

Matthew C. Fedders
Superintendent of Schools

Andrea M. Wasson
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Director of Curriculum

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Director of Finance & Facilities

Committed to cultivating within all our students the knowledge, skills, and character essential to becoming purposeful, productive and engaged members of their world.

September 16, 2022

Oliver Olson, Chair
Vermont State Board of Education
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, VT 05602-2501

RE: Request for Written Comment on Central Vermont Supervisory Union's Willingness and Ability to Accept Lincoln School District.

Dear Chair Olson,

The Central Vermont Supervisory Union (CVSU) has received your request for written comment regarding our Supervisory Union's ability and willingness to absorb the Lincoln School District (LSD) as a member school district of CVSU beginning in July 2023.

In preparation of this letter, CVSU's superintendent met with the principal and two board members of the newly formed LSD to gather information and learn more about LSD's needs and CVSU's capacity to absorb LSD as a member district. The meeting was amicable and CVSU left with a general understanding of the needs and priorities of LSD.

What became apparent as the meeting progressed is that many of the efficiencies that we would hope to gain from merging can not be realized due to the geographical distance between LSD and CVSU, and the additional central office staff that may be required to take on an additional district.

Transportation services would most likely require separate contracting. Due to distance, there is no possibility that contracted buses could be shared between districts. This will most likely result in a separate contract for transportation in LSD with little to no efficiency realized.

Food services fall into the same category. CVSU would need to look for a different structure from other SU schools to provide food services to students daily. This is within our ability to contract for separate services, but it will not provide any efficiency to CVSU or LSD.

Special education services and related service providers of CVSU would be unable to provide services to LSD without the expense and impact of traveling 2-hours round trip to provide services. CVSU would need to work with independent contractors, remote providers, and school districts closer to LSD for such services, thus reducing the efficiencies that could be realized under an SU structure. Further, the supervision of special education

programs and services would require regular onsite visits and participation in IEP meetings by CVSU's special education director. Although the SU realizes that virtual consultation and meeting participation is always available, this form of communication is not ideal to ensure appropriate supervision and support of all special education programs and services in LSD.

Despite any capacity CVSU has to absorb LSD, CVSU and its member districts are opposed to bringing LSD into CVSU. We have not identified avenues that would allow LSD and current member districts of CVSU to realize any additional efficiencies through this merger. Further, there is concern that the forced addition of LSD and their lack of proximity to CVSU would prompt one of our two existing districts to exercise the same right as LSD and seek to withdraw from CVSU. If Paine Mountain were to seek withdrawal from the district, CVSU would be comprised of Echo Valley School District and Lincoln School District. Two small districts with over 45-miles and multiple school districts between these two towns, and a collapse of all efficiencies that were created by forming CVSU initially.

CVSU further analyzed all areas of SU operations in determining its ability to absorb another district into the SU.

Business Operations

CVSU's business department is comprised of one Director of Finance and Operations and two bookkeepers. With a total SU enrollment of approximately 1,300 students, the business office is well-suited to support the payroll, contracts, accounts receivable, and accounts payable of the SU's six schools and its staff. Disrupting the current balance between staffing and needs of the district may require additional central office staff, thus reducing any efficiencies of this merger.

Human Resources

CVSU's human resource department consists of one HR specialist to handle all services related to hiring, orientation, benefits, and leave for employees. Although LSD's staff is relatively small, any additional staff may put the SU in a position to hire additional central office staff to address the increase of employees in the SU. Again, reducing any efficiencies that may have been realized.

Educational Services

CVSU's educational services department has two administrators of curriculum and one administrator of special education. This level of staffing has been appropriate for the instructional oversight of the six schools currently in CVSU. Any addition of schools, especially outside of our region, may require additional staffing to ensure appropriate oversight of LSD's instructional and special education programs. Once again reducing any efficiencies that may be realized.

Other Administrative Functions

In a small SU, all other administrative functions are a shared responsibility of SU staff under the direction of the superintendent. In reviewing the SU's capacity to take on the various administrative needs and responsibilities that occur throughout the school year, the merger with LSD will increase these needs beyond what can reasonably be accomplished by the current administration, thus leaving the concern that additional supervisory union staff will be required to assume these functions for LSD.

If the purpose of Act 46 is to create more sustainable and efficient school governance structures, improve education and equity, by creating larger and more efficient school governance structures, and improve access to

quality PreK-12 education for all Vermont students, merging LSD into CVSU will not meet these goals. CVSU is currently the right size to accomplish the goals of Act 46 for the communities we serve. Other than sharing in the administrative costs of the SU administration, we believe each of our school districts will take on more burden and realize fewer efficiencies than anticipated.

Thank you for the opportunity to share Central Vermont Supervisory Union's position on our willingness and ability to absorb Lincoln School District into our SU. As stated above, we do not believe we have the ability to absorb LSD and we are less than willing to accept them as a member district of the Central Vermont Supervisory Union.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew Fedders". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Matthew Fedders
Superintendent of Schools