

COMMENTS FOR VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
JUNE 8, 2018
CHAUNCE BENEDICT, SWANTON VERMONT

My name is Chaunce Benedict. I live in Swanton, Vermont in Franklin County, home to the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union schools.

I retired three years ago after serving 37 years in Vermont public schools, most of them as an administrator. I am especially grateful for my career serving across 26 different Vermont towns and within nine different supervisory unions / districts. I have served as the principal in four different elementary schools, principal for one union middle-high school, assistant superintendent for two supervisory unions, and as superintendent for two others.

My work included successful efforts realign two supervisory unions, to rework a union school district charter for the education of its middle school students, to help found a new pre-K through grade 6 union school district by merging two different southwestern Vermont school systems, and to create and build both regional and statewide partnerships and collaborative efforts to serve and support children with innovative programming. Most of this work involved a combination of increasing educational opportunity and equity, serving disadvantaged learners and families, and making more effective use of resources and monies.

I will be advocating over the next several months that the State Board of Education pursue two main strategies which I believe offer the most constructive path forward in following through on the requirements of Acts 46 and 49.

First, that the state board respect, embrace and support ALL of the work that has been done to envision more effective, equitable and sustainable school systems for Vermont. Set aside the Agency's recommendations for now; and move forward to approve and support the alternative school governance plans as presented. Support and help everyone to do the best work possible, with *what they have earnestly created, and to which they have become democratically invested and committed.*

Let both the mergers and the alternative models operate to work at producing the educational results and the operational improvements to which Vermonters have committed through their incredible hard work, through their voices in the public forum, and through their votes - both for mergers and for other models.

Second, that the board create and implement a rigorous and dynamic multi-year evaluation plan for all ongoing governance and operation work - mergers and alternative models. Before moving to mandate mergers, or even doing something different, let our state take the time and work to learn what has worked, what has not worked, in meeting the goals of Acts 46 and 49. Thank you.