

**Lincoln School District
62 Quaker Street
Lincoln, VT 05443**

September 1, 2022

Dear Members of the State Board of Education:

This letter is in response to Jennifer Samuelson's email of July 21, 2022, requesting that the Lincoln School District (LSD) provide a written response stating our preference of assignment by the State Board of Education (SBE) to receive supervisory union services. The options presented in the email were:

1. Assign the Lincoln School District to an existing, multi-district Supervisory Union
2. Create a new SU that includes the Lincoln School District and one or more other town school districts and/or union school districts
3. Designate the Lincoln School District as a supervisory district in order to provide its own supervisory services
4. Deconstruct a Supervisory District into an SU that will provide supervisory union services to the Lincoln School District

The LSD board did not evaluate these options in a vacuum but rather in the real-time context of circumstances as they evolved as well as considering statutory realities. Attached to this letter is a memorandum from our legal counsel that helped inform our analysis.

To begin, as you know, Ripton is now preparing to vote on whether to return to the Addison Central School District or remain an independent district, and the ratification of Starksboro's withdrawal from the Mt. Abraham Unified School District (MAUSD), which was supported by Monkton and Bristol, was narrowly defeated in New Haven by 27 votes. Hence, Option #2, Lincoln's original preference, is no longer viable.

Lincoln has also closely followed discussions and statements arising from SBE meetings around Lincoln and Ripton; the outcome of the Ripton Status Review Committee; press articles regarding the situation in Addison County; and guidance from the Agency of Education (AOE) to seek means to create stability in the region. Based on distillation of this information, Lincoln has concluded that Option #3, designating Lincoln as its own supervisory district, is not considered viable by the SBE or AOE and therefore Lincoln removed this option from consideration. Our counsel also advises it would be contrary to the statutory responsibilities of the SBE to assign Lincoln as its own supervisory district.

Of the remaining two options, Lincoln's preference is Option #1, assignment to a multi-district SU. Specifically, the Lincoln School District desires to join an SU that lives our educational aspirations for its children, values the unique role of small schools to provide educational excellence and contribute to educational equity, and respects the importance of schools as pillars of small communities. Our preference is an SU that contains smaller districts with which

we can collaborate and share best practices, and where Lincoln would not be the only small school on an SU board.

While time has not allowed us to complete our outreach, of the SUs researched by Lincoln, White River Valley SU appears to be best aligned. Other SUs we are, or plan to be, in communication with include:

Lamoille South SU
Orleans Central SU
Orleans Southwest SU
Orange East SU
Montpelier/Roxbury SU
Central Vermont SU
Grand Isle SU
Windham Central SU

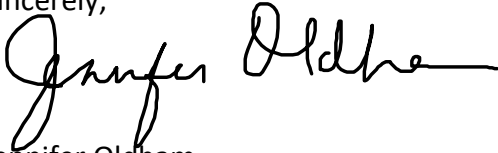
To date we have not received an invitation to pursue further conversations with SUs we have contacted, however our efforts are ongoing. Nonetheless, we recognize the SBE's authority and obligation to assign Lincoln to a Supervisory Union regardless of an SU's expressed degree of interest. We are confident that in-depth discussions and analysis would allow us to identify an SU for which the addition of the Lincoln School District would bring positive contributions given the operational viability of the district as well as the reputation of the Lincoln Community School as a well-run, high-performing school with exceptional leadership, experienced and committed staff, a supportive and engaged community, and a commitment to the success of small schools in Vermont.

Option #4, deconstruction of an existing supervisory district into an SU in order to provide services to Lincoln, is less preferred than Option #1. Lincoln has not reached out to any SDs because our focus has been on SUs; because districts created by an affirmative vote of towns to merge would be highly unlikely to consider the idea of deconstruction; and because joining an SU with an existing SD would likely result in a power imbalance similar to our experience in MAUSD. We also recognize, based on information from the SBE and MAUSD, that MAUSD is the only likely target of deconstruction. Considering this, and the AOE goal of creating stability, we wish to point out:

1. Lincoln's position at the May 18, 2022 SBE meeting where Lincoln indicated it did not desire to return to MAUSD as part of an SU and would not request such an arrangement.
2. MAUSD's strident opposition to deconstruction to become part of an SU with Lincoln, as expressed in their June 15, 2022 presentation to the SBE.
3. As a town with a highly-valued small school and engaged and vocal community, Lincoln's challenges being part of MAUSD did not begin with the proposed closure of the Lincoln Community School in December 2020, and its motivation to leave the district is not solely underpinned by that fact.

In closing, the Lincoln School District believes assignment to an existing multi-district Supervisory Union will best enable the achievement of stability in the region while allowing Lincoln to maximize the educational opportunities for its K-12 students. Participation in an educational structure and learning community that demonstrates a fundamental understanding of and commitment to the unique opportunities provided by small schools and where Lincoln can contribute to the “success story” of Vermont’s small rural schools should be considered a win for all involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Oldham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jennifer Oldham

On Behalf of the Lincoln School District Board

Board Members

Jennifer Oldham – Chair

Abby Reynolds – Vice Chair

Mary Gemignani

Jeanne Albert

Rob Backlund

ATT: Memorandum from Owen McClain, Esq, Sheehy Furlong and Behm, P.C.
“Assignment of the Lincoln School District to a Supervisory Union”