pays tuition during the 2016-2017 academic year would be “grandfathered” through June 30, 2020.

The New Unified District would be governed by a ten member school board with a total of nine votes. Each town or city within the District (the member town) would be apportioned at least two members with a combined weighted vote of one.

Motion: Peltz moved that the State Board of Education finds that the proposed formation of a new unified union school district by the member districts of the Franklin Central Supervisory Union is “in the best interests of the State, the students, and the school districts” pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 706c(b); and that the State Board votes to approve the attached report of the FCSU Study Committee. The motion was seconded by Bonnie.

Huling added that by allowing all districts to vote, ‘at large’ this will serve them well in the long run.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Peltz noted that this proposal is the first completely ‘at large’ vote that will occur, this is a change from previous models to be more inclusive and create a culture of we not us.

Johnson-Aten noted that this group specifically praised the assistance they received from AOE staff. They were very supported and couldn’t have completed this work without them.

Oller stated that the format of the Act 46 reports is incredibly helpful.

Mathis suggested that he bring another draft of the Legislative agenda to the committee without any legislation being suggested by the Board. The committee will then set up a conference call to review.

Oller suggested that the Board distribute the SBEs Legislative agenda to each committee's assistant. The Board unanimously agreed that they will not host a legislative breakfast this year.

Adjourn

Motion: Weinberger moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:07 PM. The motion was seconded by Peltz.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Rebecca Plude