

FNWSU Act 46 Study Committee Recommendations

“Act Merged – Stay Local”

Committee Members:

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, Highgate
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Executive Summary

The Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union provides management support for three PK-6 elementary, one PK-8 elementary/middle, and one combined middle and high school. The total PK-12 enrollment exceeds 2000 students. The student population trend is reasonably stable and is increasing in Swanton. FNWSU schools do not receive Small Schools grants and stable student enrollments prevent the phenomena of ghost pupils.

Franklin County is growing in population. It possesses a strong manufacturing and business base and provides affordable living options for citizens who work in Franklin and Chittenden Counties. We expect this trend to continue.

In response to escalating education costs, the Legislature passed Act 46, which was signed into law by Governor Peter Shumlin in June 2015. The law calls for all school districts in the state to consider mergers to meet the following goals:

1. Provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities.
2. Lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards.
3. Maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with the goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff.
4. Promote transparency and accountability.
5. Deliver education at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.

The bill includes incentives for districts to merge into larger districts. It also includes the eventuality that the State Board can order unification if regions have not developed their own approach.

Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union (FNWSU) agrees with the goals of Act 46 and has explored ways to meet or exceed them on an ongoing basis given the specific and constantly changing needs of our students and communities. To assist in this exploration, two Act 46 study committees were formed. The first committee was created shortly after the passage of the law, and completed a \$5,000 preliminary study, during which a forum was held in each FNWSU town to gather input regarding community needs and concerns. Of the numerous concerns raised, the strongest were the fear of losing local control and town identity, and high school choice for Sheldon. As a result of findings that emerged from the first study, the FNWSU board decided not to conduct a formal 706 study. Instead, the SU board developed an independent study process and hired a skilled facilitator to lead Act 46 committee work.

The second committee, the current one, was charged with recommending the optimal governance structure(s) to meet the needs of our students, communities and the goals of Act 46. Members brought an open mind and willingness to explore options that would result in the best governance structure for the FNWSU. The committee agreed that they would gather community input, reach out to neighboring communities, analyze all pertinent data, and then make final recommendations to the SU board.

Committee members traveled to Alburgh, Georgia and Bakersfield school boards to discuss options and determine interest in merging and/or sharing resources. All school boards decided not to merge with us; none of the towns presented viable partnership merger options. Members reached out to Maple Run Supervisory District to learn how they approached meeting the goals of Act 46 and the needs of students and communities. Members also solicited input from community members, teachers, principals, tax payers, and legislators for their comments and suggestions.

Study Committee Recommendations

The study committee found the overall Act 46 study experience to be an important and beneficial experience. The effort forced discussions and decisions that might not have taken place without the requirements of the legislation. We believe this effort has/will greatly improve FNWSU's ability to serve our students and communities in the future.

After more than a year of research, discussion and careful analyses, **our recommendation is that the FNWSU move forward with an Enhanced Alternative Governance Structure (AGS)**. We recommend retooling our supervisory union and schools to create a stronger, more effective organization that better serves our students and communities and the goals of Act 46. FNWSU member districts consider themselves responsible for the education of all prekindergarten through grade 12 students residing in our supervisory union and are committed to a governance structure that exceeds the goals of Act 46.

The FNWSU Act 46 study committee thoroughly researched all merger options and found our Enhanced FNWSU AGS to more effectively meet the values and needs for our schools and communities. In fact, before describing our enhanced structure, it is important to briefly point out the factors that make a merger not as beneficial to those same goals or as visibly necessary.

1. Franklin Elementary has some of the highest test scores and lowest cost per pupil in the state. Our analysis shows that merging will increase per pupil costs by more than \$1,000 dollars as well as education taxes for Franklin citizens. Merging school boards with Highgate and Swanton is not likely to increase Franklin's existing high student performance (Goals # 2, 3, and 5).
2. Sheldon has a PK-8 structure which will not allow a merger with the three other FNWSU PK-6 schools.
3. Franklin, Highgate, and Sheldon residents made it clear at community meetings that maintaining local control and town identity was critical to them (Goal #5).
4. The FNWSU schools have not experienced the same dramatic decline in student enrollment as other Vermont schools and do not currently receive any Small Schools grant funds nor are there any ghost pupils.
5. On Tuesday, November 7, 2017, every community voted to support the Act 46 study committee recommendation to retain and enhance the current governance structure. This last factor, the overwhelming support of the communities to not merge, gives insight into what the towns want and value. The results were:
 - Franklin: 161 to 0 Support board Act 46 recommendation to not merge
 - Highgate: 103 to 1 Support board Act 46 recommendation to not merge
 - Swanton: 148 to 105 Support board (1 spoiled) Act 46 recommendation to not merge
 - Sheldon: 87 to 0 Support board Act 46 recommendation to not merge

Action Plan

It is not the intention of our "Enhanced FNWSU AGS" to be satisfied with just meeting the goals of Act 46. FNWSU intends to explore new ideas which may have never been tried, or even thought of, to exceed the goals of Act 46. Enhancements identified by the committee will be seamlessly integrated into the current FNWSU school improvement plan, allowing all school districts within the FNWSU to meet or exceed the goals of Act 46 and align the plan with ESSA goals.

FNWSU Commitments

- Build upon existing governance plans to enhance our supervisory union's effectiveness.
- Foster a continuous improvement culture within and between school districts.

- Continue to enhance and support supervisory union/school improvement teams.
- The superintendent and school principals will prioritize the review / amendment of all existing policies, and recommend the adoption of new policies designed to support and maintain the changes in the Enhanced FNWSU AGS operations.
- Implement curriculum focus and accountability measures to ensure all students are provided equitable learning opportunities (i.e., all teacher use and implement same curriculum) and student learning successes.
- Improve students' abilities to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards.
- Support practices and processes that support students from all population groups to score at proficient and above levels on standardized tests.
- Continue to share resources and stress exploration of future possibilities. For many years, FNWSU has employed part-time teachers and support staff, and, in order to recruit full-time employees, has developed partnerships with districts, both within and outside FNWSU boundaries.
- Use data to measure success in meeting/exceeding Act 46 goals, and to inform future strategies.
- Provide communication and information on Supervisory Union budget to community members and stakeholders.
- Research and implement elementary and middle school choice within the boundaries of the FNWSU.
- Make collaboration between and within districts an administrative and organizational performance expectation.
- Assess and improve board meetings in terms of quantity, topics, and efficiencies.
- Expand the existing "Superintendent State of the Union" report to track and measure progress toward achieving all five Act 46 goals, and the actions outlined herein. Align the State of the Union process with the new ESSA school reporting requirements.
- Empower Act 46 Study Committee to annually complete a thorough organizational effectiveness audit.
- Research the development of a Foreign Student/Out of State Student Team to attract foreign and out of state students to enroll at Missisquoi Valley Union MS/HS. We believe we are geographically located to prepare, facilitate tuition students from New York, Canada, and China to attend Missisquoi Valley Union MS/HS and transition graduates into Vermont post-secondary college experiences (see Appendix E).

Full Report

Act 46 Law

Vermont has experienced several significant trends related to education and ~~education~~ finance over the past twenty years:

- The student population has fallen 20%.
- The number of staff has remained approximately the same or increased.
- There are many school districts and supervisory unions containing less than 100 pupils.
- Small schools are often limited in program offerings, leading to disparity in educational opportunity.
- Vermont's cost-per-pupil is one of the highest in the country.

In response to escalating education costs, the Legislature passed Act 46, which was signed into law by Governor Peter Shumlin in June 2015. The law calls for all school districts in the state to consider mergers to meet the following goals:

1. Provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities.
2. Lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards.
3. Maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with the goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff.
4. Promote transparency and accountability.
5. Deliver education at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.

The bill includes incentives for districts to merge into larger districts. It also includes the eventuality that the State Board can order unification if regions have not developed their own approach.

Act 46 and Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union

Although the specific circumstances in each of our communities vary, we have not experienced the general education and finance trends referred to earlier. Unlike other areas of the state, our supervisory union has not experienced significant population declines, and is large compared to other SUs, educating over 2,000 students, PK-12.

In fact:

1. Our numbers have remained reasonably stable and we expect this trend to continue or grow.
2. One school, MVU, is showing declining numbers, but at a rate far lower than the state average for high schools.
3. We do not receive small school grants or benefit from phantom pupils.
4. Our cost-per-pupil numbers are among the lowest in the state.
5. Three districts (Franklin, Highgate and Swanton) merged middle and high schools forty years before Act 46 became law.

Our circumstances differ from supervisory unions with small and declining populations. However, FNWSU agrees with the goals of Act 46 and has explored ways to meet or exceed them on an ongoing basis given the specific and constantly changing needs of our students and communities. To assist in this exploration, two Act 46 study committees were formed. The first committee was created shortly after the passage of the law, and completed a \$5,000 preliminary study which held a forum in each FNWSU town to gather input regarding community needs and concerns. Of the numerous concerns raised, the strongest was the fear of losing local

control and local identity. As a result of findings that emerged from the first study, the FNWSU board decided not to conduct a formal 706 study. Instead, the SU board developed an independent study process and hired a facilitator to lead committee work.

The second committee, the current one, was charged with recommending the optimal governance structure(s) to meet the needs of our students, communities and the goals of Act 46. Members brought an open mind and willingness to explore options that would result in the best governance structure for the FNWSU. The committee agreed that they would gather community input, reach out to neighboring communities, analyze all pertinent data, and then make final recommendations to the SU board.

The committee reached out to Alburgh, Georgia and Bakersfield school boards to discuss options and determine interest in merging and/or sharing resources. All school boards decided not to merge with us; none of the towns were a viable partner for a merger. Members reached out to Maple Run Supervisory District to learn how they approached meeting the goals of Act 46 and the needs of students and communities. Members also solicited input from community members, teachers, principals, tax payers, and legislators for their comments and suggestions.

History of Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union and its Districts

The four communities that make up FNWSU have a long history of cooperation, collaboration, and competition. Each community has its own unique history, culture, and identity. The elementary school is a central part of each community, and to varying degrees, a gathering place, a historical landmark, and a source of community pride.

The communities of Swanton, Highgate and Franklin have collaborated significantly in the past, with Missisquoi Valley Union's (MVU) creation being the most visible example. The towns created a merged union middle/high school more than forty years before Act 46 required communities to do so. This merger has been perceived as both a success and a source of frustration over the years. Some students have not performed as well at the middle/high school, test scores are lower at MVU than other schools in the region, towns feel a lack of local control and ownership, and school identity/pride is a challenge, although this is improving. This lack of control and ownership at MVU is evidenced by the historical low numbers of taxpayers who attend MVU district #7 annual budget meetings and board member elections, and the fact that MVU is not always referred to as 'our school'. As a result, communities have mixed emotions and concerns about merging districts and have grave concerns with the thought of potentially merging elementary schools with MVU.

Sheldon has high school choice; its students attend PK through 8th grade at Sheldon Elementary and the Board pays tuition to Enosburgh High School, BFA, and MVU, in that order of frequency. MVU not being the first school of choice contributes to and reflects the underlying issues that make merging into one district a challenge.

Other factors influence the feasibility of an Act 46 preferred merger. First and foremost is the matter of local control. As mentioned earlier, when Act 46 was passed, FNWSU's first Study Committee conducted public meetings to gather local input. Most people attending the meetings were against merging, the most common complaint being loss of local control. This was especially prevalent in the smaller communities where by law their representation on a merged district school board would be less than that of larger communities. Due to the effects of proportional representation as required by Act 46, consolidation proposals will all but eliminate the ability of the smaller school districts in FNWSU to successfully advocate for the specific needs of their students. Some taxpayers voiced concerns that 'smaller school districts could be held hostage to spending

patterns not of their making', thus failing to meet the Act 46 goal SU wide. (Goal #5: "delivered at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.")

When the communities decided to consolidate middle and high schools to create MVU, a deal breaker was the need for equal representation for all communities regardless of size and pupil numbers. The loss of local control (and equal representation) seems to be the most controversial and contentious aspect of Act 46 in FNWSU communities. Along with concerns about lack of control comes the fear of possible loss of an elementary school, which is a critical part of the community fabric. In three of the districts, the school is the town meeting place, emergency shelter and voting center.

Another factor affecting a possible merger is the perception of failed cooperation between towns, what some might call 'bad blood'. A significant schism occurred approximately five years ago when Highgate asked Franklin and Swanton to share in the use and cost of their Highgate ice arena. Franklin supported the effort but Swanton voters as well as the Swanton Select Board did not. Two years ago, Highgate's Select Board changed ambulance providers, choosing a St Albans commercial provider over Swanton's Missisquoi Valley Rescue, resulting in damaged relationships and serious financial setbacks to the latter. Even Highgate citizens were divided on the decision. Both issues are still sources of contention and stress; Missisquoi Valley Rescue has filed a lawsuit against Highgate for breach of contract.

In terms of culture and identity, our towns are strong in their sense of community with school being the center of community life. Swanton is the only town with a large municipal building and library; all other towns use the school, churches or town clerk's office for public meetings and gatherings. The school is typically the heart of these communities. The fear of losing a town school outweighs the concern of minor cost increases or decreases. Interestingly, the financial analysis regarding a merger of FNWSU school districts reveals that Franklin, Highgate and MVU would see an increase in per pupil costs. In fact, Franklin school district, which currently has one of the lowest per pupil cost in the State, will experience an increase of almost \$1,000 dollars in per pupil costs. All other school districts, except Swanton, will experience an increase in per pupil costs, making it more difficult for those schools to meet Act 46 goal 5.

The Act 46 Committee Process

The Act 46 committee met twice a month, except for March, from August 2016 through December 13, 2017. Committee discussions and decisions were guided by the commitment that the best structure would be the one(s) that would meet and/or exceed Act 46 goals. The committee gathered community input, reached out to neighboring communities, analyzed all pertinent data, and then made its recommendation.

As mentioned previously, the committee communicated with the Alburgh, Georgia and Bakersfield school boards to discuss options and determine interest in merging and/or sharing resources. Committee members also reached out to the Maple Run Supervisory Union for suggestions and advice from lessons learned in their process. Members also solicited feedback from community members, teachers, principals, legislators, and tax payers.

The committee researched quantifiable and qualitative data sources. It analyzed and reviewed the data, always considering the implications for meeting and/or exceeding the goals of Act 46. Quantitative sources included per pupil costs, enrollment numbers, instruction hours, subject offerings, student/teacher ratios, student/staff ratios, and current tax rates, merged tax rates, merged costs per pupil, school performance data, student cohort performance scores, graduation rates, etc. Key data highlights include:

- FNWSU already enrolls more than 2,000 PK-12 students.
- Student enrollment remains reasonably stable and we expect this trend to continue or grow; we are not experiencing the steep enrollment declines found in other areas of the state.
- Our merged school, Missisquoi Valley Union Middle and High School (MVU), is showing declining numbers, but at a rate far lower than the state average for high schools.
- We do not receive small school grants or benefit from phantom pupils; our schools are not in the same financial jeopardy as other rural schools.
- Our cost-per-pupil numbers are among the lowest in the state.
- Merging would raise per pupil costs for Franklin, Highgate, and Sheldon and lower them for Swanton.
- Franklin Elementary School has the lowest cost per pupil. With a merger, it could increase significantly.
- Our towns (except Sheldon, who has high school choice) have already merged grades 7-12 with a union middle/high school (MVU).
- Test score performance is below state averages in several towns; improvement is needed.
- Curriculum options tend to be equitable across schools; however, steps are being taken to ensure total equity through sharing of resources.

Qualitative data sources included community input from meetings, principal surveys and principal input at meetings, public discussions in meetings, historical analyses of towns, social/cultural discussions, discussions of town values regarding education, and discussions of town similarities and differences. Several data highlights are:

- FNWSU member districts consider themselves responsible for the education of all prekindergarten through grade 12 students residing in our supervisory union and are committed to a governance structure that exceeds the goals of Act 46.
- All four towns value education and are committed to providing quality, affordable and easily accessible education to their children.
- The four communities that make up FNWSU have a long history of cooperation, collaboration, and competition.
- Each community has its own unique history, culture, and identity.
- The elementary school is a central part of each community, and to varying degrees, a gathering place, an historical landmark, and a source of community pride and identity.
- Local control is given high priority by townspeople.
- The communities of Swanton, Highgate and Franklin have collaborated significantly in the past, with MVU's creation being the most visible example. The towns merged union middle/high schools forty years before Act 46 requirements. The MVU merger has been perceived as both a success and a source of frustration over the years. Some students have not performed as well at the middle/high school, MVU test scores are lower than other schools in the region. Towns feel a lack of local control and ownership, and school identity/pride is a challenge, although we are working to improve this situation.
- In 1970, a deal breaker in the formation of MVU was the need for equal board member representation for all communities regardless of school size and pupil numbers. The MVU board was created with three members from each town. In 2017, one of the rationales for not creating an Act 46 preferred structure was again the need for equal board member representation and the fear of loss of local identity.

After considering all the data, the study committee developed recommendations and a list of actions for making the recommendations a reality. The study recommendations are included in the next section. The data and findings used by the committee are contained in the appendices.

Study Committee Recommendations

A benefit of the Act 46 mandates is that districts and supervisory unions are required to engage in extensive self-evaluations. The committee, along with school improvement teams, has conducted a thorough assessment of our strengths, identified opportunities for improvement, and planned short and long-term actions for retooling and revamping our supervisory union. We've had the opportunity to look at our practices, procedures, systems, school compositions, school cultures, processes, continuous improvement strategies, operating procedures, leadership, finances, performance, curriculum, best practices, etc. This information, along with the concerted continuous improvement efforts FNWSU has been making over the last several years, will position FNWSU to become even more effective and better able to meet and exceed the goals of Act 46.

After more than a year of research, discussion and careful analyses, our recommendation is that FNWSU enhance its current governance structure to better meet or exceed the goals of Act 46. We recommend retooling our supervisory union and schools to create a stronger, more effective organization that better serves our students, communities, and provides FNWSU with the ability to meet or exceed all the goals of Act 46. FNWSU member districts consider themselves responsible for the education of all prekindergarten through grade 12 students residing in our supervisory union and are committed to a governance structure that exceeds the goals of Act 46.

The FNWSU Act 46 study committee thoroughly researched all merger options and found our Enhanced Alternative Governance Structure to more effectively meet the values and needs our schools and our communities. In fact, before describing our enhanced structure for exceeding the goals of Act 46, it is important to briefly point out the factors that make a merger not as beneficial to those same goals.

1. Franklin Elementary has some of the highest test scores and lowest cost per pupil in the state. Our analysis shows that merging will increase per pupil costs by more than \$1,000 dollars as well as education taxes for Franklin citizens. Merging school boards with Highgate and Swanton is not likely to increase Franklin's existing high student performance (Goals # 2, 3, and 5).
2. Sheldon has a PK-8 structure which will not allow a merger with the three other FNWSU PK-6 schools.
3. Franklin, Highgate, and Sheldon residents made it clear at community meetings that maintaining local control was critical to them (Goal #5).
4. The FNWSU schools have not experienced the same dramatic decline in student enrollment as other Vermont schools and do not currently receive any Small Schools grant funds. **As an example, according to the AOE's 2017 preliminary report, Swanton's equalized pupil count increased by 28, and Highgate increased by 5.**
5. **MVU is an example for why merging school boards would not necessarily equate to increased student achievement. In FNWSU, elementary students generally perform better on standardized assessments than do MVU students, who attend the union middle and high school. Therefore, one might hypothesize that creating a PK-12 school board would not cause middle and high school student performance to improve.**
6. Every community voted to support the Act 46/49 study committee recommendation to retain and enhance the current governance structure. The referendum was held on November 7, 2017 (town information meetings were held before that day). The wording of the referendum follows:

"Should the (INSERT) Town School District, with other members of the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union propose to maintain the operation of the Franklin, Highgate, MVU, Sheldon, and Swanton school boards (which is an Alternative Governance Structure as defined in the Act 46/49 law) to the Vermont State Board of Education by January 31, 2018?"

The voting results were:

- Franklin: 161 to 0 Support board Act 46 recommendation to not merge
- Highgate: 103 to 1 Support board Act 46 recommendation to not merge
- Swanton: 148 to 105 Support board (1 spoiled) Act 46 recommendation to not merge
- Sheldon: 87 to 0 Support board Act 46 recommendation to not merge

This last factor, the overwhelming support of the communities to not merge, gives insight into what the towns want and value.

ACTION PLAN

As a result of extensive site-based assessments detailing the specific and varying needs of each school, there will be a formal process to ensure new approaches and programs are identified.

It is not the intention of our “enhanced FNWSU AGS” to be satisfied with just meeting the goals of Act 46. FNWSU intends to explore new ideas which may have never been tried, or even thought of, and to exceed the goals of Act 46 on a continuous basis. Enhancements identified by the committee will be seamlessly integrated into the current FNWSU improvement plan, allowing all the school districts within the FNWSU to meet or exceed the goals of Act 46.

FNWSU Commitments

1. Build upon existing plans to enhance our supervisory union’s effectiveness.
FNWSU school districts have successfully increased their commitment to find new and creative ways to meet the needs of all our students. Teachers and school leaders are implementing promising new approaches, including Marzano Research, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and Anthony Muhamad’s work on transforming school culture.
2. Continue to enhance and support supervisory union/school improvement teams.
FNWSU will enhance our governance structure by formally establishing a SU level school improvement team consisting of the Superintendent, Curriculum Director, Special Education Director, the Director of Indian Education, a Principal, and a School Board Member. In addition, each FNWSU school will also create a site-based school improvement team consisting of the Principal, Guidance Counselor, Math Teacher, Literacy Teacher, and Special Education Teacher. Each team will use current assessment data, and facilitate the implementation of any additional assessments deemed necessary to create, monitor, and update all site-based continuous school improvement plans. The FNWSU level school improvement team will meet monthly for the purpose of reviewing each school improvement plan and to facilitate continuous plan implementation, monitoring, and revision.
3. FNWSU has created and empowered official school improvement teams required by NCLB and Title I, and as amended by ESSA. Under the Act 46 Enhancement Plan, these teams will be adjusted to include recommendations described in the above paragraph. There will be formal evidence of site-based staff collaboration essential for ensuring successful school wide implementation. All school improvement teams will be required to meet regularly to compare data findings, conduct peer reviews of individual school improvement plans, and assist in the validation of new initiatives and programs to ensure success and SU wide continuity. The FNWSU Board recently decided to designate MVU a Title I school (the four local elementary schools are also Title I schools). The focus of the new Vermont ESSA plan shifts the emphasis away from shaming schools for student performance deficiencies to reinforcing

the student performance growth model. This change is an identified priority in the FNWSU AGS action plan and will be an intricate part of meeting or exceeding the specific Act 46 goals #1 and #2.

These teams are instrumental in school improvement and have already implemented “Data Days” where they share important data with teachers and staff. The data identifies local assessment benchmarks, targets and feedback – critical information for continuous improvement efforts.

4. Foster a continuous improvement culture within and between districts.

FNWSU employees are committed to continuous improvement and take ownership for their role in the process. The school and SU culture fosters improvement, collaboration and a supervisory-wide view of student success. Enhanced FNWSU AGS school improvement teams will serve as conduits for staff collaboration, peer review, and effective problem solving within each school, increasing our ability to meet or exceed all the goals of Act 46.

5. The Superintendent and Boards will prioritize the review / amendment of all existing policies, and approve the adoption of new policies designed to support, and maintain the changes identified in the AGS operational methodology.

Doing so will embed operational procedures designed to promote and support new and innovative initiatives throughout all the schools within the FNWSU.

6. Implement curriculum focus and accountability measures to ensure all students are provided equitable learning opportunities (i.e., all teachers using and implementing same curriculum) and learning successes.

FNWSU meets and often exceeds goal #1 of Act 46 and provides more equitable opportunities across the SU regarding curriculum and instruction. They include:

- a) Ensure each school has adequate behavior/academic intervention services based on need and population. When viewed in relation to need and student population MVU and Sheldon currently have considerably less intervention services available to students in need than the other three schools. For instance, there is one math and one literacy interventionist at the middle school in MVU, but none at the high school. At Sheldon School, there is one professional math interventionist, one paraprofessional math interventionist, and one professional literacy interventionist; however, Highgate School, with nearly the same student population as Sheldon, has three professional literacy interventionists, two professional math interventionist.
- b) Ensure each school has a behavior system and personnel to make the system successful for all students. Currently some schools work more closely with the Northwest Counseling and Support Services (NCSS) while others do not.
- c) Create formalized practices for common positions and systems (e.g., Instructional Coaching). The Director of Curriculum and Instruction oversees a highly successful leadership team structure, both within each school and an SU oversight team.
- d) Implement an improved supervision and evaluation system that better matches the instructional framework. While FNWSU currently uses the same supervision and evaluation system across all schools, we are planning to change this system to better match our Marzano instructional framework. The work ahead is to calibrate this new system with all building administrators. This work is currently being implemented in the 2017-2018 school year.

- e) Ensure there are similar opportunities for Sheldon and MVU grade 7/8 students. Currently MVU middle-level students enjoy opportunities not offered to Sheldon students. Of particular interest is the lack of foreign language experiences at Sheldon vs. MVU. Likewise, there are also enrichment opportunities offered at Sheldon that are not available at MVU. These differences are largely due to personnel and geographical differences. The new and enhanced structure will encourage sharing of teachers and classes, so students can benefit from all of FNWSU's offerings.

7. Establish an "Instructional Resource Team" to promote access to learning opportunities and ensure all students are afforded educational opportunity.

The team will be charged with developing a process to facilitate student access to the variety of learning opportunities known to exist throughout FNWSU, and will consist of the Superintendent, Business Manager, Curriculum Coordinator, and the Principals of each school as deemed necessary. The team will meet before the beginning of each school year to assess the learning opportunities known to exist throughout the FNWSU. It will evaluate the need to create joint agreements to provide joint programs, services, professional, and other staff that are necessary to carry out the desired programs and services. The team will present its findings to the SU and local boards for its approval.

8. Improve opportunities to improve students' ability to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards.

FNWSU has several opportunities to meet and exceed goal #2 of Act 46.

1) Study the measures taken to provide more equitable learning opportunities so students across the SU meet or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards. Ensure each school has adequate academic and behavior intervention services based on need and population.

2) Track students who graduate from district elementary schools through middle and high school to determine overall graduation rates. Graduation rates are improving and dropout rates are declining; however, improvement is needed and there is strong commitment to finding ways to ensure that improvement continues. This information may help us determine where the graduation numbers are most impacted.

9. Support practices and processes that enable students to achieve at the proficient and above proficiency levels on standardized tests.

FNWSU is committed to improving test performance and determined to find and address possible causes for low scores. It will continue to investigate the methodology and processes used by each of the districts regarding testing, and assess which ones seem to produce the best outcomes for students. It is committed to implementing these processes, assessing results, and making changes as a key ingredient for continuous improvement.

Four out of five schools within the FNWSU have been identified as schools in "required corrective action" due to low student test scores. FNWSU administrators and the Vermont Secretary of Education are aware of our student performance data and have expressed their concern on this issue. Raising student test scores has become a priority in the FNWSU AGS action plan, and will be an intricate part of meeting or exceeding the specific Act 46 goals #1 and #2. Raising test scores will provide a visible milestone in our Enhanced FNWSU AGS.

10. Continue exploring and sharing resources.

Each district in the FNWSU is committed to operational efficiency, using every dollar to the greatest benefit for our students and communities. We believe we are already making great progress towards Goal #3: Maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with the goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff. Many of the efficiency measures being adopted by merging districts in Vermont have already been implemented by FNWSU.

Some examples already implemented or in process are: SU wide centralization of special education staff, transportation contracts, district-wide negotiated union contract, curriculum coordination, fiscal service management, bulk purchasing, food services, shared teaching staff, and including but not limited to discussions of a proposal to centralize all SU custodial / maintenance staff. We recommend that all of this continue and that centralized bulk purchasing systems be expanded where ever possible. For years we have shared employment of professional and support staff positions both within and outside the boundaries of the FNWSU.

Although the FNWSU will continue its pursuit of innovative cost saving measures, the Enhanced FNWSU AGS is the most viable option which will ensure our ability to meet or exceed Act 46 Goals #4 and #5.

Implementation of the Enhanced FNWSU AGS within individual FNWSU schools is necessary to ensure their success in meeting or exceeding the goals of Act 46 as amended by H.513 / Act 49. In fact, given the demonstrated willingness by site-based administrators to pursue innovative staff sharing techniques the “Enhanced FNWSU AGS” will create additional policy directives designed to meet or exceed Act 46 Goal #3.

11. Use data to measure success in meeting/exceeding Act 46 goals, and to inform future strategies.

We have learned (or in many cases had that knowledge reinforced) that data is critical to building and continually improving our Enhanced Alternative Governance Structure. To measure our success in meeting Act 46 goals, and for accountability, we will continually look at data and create feedback loops. Using the Act 46 goals to remind us of what matters, we will be able to measure the right things. This effort will support Act 46 Goal #4.

12. Provide communication and information regarding the Supervisory Union budget to the community and stakeholders.

Currently, an SU assessment is included in each local school budget. In the spirit of transparency, the FNWSU will expand its communication regarding the SU budget to the community and stakeholders by discussing this at local public budget informational meetings. FNWSU will continue to report SU budgets in annual town reports and make them available on the SU website.

13. Research and implement school choice PK-8 and PK-6.

FNWSU has for years benefitted from greater flexibility of sharing staff and resources among schools. It is a natural move that we begin share students as well. FNWSU does this on an informal, case-to-case basis. If a family moves to another town in the supervisory union, its children are typically allowed to attend the new town school. As part of our continued effort to “*Act Merged – Stay Local*,” the school boards have emulated an elementary and middle school choice initiative, which closely mirrors the

Maple Run SD model. This flexible learning environment adapts to the needs of students and parents across the SU. The elementary/middle school choice initiative will assist the SU to meet or exceed Act 46 Goal #1, and serve as a powerful example of our commitment to improving equity and expanded educational opportunities for all students. Policy recommendations are:

- 5 students in and 5 students out per year, for each school, based on district board approval
- 50% ADM remains in sending school and 50% ADM goes to the receiving school
- Board decision making considerations:
 - Geography
 - Transportation
 - Capacity of school
 - Available programs
 - Parent employment
 - Family circumstances
 - Building/ moving to a new home
 - Sending and receiving board approval

14. Make collaboration between and within districts an individual and organizational performance expectation.

We realize that it often takes more than good intentions to create a cultural shift. By holding people accountable to collaborate and measuring performance, we will increase the probability that this commitment will be embraced.

15. Assess and improve board meetings in terms of quantity, topics, and efficiencies.

We recognize that the number of boards and meetings can be problematic for the superintendent. We also recognize that *not* having district boards would be even more problematic for community members who want to be able to reach out and have access to their town board members. We believe that we have a solution that will work for all involved. We are going to cut down on the number of meetings, combine meetings where possible, and focus on making every meeting streamlined, organized, efficient and effective. We will also assess the topics and results of our meetings. We believe we can be more strategic and involved in matters of importance, such as discussing and monitoring our improvement plan at every meeting.

We recognize the strength in having board members represent all students in the supervisory union rather than simply their own town. We need a commitment that each local board "*Act Merged-Stay Local*" when serving as Supervisory Union board members, and will draft and adopt a policy to achieve this commitment.

16. Establish a yearly "State of the Union" report.

The Superintendent will analyze and complete an annual report on the "State of the Union," which will be included in each Town Report. The State of the Union information will be based on the five Act 46 questions. We believe this will send a message that we are serious about increasing SU budget and program transparency, outlined in Act 46 Goal #4. The report will track and measure progress toward achieving all five Act 46 goals, and the actions outlined herein. For example, in 2018, the report will focus on student performance and learning opportunities available in grades PK-12 for Goals # 1 and #2. For Goal #3, the superintendent will highlight the progress we have made in sharing teacher and support staff employment contracts, both within and outside the FNWSU boundaries. For the sake of

transparency and accountability, Goal #4, the report will highlight expenditures of local district and SU tax dollars. For Goal #5, the report will share measurements, data, progress on past strategies and identification of new strategies to illustrate the value of taxpayer investments. It is our intent to align the State of the Union process with the new ESSA school reporting requirements.

17. Investigate a foreign student/out of state student team to research and develop a system designed to attract foreign and out of state students to enroll at Missisquoi Valley Union MS/HS.

We believe we are geographically located to prepare, facilitate and tuition students from New York, Canada, and China to attend Missisquoi Valley Union MS/HS and transition graduates into Vermont post-secondary college experiences (see Appendix E).

18. Keep the Act 46 Study Committee together and change their mission to an advisory committee.

The committee has a thorough knowledge of the goals of Act 46 and the issues facing our supervisory union. It is also committed to the success of the enhanced supervisory union structure. Keeping the committee together will provide a resource to staff and emphasize the long-term commitment being made to achieve continuous improvement and accountability. The committee will be empowered to complete an annual organizational effectiveness audit.

Conclusion

We have realized great benefits from the discussions that ensued while studying governance options. As a result of our deliberations, it is the recommendation of this committee that we not pursue a preferred merger option. We believe the Franklin Northwest SU Enhanced FNWSU AGS option being presented to the State Board of Education will best allow us to achieve the five Act 46 goals. This option allows us to pursue the best of both worlds while honoring community values, town identity, local pride, school choice patterns, and history. We believe in “acting merged but staying local,” and consider it the collective responsibility of member districts to work toward the success of all students in the FNWSU.

The committee’s analysis identified a number of opportunities for efficiencies that can be gained through the Enhanced FNWSU AGS structure. The committee’s modeling of financial benefits associated with a preferred merger in the FNWSU showed adverse tax impact for Franklin, Highgate, and Sheldon. Franklin would experience a dramatic increase. We see little advantage to merging, especially when those savings are dependent on incentives that will end in four years.

We recommend an ambitious and extensive plan for a new and improved supervisory union: an enhanced FNWSU AGS. The Act 46 committee, the FNWSU school boards and voters are in synch with support for the recommendation. We realize a great deal of systemic work remains, and FNWSU does not intend to let this opportunity slip away. We are excited to continue implementing the type of reforms detailed in the “enhanced FNWSU AGS” action plan which we believe are needed to ensure success in exceeding the goals of Act 46 on an ongoing basis. We are confident that our plan will meet and exceed the goals of Act 46, as well as best serve our students and communities.

(The appendices contain detailed information and data studied by the committee.)

Appendix A

Goal 1: Equity

Goal 1

Educational Equity in the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union

The Act 46 Study Committee has conducted a thorough investigation of the educational equity among the four elementary school districts (Franklin, Highgate, Sheldon, and Swanton) in the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union. The purpose of this study was to assess the supervisory union's current ability to meet or exceed Act 46 goal (1) which states: **Provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities statewide.** The committee members met with each of the respective principals and engaged in a detailed discussion about the school's master schedule. The committee members received explanations of the nomenclature, function, and rationale of the master schedule. The committee then charged the principals with the task of meeting with their leadership teams to analyze their school's master schedule and make a list of all program/subject offerings and how many minutes per week students spend in each respective instructional period. The results were tabulated and formulated into a chart where they could be easily compared according to school, grade level, subject, and minutes in each subject. (Appendix A. Equity of Offerings: Master Schedules)

Subjects Offered

The chart displays a high degree of educational opportunities among the four elementary schools. Each of the schools offer essentially the same opportunities in math, social studies, science, reading, writing, literacy, physical education, music, guidance, computer lab/technology, library, art, health, and socio-emotional wellness.

The MVU and Sheldon Middle schools offer the same educational opportunities, except for foreign language being offered at MVU but not at Sheldon. MVU has taken advantage of sharing foreign language teachers in the middle school and high school since they are in the same building. Sheldon's geographic isolation has made it difficult to justify a foreign language program at the middle school level. In the past few years, the number of students choosing foreign language electives has dwindled and the supervisory union is in the initial stage of discussing the possibility of MVU and Sheldon sharing a foreign language teacher.

Time in Subjects

The chart reveals there is substantial equity in the amount of time students spend in each program area. While there is some difference in program nomenclature and actual minutes in programs among the grade clusters, each student has adequate time available in core subject instruction and unified arts. The respective schools and individual grade levels nuance their time apportionments to meet student needs.

SU-Wide Curriculum

ELEMENTARY

At the advent of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and then the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), FNWSU began embarking on understanding and writing new curriculum based on the standards. In 2011 staff began "unpacking" the CCSS. In 2013-2015, FNWSU began writing units of study for grades K-6 using the math, reading, and writing standards in the CCSS. We began writing science units in 2016. This work was facilitated by the SU Director of Curriculum and Instruction; with the math and literacy leaders from each of the four elementary school buildings making the largest contributions to the work. Following the completion of the units of study, the group began work choosing priority standards within each unit of study, and most recently proficiency scales tied to these standards. Future work

will include creating assessment item banks for teachers in the four elementary schools to use as guides to rigor and examples of quality tasks for each level defined in the proficiency scales. This work can be accessed by the public at www.fnwsu.org under the curriculum tab.

Teachers at the four elementary schools now work within professional learning communities (PLC) to ensure our students are reaching proficiency in the priority standards. Within PLC's, teachers discuss four questions: 1) What is it we want students to know; 2) How will we know if they have learned it; 3) What do we do if the students have not learned it; and 4) What do we do if the students already know it? This structure not only helps with our goal towards high levels of achievement for all students, but also helps the SU monitor that teachers are teaching the SU-wide curriculum. In addition, the 2017-2018 school year will see a SU-wide report card for grades K-6 that will report out to parents and guardians on their student's progress towards the priority standards. Finally, the SU analyzes the SU-wide local assessment plan three times a year. All teachers report results in the same software program—VCAT (also where our report cards are housed).

MIDDLE SCHOOL

FNWSU currently has a divide between its two middle schools regarding curriculum. MVU's grades 7/8 work within the same system as the high school (described below). Sheldon's grades 7/8 work within the same system as the K-6 schools. They have chosen priority standards and have begun working on proficiency scales to match the standards. They are further along in ELA than math. Currently the two sets of middle level teachers rarely, if ever, work together. This is an area that FNWSU can grow.

HIGH SCHOOL

The Educational Quality Standards require that high schools build a proficiency-based system for graduation. MVU has been working towards this goal for the past 3 years. Core content departments are developing Essential Learning Outcomes (ELO) that are vertically aligned grades 7-12. Because the CCSS and NGSS are more generalized in later years of school, this task requires more work and revision than at the elementary level.

MVU's high school and middle school also work within the PLC structure called data teams. Data teams use the ELO's and common assessments to look at student achievement. School leadership can use this work to monitor teacher usage of the agreed upon ELO's.

Professional Development

When professional learning opportunities are offered through the SU, all schools receive the same opportunities. Most times we work together as a team, however, there are certain instances where schools decide to make their own path (e.g., Highgate Elementary School has decided to work on the priority standards through a stock math program, whereas the other schools are not using this). Currently, the SU is focusing professional learning around quality first instruction and developing a multi-tiered system of support in each building.

In light of this, the SU is developing a teacher leadership system that is based in a common understanding of what good instruction is. We are working with the Marzano Research group and their instructional framework. Each of the five schools are participating. Connected to this is our need to formalize our coaching system. All four elementary schools have a literacy and mathematics teacher leader. In 2017, MVU added an instructional coach to their staff. FNWSU does not have a common job description for these positions although they do similar work. In the fall of 2017, teacher and building leadership worked with the SU Director of Curriculum and Instruction to formalize our coaching beliefs and structures. The goal is to have a similar expectation for these positions in each building.

During this past school year, the SU-wide leadership team took an on-line course together concerning Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-tiered support system (MTSS). The goal of this course was to develop a collective understanding of evidence-based practices. We are building on this understanding this school year with

each school creating an action plan based on need but within the constraints of our collective understanding. This work will be monitored through central office leadership.

Opportunities for More Equity Between Schools

FNWSU has several opportunities to provide more equitable opportunities across the SU regarding curriculum and instruction. They are:

- 1) Ensure each school has adequate intervention services based on need and population.
 - a. When viewed in relation to need and student population MVU and Sheldon currently have considerably less intervention services available to students in need than the other three schools. For instance, there is one math and one literacy interventionist at the middle school in MVU, but none at the high school. At Sheldon School, there is one professional math interventionist, one paraprofessional math interventionist, and one paraprofessional literacy interventionist; however, Highgate School, with nearly the same student population as Sheldon, has one literacy and two professional literacy interventionists, one professional math specialist, and one professional math interventionist.
- 2) Ensure each school has a behavior system and personnel to make the system successful for all students.
 - a. Currently some schools work closely with Northwest Counseling and Support Services (NCSS) while others do not. Some schools have a clearer system than others. Some schools have not formalized their system but rather react as discipline incidences occur.
- 3) Create formalized practices for common positions and systems (e.g., Instructional Coaching)
- 4) While FNWSU currently uses the same supervision and evaluation system across schools, we are planning to change this system to better match our instructional framework. The work ahead is to calibrate this new system with all building administrators. This work is currently being planned for the 2017-2018 school year.
- 5) Ensure there are similar opportunities for students at the grade 7/8 levels between schools. Currently students at MVU enjoy opportunities not offered to students at Sheldon. Of particular interest is the lack of foreign language experiences at Sheldon vs. MVU. MVU 7th and 8th graders have the opportunity to begin studying a foreign language while Sheldon's do not. There are other enrichment opportunities available to MVU middle level students that are not offered at Sheldon, but there are also enrichment opportunities offered at Sheldon that are not offered at MVU. These differences are largely due to personnel and geographical differences.

Conclusion

The equity data among the five school districts in the FNWSU reveals that there is already substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities to satisfy the first Act 46 goal. The data also reveals that improvements to educational opportunity and quality can already be achieved in the current SU governance structure. Likewise, school boards in FNWSU have not seen evidence that consolidated governance structures lead to greater equity. The Act 46 study committee believes that the schools in the FNWSU will be best served by the implementation of our enhanced alternative governance structure, which has been designed to exceed all the goals of Act 46".

The various grade master schedules follow on the next pages.

Equity of Offerings: Master Schedules

Kindergarten

Minutes per week	Math	SC/SS	Reading	Writing	Literacy / foundation	PE	Music	Guidance	Comp lab/tech	Library	Art	UA/health	Socio/Emo	Success/teams	Total
Franklin	150	75	225	100	50	60	30	30	30	30			75		855
Highgate	300	150		225	600							225	225		1725
Sheldon	250	200		250	525	50	50	50	50	50	50		150	50	1725
Swanton¹	305 - 375	0 – 55	160-265 - 375 ²	120-160	75 - 305	85	40	25	40	40	40		150 - 375 ³		⁴

1st grade

Minutes per week	Math	SC/SS	Reading	Writing	Literacy / foundation	PE	Music	Guidance	Comp lab/tech	Library	Art	UA/health	Socio/emo	Success/teams	total
Franklin	300	150	375	200	125	70	35	35	70	35	35		150		1580
Highgate	300	150		225	600							225	225		1725
Sheldon	250	250	250	225	350	50	50	50	50	50	50		150	50	1825
Swanton	335-400	45-120	350-375	140-225	120-165	85	40	30-40		40	40		200		

¹ Includes a range of times given the different teacher/class allotments

² Mindfulness was included in reading due to class description (Instead of just Mindfulness was labeled “Mindfulness Reading aloud”)

³ Includes mindfulness time

⁴ Unable to truly total Swanton due to ranges rather than one class

2nd grade

Minutes per week	Math	SC/SS	Reading	Writing	Literacy / foundation	PE	Music	Guidance	Comp lab/tech	Library	Art	UA/health	Socio/econo	Success/teams	total
Franklin	325	125	350	225	120	70	35	35	70	35	35		125		1550
Highgate	450	150		225	450							225	225		1725
Sheldon	250	250	250	225	350	50	50	50	50	50	50		150	50	1825
Swanton	335-400	45-120	350-375	140-225	120-165	85	40	30-40		40	40		200		

3rd grade

Minutes per week	Math	SC/SS	Writing	Reading ⁵	Literacy/ foundation	PE	Music	Guidance	Comp lab/tech	Library	UA/health	Socio/econo	Art	Success/ Teams/ Skills time ⁶	total
Franklin	300	120	250	325	150	70	35	35	70	35		95	35	60	1580
Highgate	375	225	225		450						225	225			1725
Sheldon	400	200	730			100	50	45	50	50		150	50	50	1875
Swanton	325-375	125-180	225	305-375	150-180	90	45	30		45		150	45	40	

4th grade

⁵ Order of columns is changed to easier show Highgate numbers

⁶ Special intervention for students or catch up time

Minutes per week	Math	Reading	writing	SC/SS	Literacy/fundation	PE	MUSIC	Guidance	Comp lab/tech	Library	UA/health	Socio/e mo	Succe ss/ Teams / Skills time	Art	Total
Franklin	525	470	205	225		70	35	35	35	35		75		35	1745
Highgate	360	360	360	90							225	225			1680
Sheldon	400	735		200		100	50	45	50	50		150	50	50	1875
Swanton	375	400-450	175-225	180	100	90	45	45		45		125		45	

5th Grade

Minutes per week	Math	Writing	SC/SS	Reading	L/A	Literacy/fundation	interven tions	Succe s time	Enri chment And Flex	PE	MUSIC	Guidance	Comp lab/tech	Library	U A / health	Socio/e mo	Succe s/s kill s/tea m	A r t	total
Franklin	350	205	225		375		135			70	195 ⁷	35	35	35		80			1740
Highgate	300	200	225			375		150							225	200			1675
Sheldon	250	250	200	75		400			200	100	50	50		50		150	50	50	1875
Swanton	350-425	225-270	160-335	325-400		100-270				90	45	45		20		125		45	

6th grade⁸

⁷ Includes music, chorus and band

Minutes per week	Math	Writing	SC /S S	Reading	L/A	Literacy	Humanities	interventions	Success time	Enrichment and flex	PE	Music	Guidance	Comp lab/tech	Library	UA / health	Socio/emmo	Success/skills/team	Art	total
Franklin	375	180	225		350			135			70	195	35	35	35		105			1740
Highgate	300	375	300			300			150							225	150			1650
Sheldon	250	250	200	75		400				200	100	50	50		50		150	50	50	1875
Swanton	375	225	225-275	245-300			110-180 500				85 90	45	45				150		45	

7th and 8th Grade

Minutes per week	Math	Science	SS/Humanities	Reading	L/A, English Literacy	Enrichment/Intervention ⁹	Exploratory/Electives	Success/team	Socio/emmo/homeroom	PE	Art	Music	Guidance	total
MVU	255	255	255		255	255	450 ¹⁰		50					1775
Sheldon	250	250	250	150	200	200 ¹¹		50	195	100	100	50	50	1845

⁸ This grade introduces “humanities”. It replaces Literacy/Fundations.

⁹ This section is called enrichment at both Sheldon and MVU. At MVU it can be enrichment or intervention, depending on the student need. Intervention is for any student that needs math or reading support to reach grade level.

¹⁰ At MVU, Electives include French, Spanish, Band, Guitar, Strings, Chorus, Family Science, Agriculture, Elective Art, Woods, and Information Technology. The Exploratory Program consists of Art, Business and Technology Education, Physical Education and Family and Consumer Science. Students are required to take all exploratory classes.

¹¹ At Sheldon, this is miscellaneous UA time (Music, PE, Tech, Art)

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Appendix B

Goal 2: Student Achievement

Goal 2

Student Achievement in the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union

Achievement of State's Education Quality Standards

Just as the Act 46 Study Committee conducted a thorough investigation of the educational equity, it also conducted a thorough investigation of student achievement among the four elementary school districts. The purpose of this study was to assess the supervisory union's current ability to meet or exceed Act 46 goal (2) which states: **Lead students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards, adopted as rules by the State Board of Education at the direction of the General Assembly. The purpose of said rules is 'to ensure that all students in Vermont public schools are afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality, and enable them to achieve or exceed the standards approved by the State Board of Education'**¹.

Nondiscrimination

Each district ensures that students are furnished educational and other services in accordance with state and federal entitlements and requirements. Each district maintains a record system that aligns with the Agency of Education's statewide data collections. Each school also implements policies consistent with the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Act regarding surveys, analyses and evaluations.

Curriculum

Curriculum work in the districts is described in the Equity portion of this report. The schools meet the education quality standards and are working on ways to improve equity and quality (e.g., MVU's progress on Expected Learning Outcome (ELO) development and monitoring). MVU, the middle/high school for K-6 students in Franklin, Highgate and Swanton, has programs in place to develop student career readiness. These programs stress career and technical education, college and career readiness, and educational technology. Personalized learning plans are updated annually (or more frequently as needed). Proficiency-based learning and proficiency-based graduation systems of instruction, assessment, grading and academic reporting are standard.

Assessments: Test Performance

One way to measure progress towards this goal is through student test scores. We analyzed test score data and found differences in test performance between schools. Franklin Elementary School students performed well (one of the top performers in the state), while fifty percent or more of the students at the other elementary schools were performing below proficiency level (level 1 and 2). Test scores have been and are an area of concern for all districts in FNWSU, and all districts, except Franklin, have been required to make improvements.

SBAC Math (and Math NECAP) Test Results

We looked at two years of SBACAC Math (FY15 and FY16) and one year of NECAP Math (FY13) test score results for all grades. In grade 3 in FY15, SBACAC Math scores showed that students in all schools except Swanton, performed higher than the state average for proficient or above. In FY16, all schools

¹ <http://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-state-board-rules-series-2000.pdf>

except Swanton and Sheldon did so. The results also show the volatility that small class sizes can have on student performance scores, e.g. in 2014-15, only 54% of Franklin students scored as proficient or above (3 and 4 rankings) and in 2015-16, 83% were proficient and above.

School performance gains will be better demonstrated using scaled scores under ESSA than was the case with NCLB. Evidence of this assumption can be seen with the comparison of Franklin and Highgate 3rd grade scaled scores below vs. the total proficient and above.

SBAC MATH GRADE 3, 2015-16

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above ²	Total below proficient ³
Franklin	18	2455.1	83%	16%
Highgate	37	2455.8	56%	43%
MVU				
Sheldon	33	2419.5	48%	51%
Swanton	64	2415.0	39%	60%
State	6,107	2441.7	55%	44%

SBAC MATH Grade 3, 2014-15

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above	Total below proficient
Franklin	11	2447.5	54%	45%
Highgate	45	2432	55%	44%
MVU				
Sheldon	26	2436.7	57%	42%
Swanton	61	2407.6	36%	63%
State	5,870	2435	51%	48%

Grade 6 SBAC Math scores showed that students tend to score lower in the higher grades. They also show differences in testing years. In these tests, Franklin students score significantly higher than students in the other schools. Only Franklin students scored higher than the state average both years; Highgate was higher one year. Swanton and Sheldon are significantly below the state average in Fy15.

SBAC MATH, grade 6, 2015-16

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above	Total below proficient
Franklin	19	2586.8	73%	26%
Highgate	40	2498.1	35%	65%
MVU				
Sheldon	33	2508.5	36%	63%
Swanton	73	2484.6	26%	73%
State	5,969	2522.0	40%	59%

²

Total proficient and above equals scores 3,4

³ Total below proficient equals scores 1,2

SBAC MATH, grade 6, 2014-15

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above	Total below proficient
Franklin	20	2539.9	45%	55%
Highgate	33	2512.5	42%	57%
MVU				
Sheldon	21	2478.5	14%	85%
Swanton	80	2489.5	21%	78%
State	5,881	2515.5	37%	62%

SBAC Math scores for grades 7 and 8 show even lower average scores. Both Sheldon and MVU are significantly below the State average. Grade 11 SBAC math scores were lower than the state average for both FY 15 and FY16. Other than seventh graders in FY16, Sheldon 7th and 8th graders had higher scores than MVU, our merged middle and high school.

SBAC MATH, grade 7, 2015-16

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Prof/above	Below proficient
MVU	131	2530.9	35.9%	64.1%
Sheldon	20	2502.5	25%	75%
State	2845	2547.5	46%	54%

SBAC MATH, grade 7, 2014-15

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Prof/above	Below proficient
MVU	114	2491.4	17.5%	82.5%
Sheldon	26	2490.1	26.9%	73.1%
State	5,910	2541.5	43.2%	56.8%

SBAC MATH, grade 8, 2015-16

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Prof/above	Below proficient
MVU	113	2520.2	22%	77%
Sheldon	22	2481.6	27.3%	72.7%
State	5,913	2563.7	43.9%	56.1%

SBAC Math, grade 8, 2014-15

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Prof/above	Below proficient
MVU	137	2484.7	13.9%	86.1%
Sheldon	26	2524.3	27%	73%
State	5,908	2552.7	40.2%	59.8%

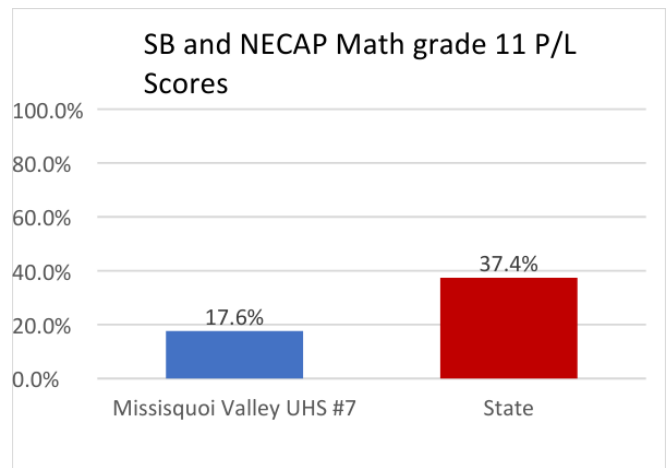
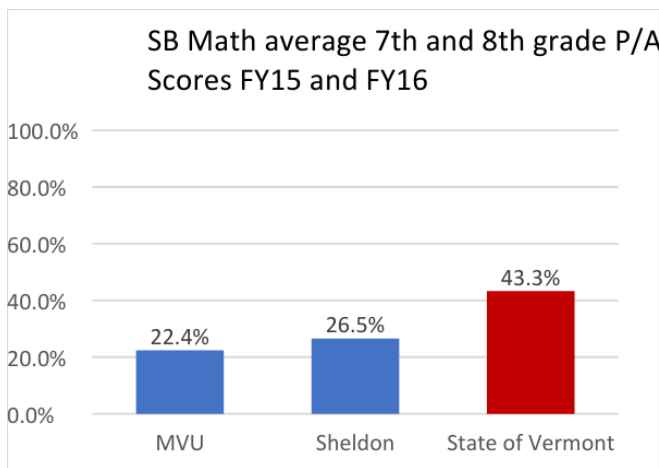
MVU eleventh graders also performed below the state average. This seems to contradict the assumption that merged districts perform better.

SBAC MATH, grade 11, 2015-16

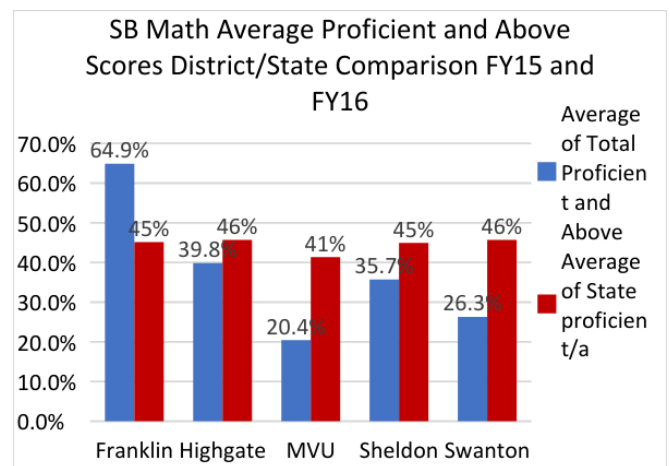
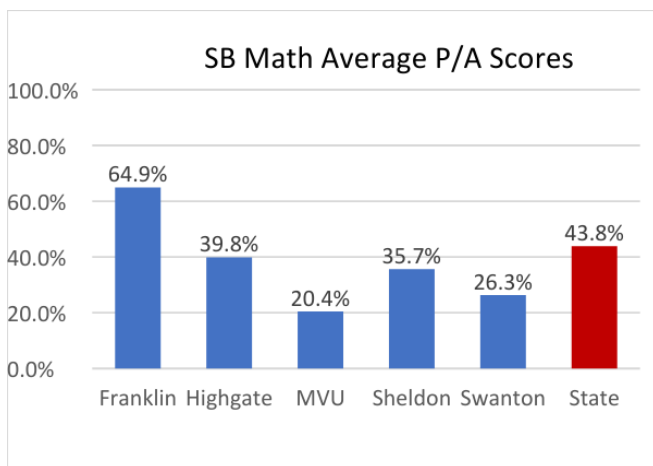
School	# students	Avg scaled score	Prof/above	Below proficient
MVU	126	2519.5	19%	81%
State	5,829	2580.9	37.8%	62.2%

SBAC MATH, grade 11, 2014-15

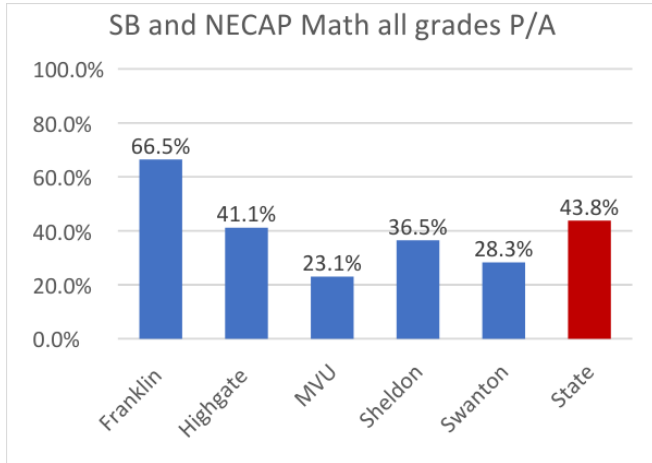
School	# students	Avg scaled score	Prof/above	Below proficient
MVU	113	2497.0	14.2%	85.8%
State	5,677	2580.6	37.1%	62.9%



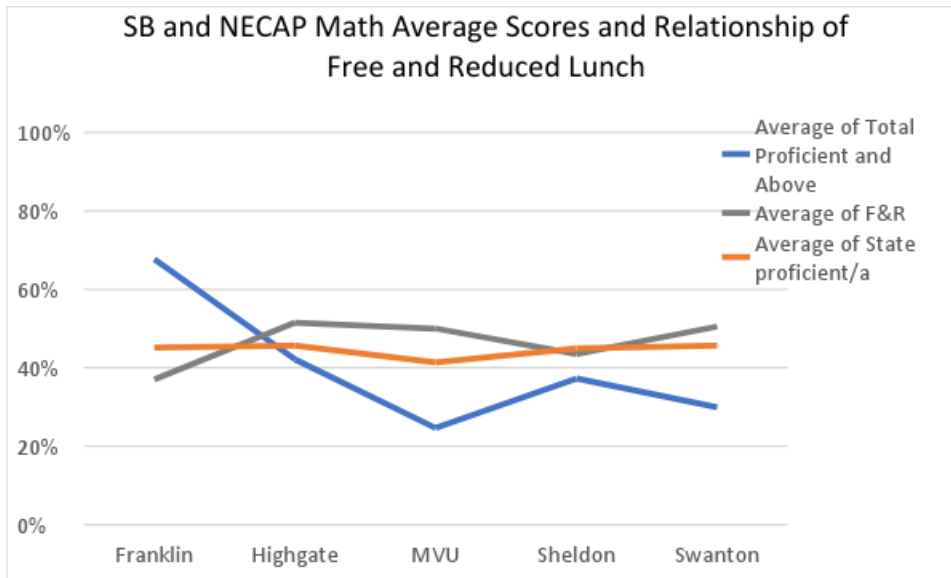
We then looked at the SBAC Math average district scores for FY15 and FY16 for all grades against the state score. The blue column shows district scores; the red shows state scores. Franklin scored above the state average (65% vs. 44%); Highgate, MVU, Sheldon and Swanton scored below the state average at 40%, 20%, 37%, and 26%, respectively.



When NECAP scores are considered in the average scores, taking all grades into account for Math NECAP FY 13 and FY14 and SBAC FY15 and FY16, Franklin again performs above the state average at 67% versus 44% (state average is same as SBAC state averages since state NECAP scores are not available). Highgate, MVU, Sheldon and Swanton scored at 41, 23, 37, and 28%.



We looked at the effect of poverty on test scores using the measure of Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) and found an indirect correlation. Schools with the greatest number of students receiving FRL had lower scores.



SBAC English and Language Arts (ELA) and NECAP Test Results

SBAC ELA and NECAP Reading and Writing scores were like Math test scores in that:

- Franklin scores higher than the other districts
- Highgate comes in second
- MVU, Sheldon and Swanton consistently perform below the state average
- There was a relationship between FRL/non FRL scores

The scores differ in that:

- Highgate scores are higher than average state scores
- Scores for Language Arts testing do not tend to change as grade level increases

In grade three, Franklin and Highgate have average test scores higher than the state average. This is not the case for Sheldon and Swanton, both of whom score below the state average. When looking at two different years, one can see the difference a year and/or number of students can make. Franklin had 18 students with an average proficient and above score of 66% in FY16. IN FY15, they had only 11 students and an average proficient and above score of 81%. Franklin, Highgate, Sheldon and Swanton all scored higher in FY15, while the state average was slightly lower that year.

SBAC English grade3, 2015-16

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above	Total below proficient
Franklin	18	2473.00	66%	33%
Highgate	37	2431.7	54%	45%
MVU				
Sheldon	33	2395.7	30%	69%
Swanton	64	2400.1	34%	65%
State	6,090	2437.7	53%	46%

SBAC English grade3, 2014-15

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above	Total below proficient
Franklin	11	2481.5	81%	18%
Highgate	45	2440.1	60%	40%
MVU				
Sheldon	26	2415.0	46%	53%
Swanton	60	2413.6	45%	55%
State	5,842	2431.0	51%	48%

In grade six, only Franklin and Highgate have average test scores higher than the state average in FY16. In FY15, only Franklin does. Franklin again shows a significantly higher average p/a score in FY16, at 83% with 19 students. In FY15, there were 20 students and the average p/a score was 55%. Swanton had an average p/a score of 52% in FY15, only 1% lower than the state average.

SBAC English, Grade 6, 2015-16

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above	Total below proficient
Franklin	19	2598.5	83%	17%
Highgate	40	2553.1	57%	43%
MVU				
Sheldon	33	2520.5	45%	55%
Swanton	73	2519.6	43%	57%
State	5952	2538.9	55%	45%

SBAC English, Grade 6, 2014-15

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total proficient and above	Total below proficient
Franklin	20	2547.7	55%	45%
Highgate	33	2535.5	48%	52%
MVU				
Sheldon	21	2477.8	21%	79%
Swanton	80	2522.3	52%	48%
State	5884	2532.3	53%	47%

Grade eight involves only two districts, Sheldon and MVU. Both districts had average p/a scores below the state in both FY15 and FY16.

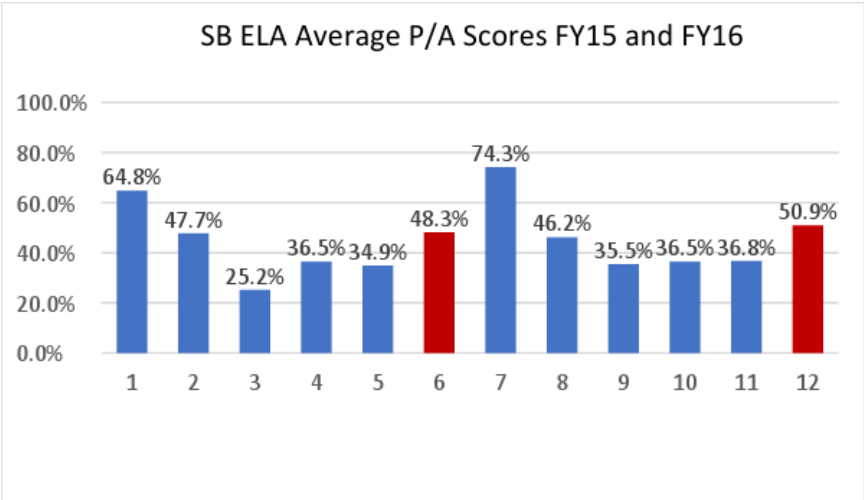
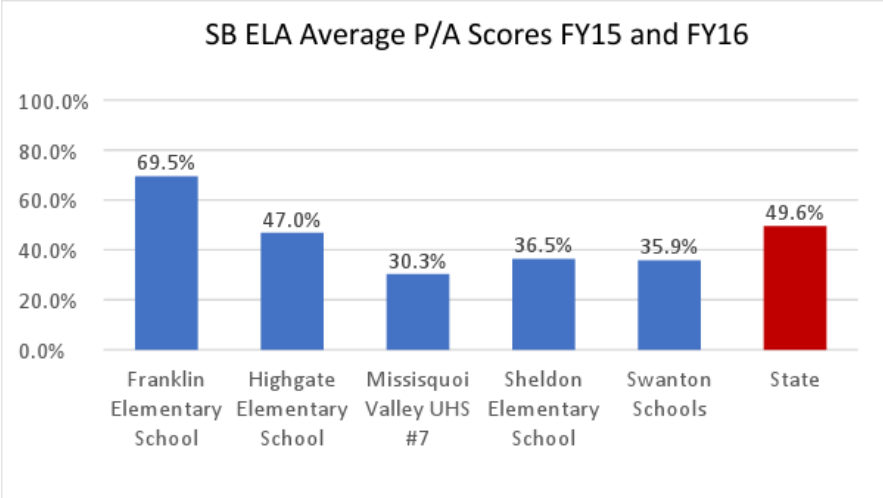
SBACAC ELA grade 8, 2015 -16

School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above	Total below proficient
MVU	113	2540.3	42%	57%
Sheldon	21	2490.4	28%	71%
State	5,916	2580.2	58%	41%

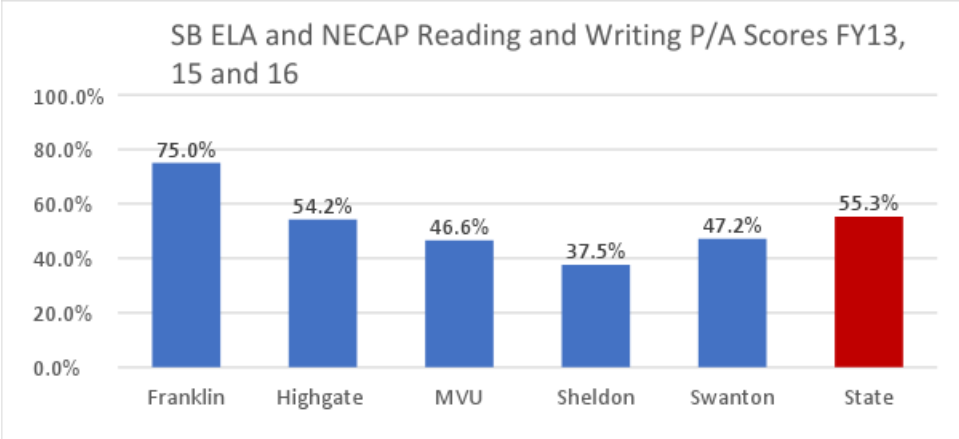
SBACAC ELA grade 8, 2014-15

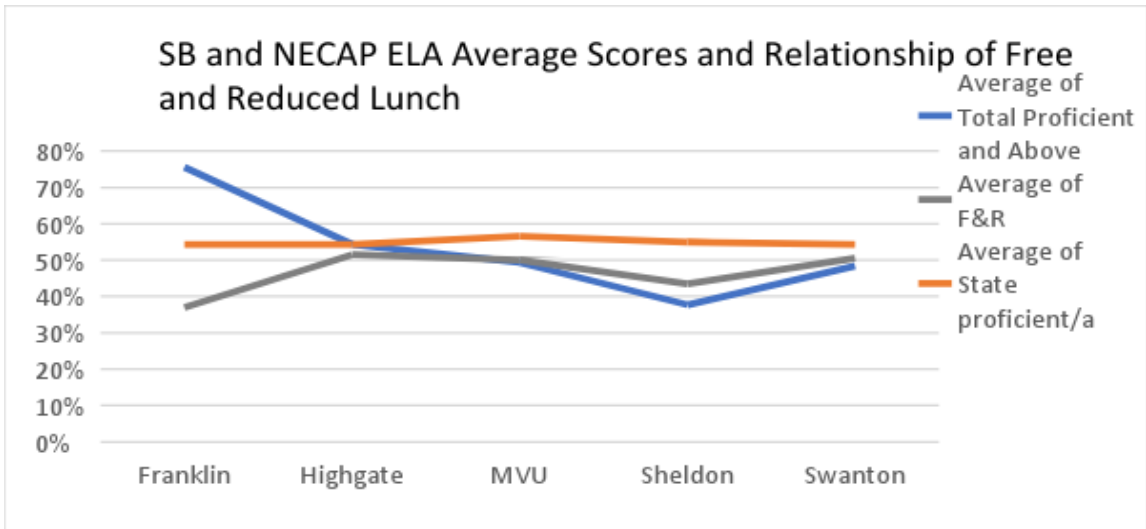
School	# students	Avg scaled score	Total prof/above	Total below proficient
MVU	138	2521.1	32%	67%
Sheldon	26	2528.7	34%	65%
State	5,970	2569.3	53%	46%

The data shows that students at our merged school, MVU, performed lower than students at the other schools, as well as below the state average. Only Franklin scored above the state average.



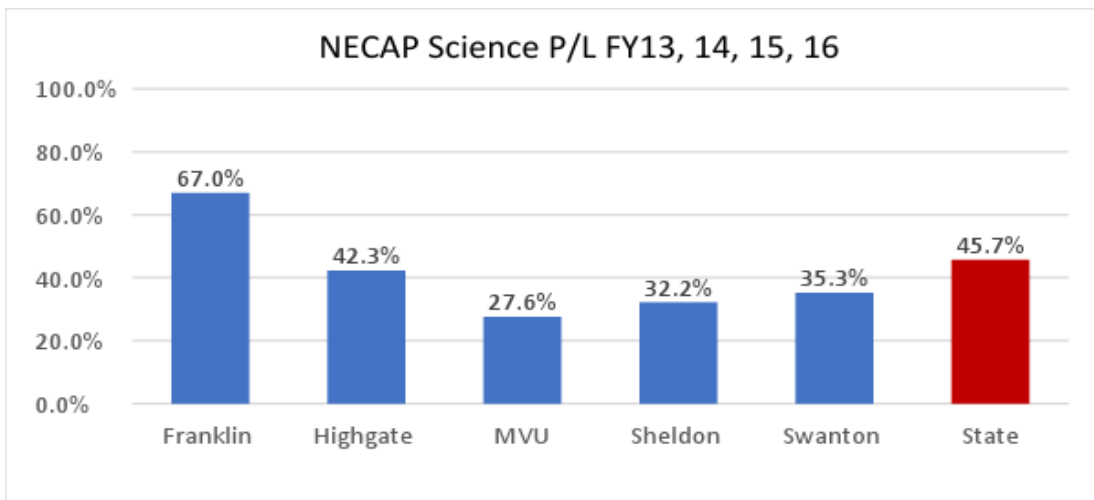
When all reading and writing scores were considered (NECAP reading and writing and SBAC ELA) the proficient and above scores were higher for both Swanton and Highgate. And, as with Math scores, the scores correlated with Free and Reduced Lunch.





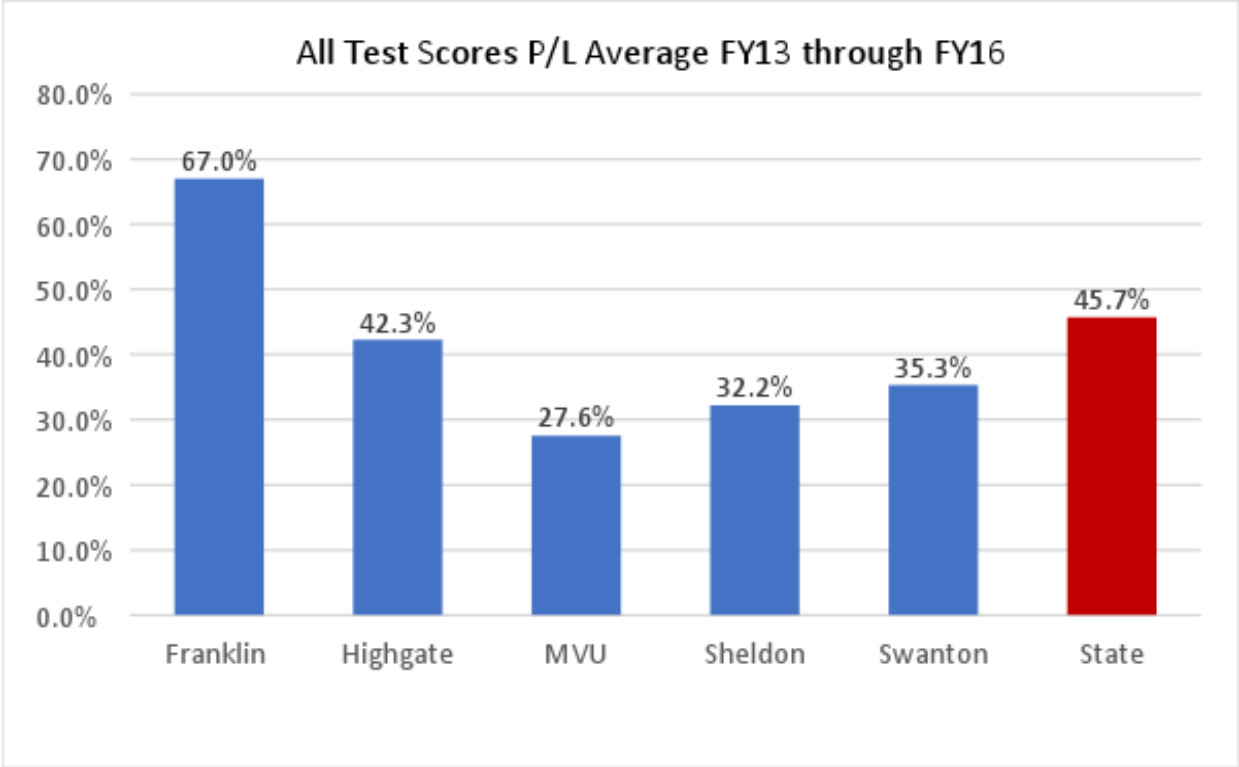
NECAP Science

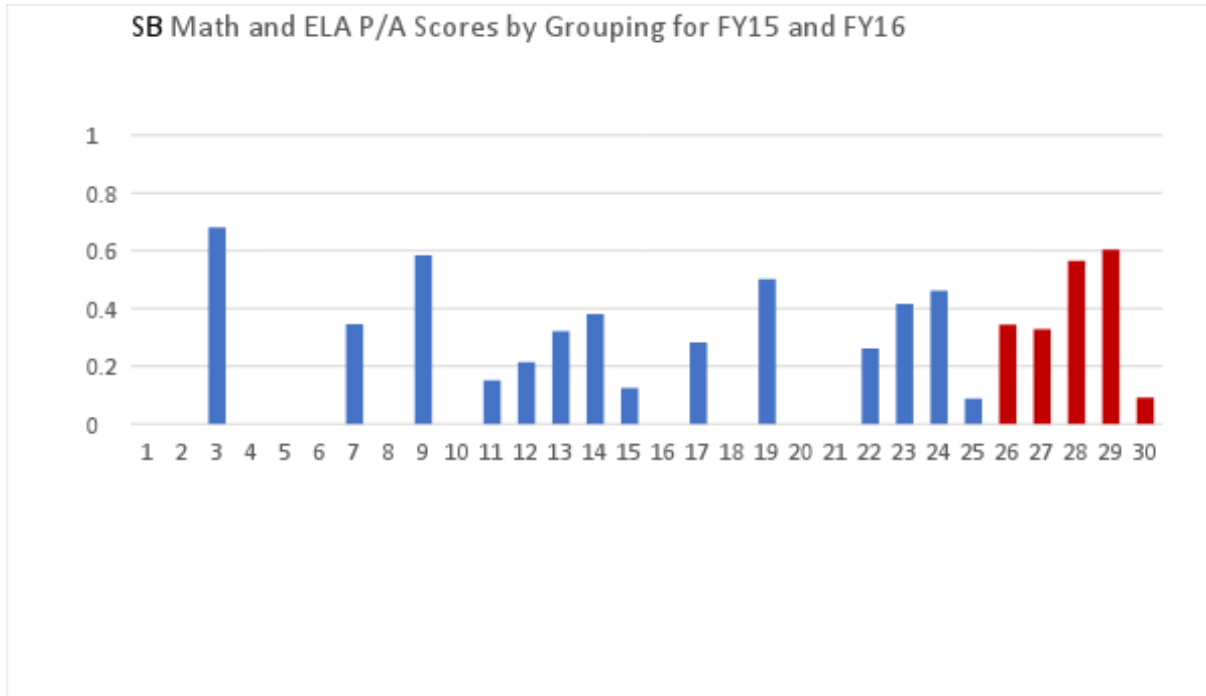
Student proficient and above scores for Science were consistently below the state average, except for Franklin whose scores exceeded the State average in each grade each year.



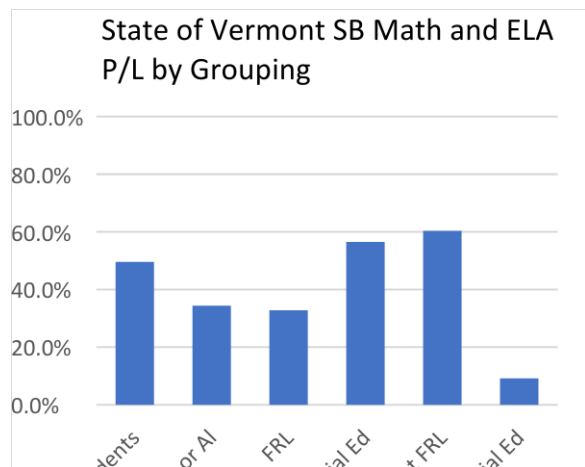
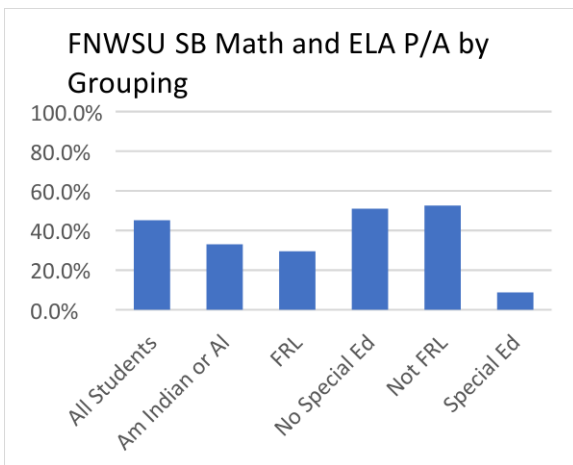
Combined Test Scores

We looked at scores for all tests (NECAPS and SBAC's) from 2013-2016 and found that only Franklin students scored higher than the state average which was 46% proficient and above. Sixty seven percent of Franklin students were proficient and above; Highgate, Swanton, Sheldon and MVU students scored at 42%, 27%, and 35%, respectively.

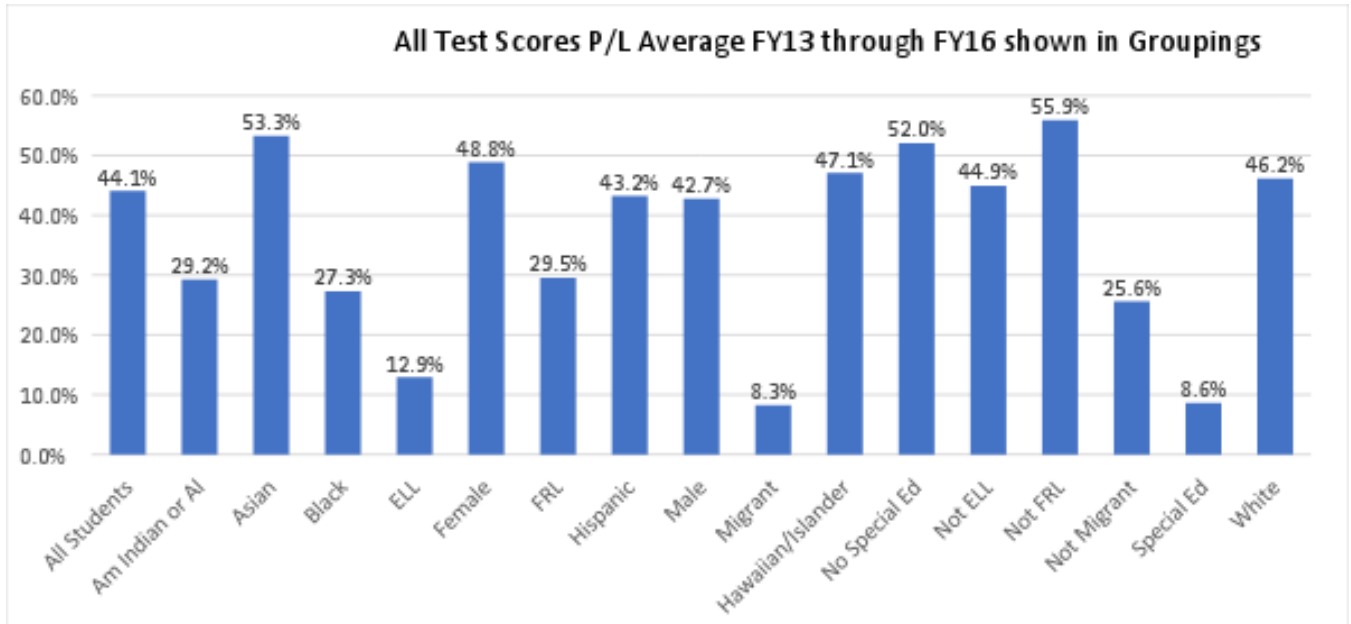




We disaggregated for FRL, non-FRL, Native American, White, Special Ed and non-special Ed and found



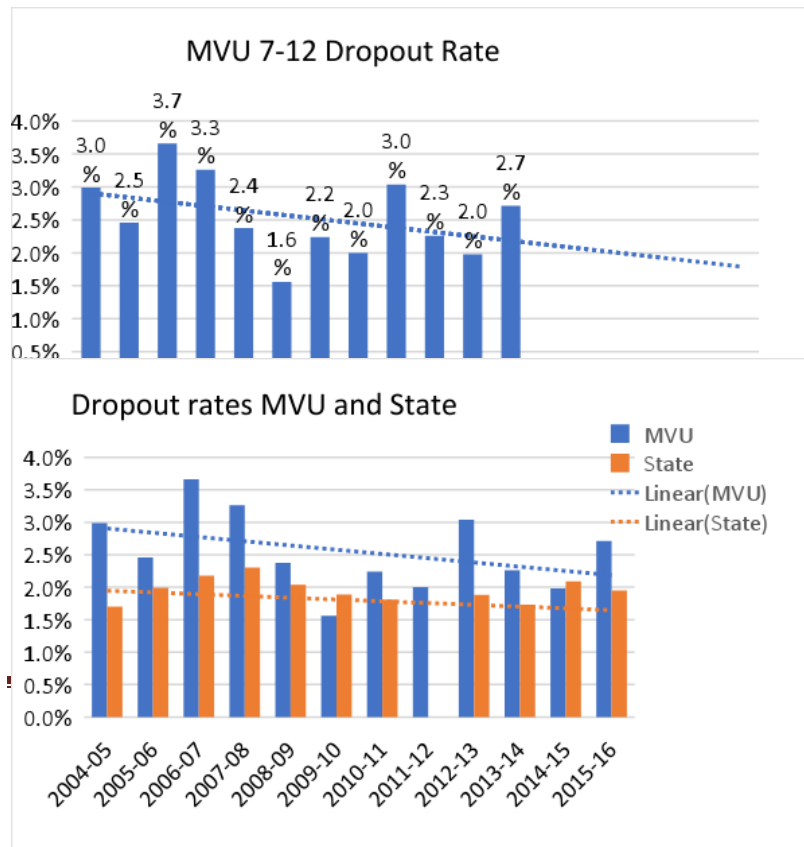
our statistics were similar to state results. All districts except Franklin had large enough numbers to break out non-FRL. When test scores for this group were compared, Franklin still performed higher than the other districts.



Graduation Rates

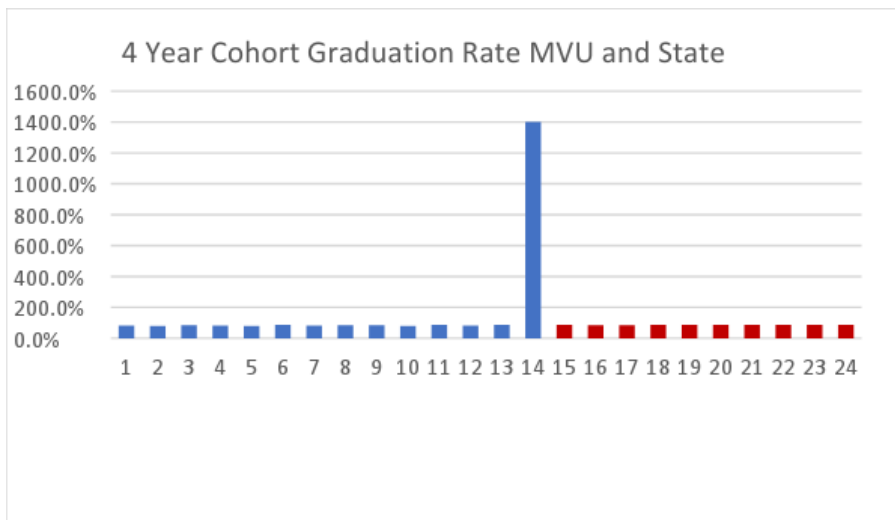
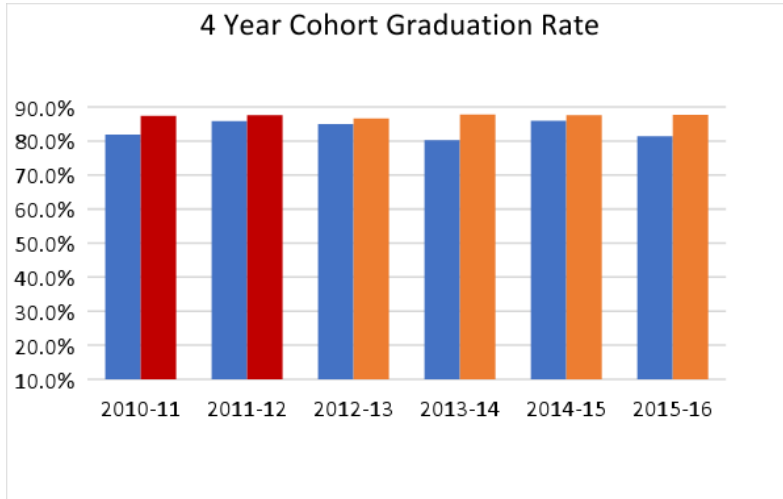
The MVU grade 7-12 dropout rate is higher than the state average. However, it is dropping and trend predictions are that it will continue to drop. The dropout rate was 3% in 2004-2005, 3.7% in 2006-2007, 2% in 2014-2015 and 2.7% in 2015-2016. We expect the trend to continue to decrease due to systems, structures and procedures in place to ensure all students thrive and graduate. MVU's dropout rate is declining at a higher rate than the state. In 2009-2010 and 2014-2015, MVU dropout rate was lower than the state average.

MVU Dropout Rates



Four-Year Cohort Rates

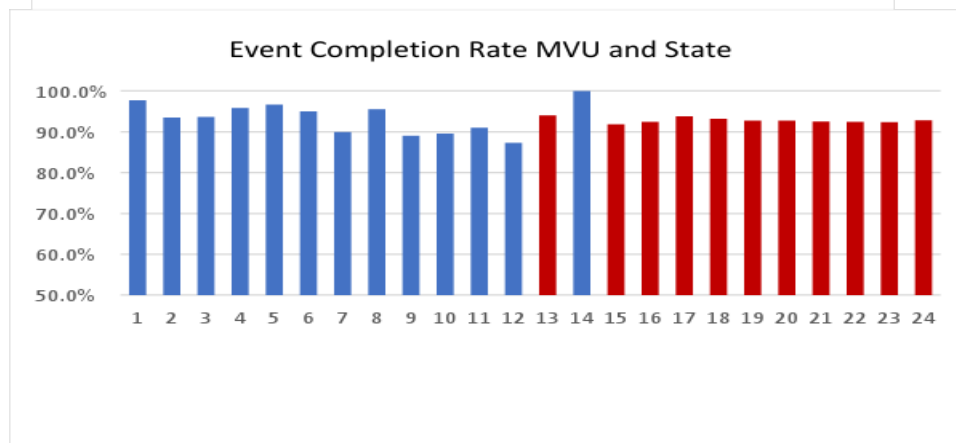
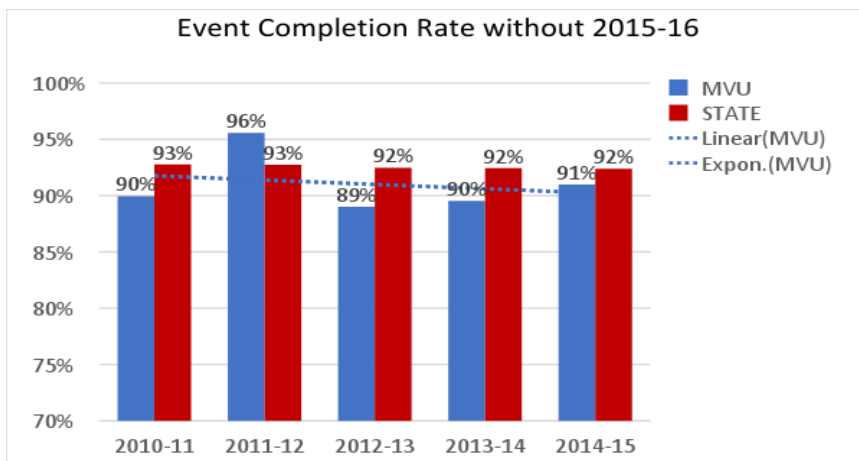
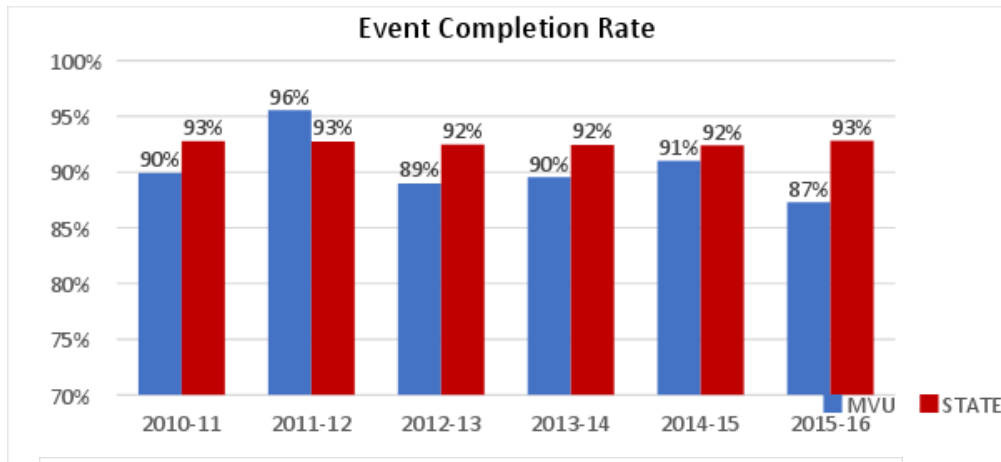
The four-year cohort graduation rate⁴ is lower than the state average; however, many factors influence this measure, some of which are beyond our control (e.g., students move, change schools, etc.). Our cohort rate has been improving (from 82% in 2010-2011 to 86% in 2014-2015). Several outlier years (2013-14 and 2015-16) are the exception to this trend.



⁴ The cohort graduation rate is the percentage of students enrolled at a school who graduate within four years of entering ninth grade.

Event Completion rate⁵

The event Completion rate is higher than MVU's four-year cohort graduation rate. It is still lower than the state average, except for the year 2011-2012. If 2015-2016 is not considered, MVU completion rates are exponentially trending higher.



⁵The event completion rate represents the percentage of 12th grade students who were promoted from Vermont high schools. AOE calculates this rate by dividing the number of promoted 12th graders by the adjusted enrollment of 12th graders during the same school year

Opportunities to improve students' ability to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards

- 1) The measures FNWSU takes to provide more equitable opportunities across the SU regarding curriculum and instruction will also provide opportunities for students to achieve or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards (e.g., ensuring each school has adequate intervention services based on need and population; ensuring each school has a behavior system in place and personnel to make the system successful; creating formalized practices for Instructional Coaching; etc.)
- 2) Investigate the methodology and processes used by each of the districts regarding testing, and assess which ones seem to produce the best outcomes for students.
- 3) Implement those processes, assess results, make alterations and commit to continuous improvement.
- 4) Swanton Elementary took additional measures this year to help students be successful at testing. They focused on student familiarity with testing technology and creating an environment to support their efforts.
- 5) It may be helpful to track students who graduate from district elementary schools through high school to determine overall graduation rates. It may also be helpful to look at graduation rates at MVU when these students are excluded from the population. This information may help us determine where the graduation numbers are most impacted.

Conclusion

The equity data among the five school districts in the FNWSU revealed there is substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities; however, test score performance varies greatly among the districts. Franklin is a consistently high performer, with scores that exceed state averages. Highgate comes in second in the SU, with scores similar or slightly below state averages. MVU, Sheldon, and Swanton performance scores are below state averages. In fact, at MVU, our consolidation example, student scores are improving but are still below state averages, leaving community members skeptical that merging is good for students.

After looking at the test score data, we asked ourselves, would merging schools change test performance scores? Is there any data showing that school governance affects student performance? Would merging raise scores of low performing schools and/or lower scores of high performing schools?

We have not found evidence that governance structure or merging affects test performance. Without such evidence, it is difficult, if not impossible, for Franklin to perceive any benefit to merging. On the contrary, this goal reinforces Franklin's current structure and the belief that merging is not in their best interest. Following Franklin's best practices might improve test scores in the other districts. Or maybe not, if socio-economic factors are the cause of lower scores in those schools. Educational research demonstrates that socio-economic circumstances need not determine test performance, and FNWSU is committed to finding ways to improve test scores across the board. Again, research does not indicate that merging schools positively impacts test performance.

FNWSU is committed to improvement in test performance and determined to find and address possible causes for low scores. Achievement is high in other areas: graduation rates are improving and dropout rates are declining. There is a realization that improvement is needed and there is strong commitment to finding ways to ensure that improvement.

Appendix C

Goal 3: Operational Efficiencies

Goal 3

Maximize operational efficiencies

Each district in the FNWSU is committed to operational efficiency, using every dollar to the greatest benefit of our students and communities. We believe we are already making great progress towards **goal 3: Maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with the goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff.**

Many of the efficiency measures being adopted by merging districts in Vermont have already been implemented by FNWSU. We are already collaborating to realize benefits from sharing resources, such as:

- Reduced transportation costs by combining/sharing busing contracts
- Reduced costs and increased efficiency from sharing personnel costs/negotiations
- Cost savings from combining purchasing contracts
- Greater efficiency and flexibility from sharing personnel
- More examples

Our commitment and vigilance in pursuing efficiencies and value for every dollar is reflected in our educational spending per equalized pupil costs (one of the factors in determining tax rates). For FY17, the costs range from \$11,684 (Franklin) to \$13,625 (MVU). The state average in FY17 is \$14,652, with a median of \$14,327.18 and a range from \$6,873.14 (Greensboro) to \$23,947.80 (Lemington). Our equalized pupil costs are lower than most Vermont schools with Franklin having the lowest in Franklin County. Bellows Free Academy UHSD is the highest in the county at \$16,598.48.

Enrollment numbers can significantly impact equalized pupil cost. As mentioned earlier, declining enrollment in Vermont schools has affected school costs in numerous ways: student/teacher ratios; student administrator ratios; equalized pupil counts; phantom pupils and hold harmless formulas. FNWSU is not experiencing the significant student population decline other areas of Vermont are experiencing. Except for MVU our enrollment numbers are relatively stable.

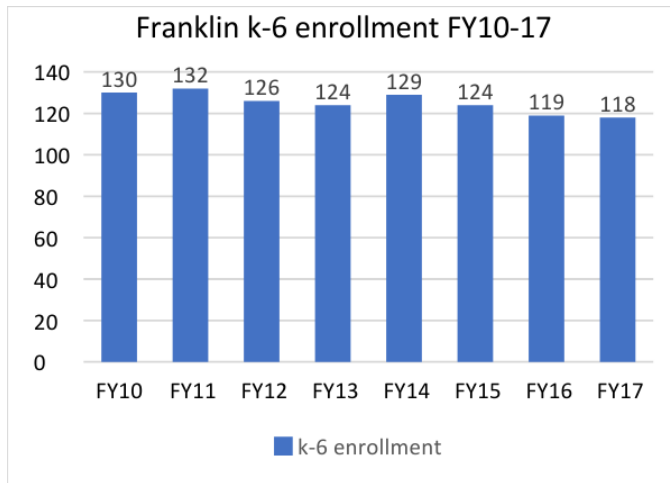
Our enrollment and student/staff ratio data follows.

Franklin

Franklin numbers are somewhat reflective of FNWSU schools in that numbers are declining in some years and not in others. For example, in FY14 enrollment was 129, similar to 130 in FY10. It is also important to note that ADM numbers are similar to enrollment numbers.

Enrollments	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	overall %change
EE				3	4				
PreK				17	14	33	23	24	
k	19	17	17	19	18	17	18	14	-26%
1st	22	18	19	15	20	17	14	18	-18%
2nd	18	23	18	18	15	19	20	14	-22%
3rd	13	19	22	17	17	12	18	20	54%

4th	18	15	18	21	19	18	12	20	11%
5th	25	16	16	19	21	21	18	10	-60%
6th	15	24	16	15	19	20	19	22	47%
total enrollment	130	132	126	144	147	157	142	142	9%
PK-6 enrollment	130	132	126	124	129	124	119	118	-9%



Franklin School District				
ADM	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14
EEE	3.20	3.00	4.00	2.40
prekindergarten	19.00	21.00	17.00	14.00
kindergarten	17.00	18.00	19.00	18.00
1st	18.00	19.00	16.00	20.00
2nd	22.03	18.03	18.00	16.00
3rd	19.00	20.06	18.00	17.00
4th	15.02	18.00	21.05	20.06
5th	16.00	16.06	19.07	21.10
6th	24.04	16.00	15.06	19.06
preK-6 ADM	153.29	149.15	147.18	147.62
K-6 ADM	131.09	125.15	126.18	131.22
7th	-	-	-	-
8th	-	-	-	-
9th	-	-	-	-
10th	-	-	-	-
11th	-	-	-	-
12th	-	-	-	-
7-12 ADM	-	-	-	-
Total ADM	153.29	149.15	147.18	147.62

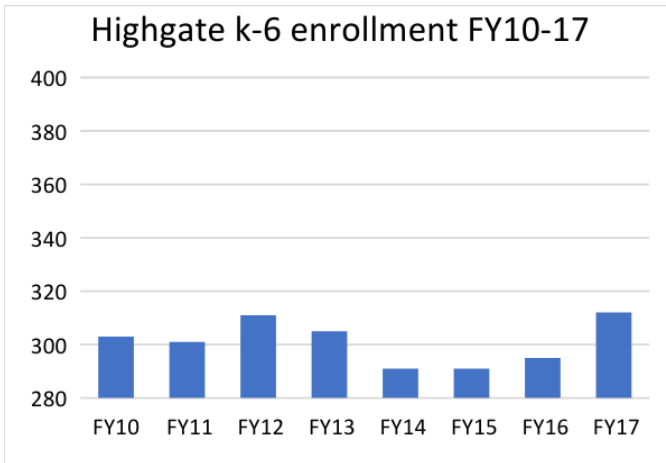
Total ADM FY16 = 240.67
 Total ADM FY17 = 230.73
 FRL = 38%

Highgate

Highgate has seen a 3% increase in PK-6 enrollment from FY10 to FY17. A trend shows the largest enrollment increases in the lower grades. There are some differences in ADM versus enrollment numbers.

enrollments	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	overall %change
EE				7	8				
PreK				32	21	48	58	50	
k	47	47	47	37	53	35	40	56	19%
1st	32	52	52	51	37	55	43	42	31%
2nd	40	32	55	51	47	38	50	41	2%
3rd	49	43	36	50	43	48	37	55	12%
4th	37	45	39	38	47	40	44	37	0%
5th	46	37	45	34	36	41	41	44	-4%

6th	52	45	37	44	28	34	40	37	-29%
total enrollment	303	301	311	344	320	339	353	362	19%
k-6 enrollment	303	301	311	305	291	291	295	312	3%



Highgate School District				
	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14
ADM				
EEE	2.98	3.71	3.35	6.25
prekindergarten	25.00	18.00	32.00	21.00
kindergarten	47.00	47.20	35.75	49.00
1st	53.00	51.00	51.00	35.00
2nd	34.00	53.60	50.00	46.00
3rd	45.00	38.00	48.55	41.00
4th	47.00	40.11	41.00	45.00
5th	38.00	46.04	35.00	38.00
6th	49.00	39.00	45.00	28.00
preK-6 ADM	340.98	336.66	341.65	309.25
K-6 ADM	313.00	314.95	306.30	282.00
7th	-	-	-	-
8th	-	-	-	-
9th	-	-	-	-
10th	-	-	-	-
11th	-	-	-	-
12th	-	-	-	-
7-12 ADM	-	-	-	-
Total ADM	340.98	336.66	341.65	309.25

Total Elem. and MVU ADM FY16 = 568.57

Total Elem. and MVU ADM FY17 = 531.8

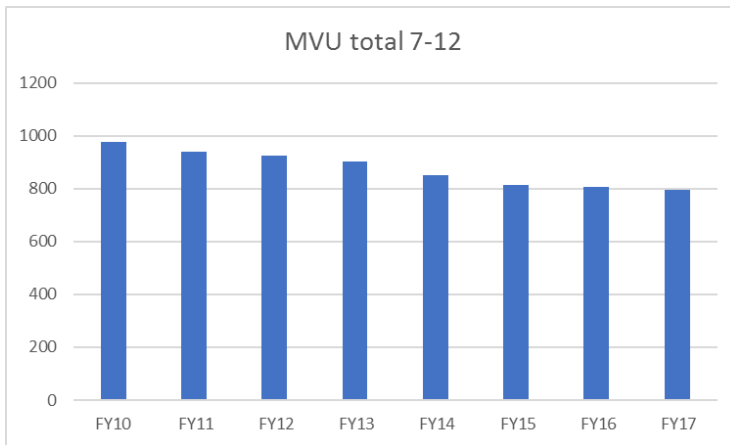
FRL = 51%

Missisquoi Valley Union Middle and High School (MVU)

MVU, our merged school, is experiencing the greatest enrollment decline. Enrollment numbers are higher than ADM numbers.

Enrollments	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	%change
7th	161	139	146	126	137	121	133	137	-15%
8th	158	158	140	143	127	141	118	129	-18%
9th	182	157	176	151	162	127	162	120	-34%
10th	153	180	159	162	129	149	127	159	4%
11th	164	149	172	154	161	131	139	121	-26%
12th	158	157	132	166	135	145	126	129	-18%
total 7-12	976	940	925	902	851	814	805	795	-19%
7-8 enrollment	319	297	286	269	264	262	251	266	-17%
9-12 enrollment	657	643	639	633	587	552	554	529	-19%

As the numbers show, the numbers are going down. FNWSU is studying the causes for the decline and is instituting an elementary school choice system to modulate enrollment peaks and valleys.



FRL = 52%

ADM	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14
EEE	-	-	-	-
prekindergarten	-	-	-	-
kindergarten	-	-	-	-
1st	-	-	-	-
2nd	-	-	-	-
3rd	-	-	-	-
4th	-	-	-	-
5th	-	-	-	-
6th	-	-	-	-
preK-6 ADM	-	-	-	-
K-6 ADM	-	-	-	-
7th	141.00	145.62	126.00	136.00
8th	158.49	139.65	142.06	126.00
9th	152.18	163.90	142.14	156.99
10th	172.27	147.37	153.46	129.00
11th	137.23	162.29	145.05	154.06
12th	154.06	123.19	152.32	127.60
7-12 ADM	915.23	882.02	861.03	829.65
Total ADM	915.23	882.02	861.03	829.65

Sheldon

Sheldon’s enrollment has been increasing. In FY10, there were 257 K-8 students enrolled; in FY17 there were 260. Sheldon has experienced a 1% overall increase in K-8 enrollment and a 6% increase in k-6 enrollment, which could indicate that numbers will be growing. These charts show the type of enrollment change occurring in Sheldon.

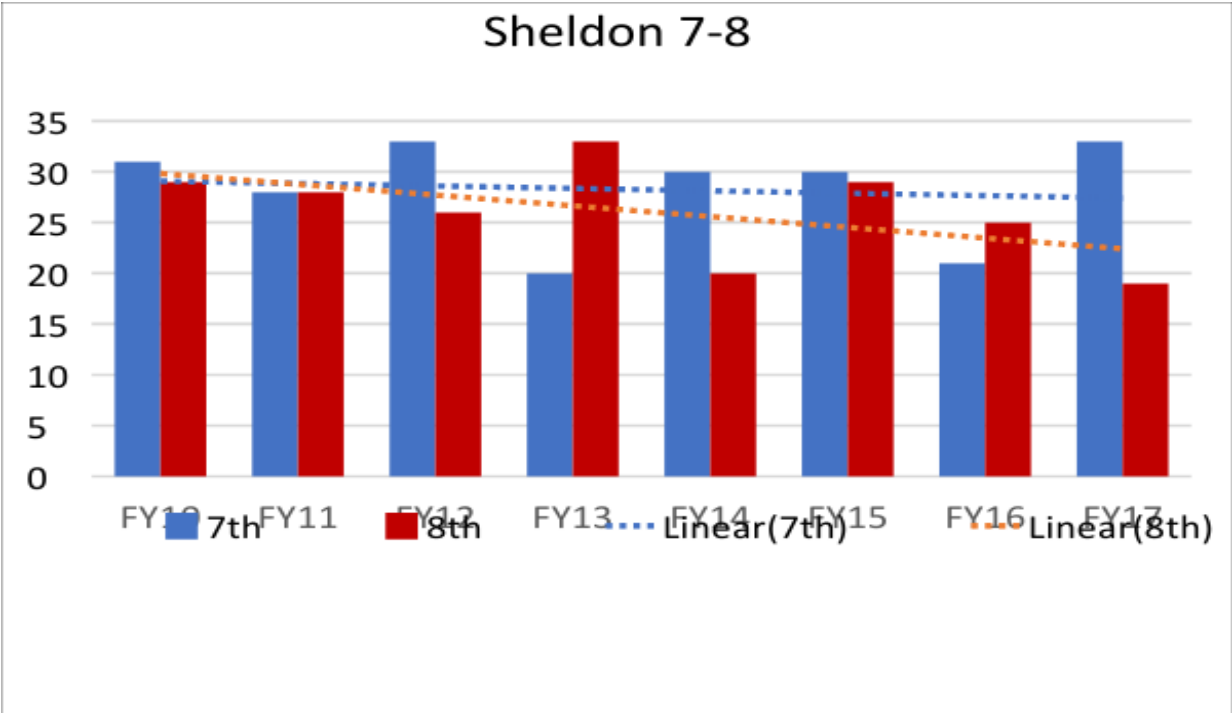
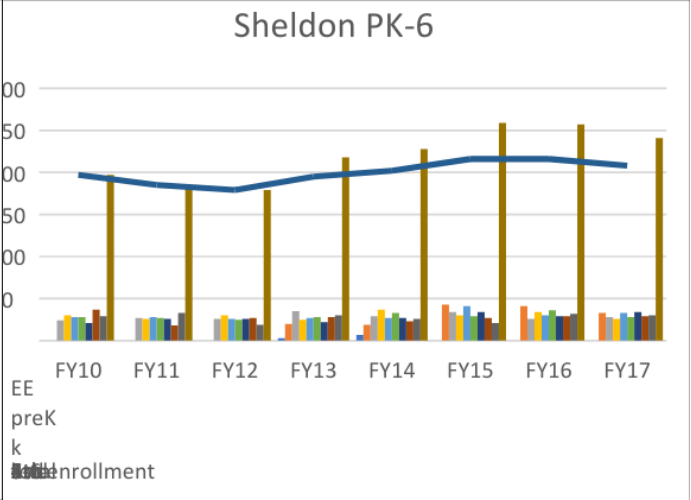
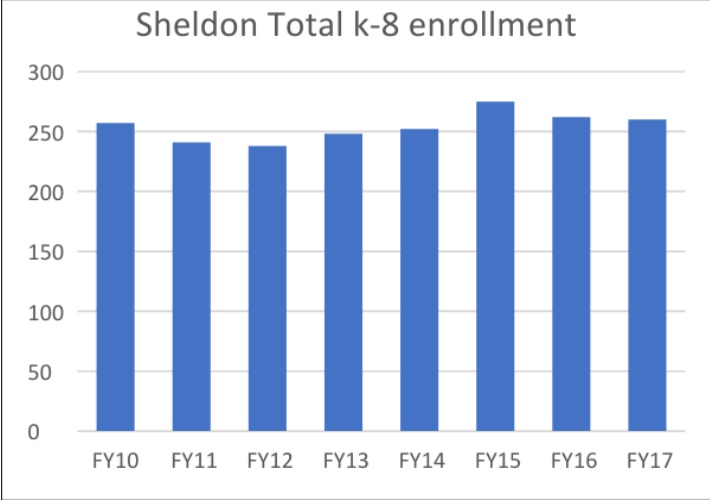
Enrollments	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	%change
EE				3	7				
PreK				20	19	43	41	33	
k	24	27	26	35	29	34	26	28	17%
1st	30	26	30	25	37	30	34	26	-13%
2nd	28	28	26	27	27	41	30	33	18%
3rd	28	27	25	28	33	29	36	28	0%
4th	21	26	26	22	27	34	29	34	62%
5th	37	18	27	28	23	27	29	29	-22%
6th	29	33	19	30	26	21	32	30	3%
total	197	185	179	218	228	259	257	241	22%
PK-6 enrollment	197	185	179	195	202	216	216	208	6%
7th	31	28	33	20	30	30	21	33	

8th	29	28	26	33	20	29	25	19	
7-12 enrollment	60	56	59	53	50	59	46	52	
total EE-8 enrollment	257	241	238	271	278	318	303	293	14%
total PK-8 enrollment	257	241	238	248	252	275	262	260	1%

Sheldon School District					
	ADM				
		FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14
EEE		4.88	6.00	3.00	5.47
prekindergarten		17.00	21.00	19.50	19.00
kindergarten		26.25	26.00	35.00	29.10
1st		25.91	31.35	24.20	37.40
2nd		28.85	27.00	27.00	26.00
3rd		27.83	25.64	29.00	33.00
4th		25.43	27.60	23.50	27.00
5th		18.00	24.00	30.50	24.00
6th		32.00	18.60	29.50	26.50
preK-6 ADM		206.15	207.19	221.20	227.47
K-6 ADM		184.27	180.19	198.70	203.00
7th		28.49	32.00	20.20	28.90
8th		27.20	27.00	33.50	20.00
9th		28.80	27.00	28.00	31.00
10th		29.91	26.51	24.00	27.00
11th		29.35	21.00	25.47	22.00
12th		23.30	25.53	21.00	21.66
7-12 ADM		167.05	159.04	152.17	150.56
Total ADM		373.20	366.23	373.37	378.03

ADM FY17 PK-6: 208.65

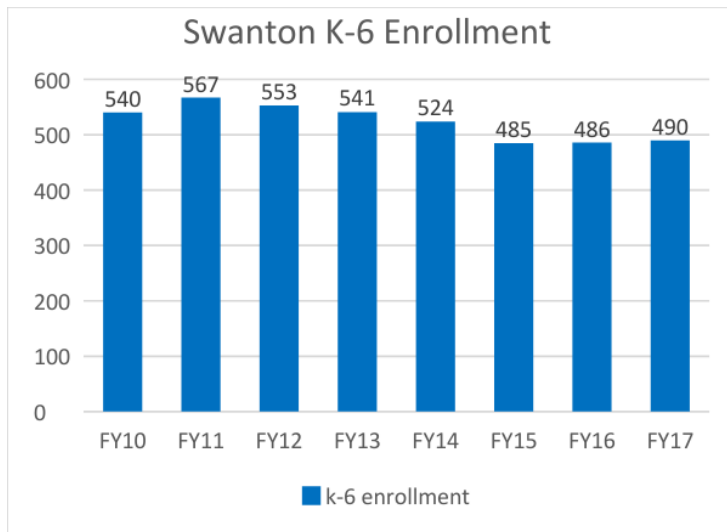
Free and Reduced Lunch = FY15: 46%; FY16 41%



Swanton

Swanton's enrollment has been decreasing. In FY10, there were 540 K-6 students enrolled; in FY17 there were 490. PreK numbers are increasing, from 25 in FY10 to 85 in FY17. The ADM numbers are sometimes smaller than the enrollment numbers.

Enrollments	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	%change
EE				15	15				
PreK	25	23	27	41	42	70	74	85	65%
k	78	86	67	73	62	63	80	83	6%
1st	81	80	82	68	72	59	62	75	-7%
2nd	73	81	81	77	69	65	63	67	-8%
3rd	77	80	79	85	75	64	65	63	-18%
4th	80	84	83	82	84	77	64	62	-23%
5th	77	79	87	77	82	78	75	65	-16%
6th	74	77	74	79	80	79	77	75	1%
total enrollment	565	590	580	597	581	555	560	575	2%
k-6 enrollment	540	567	553	541	524	485	486	490	-9%



Swanton School District				
	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14
ADM				
EEE	8.53	8.68	9.50	7.99
prekindergarten	40.35	46.21	41.00	41.95
kindergarten	83.90	66.37	73.90	62.00
1st	79.25	80.45	68.00	71.00
2nd	80.90	80.75	77.00	68.45
3rd	78.55	77.00	84.65	74.35
4th	84.55	79.00	79.35	82.60
5th	79.00	89.88	75.00	79.75
6th	75.00	73.60	79.90	78.00
preK-6 ADM	610.03	601.94	588.30	566.09
K-6 ADM	561.15	547.05	537.80	516.15
7th	-	-	-	-
8th	-	-	-	-
9th	-	-	-	-
10th	-	-	-	-
11th	-	-	-	-
12th	-	-	-	-
7-12 ADM	-	-	-	-
Total ADM	610.03	601.94	588.30	566.09

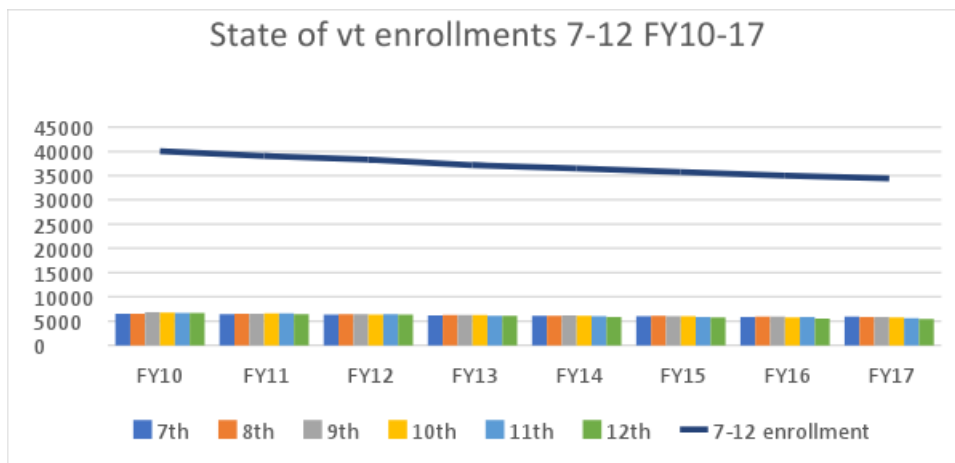
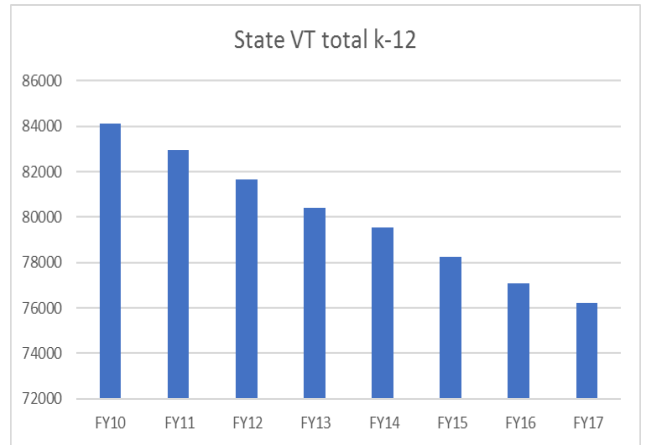
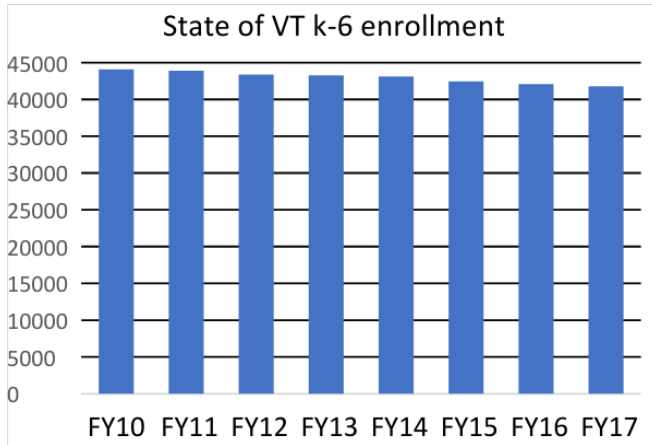
Total ADM FY16 = 1018.6

Total ADM FY17 = 936.8

FRL = 51%

State of Vermont

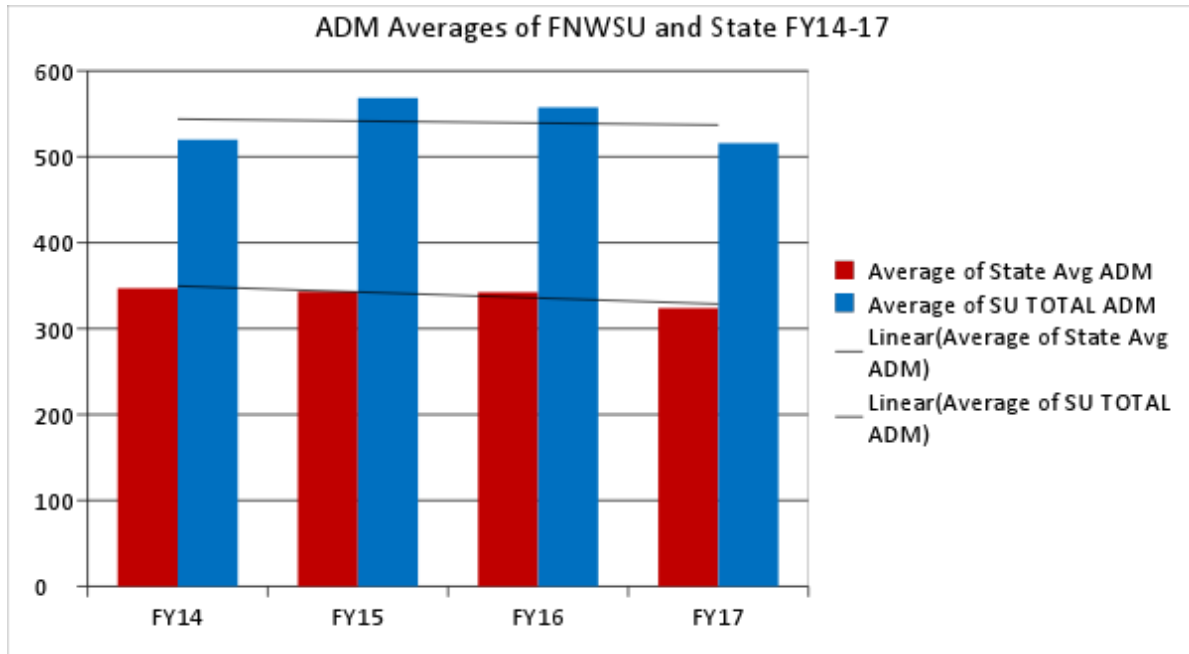
The state’s enrollment has been decreasing. The percentage increase is greater for grades 7-12 (14%) than grades k-6 (5%). Our schools are not experiencing steep enrollment declines that other schools are experiencing. Plus, we receive no small school or phantom pupil grants.



State of Vermont and FNWSU

We wanted to look at ADM numbers as well. The following chart represents the enrollment trend in our supervisory

union versus the state average. We are clearly not experiencing the declines of other supervisory unions.



Student /Teacher/Administration Ratios

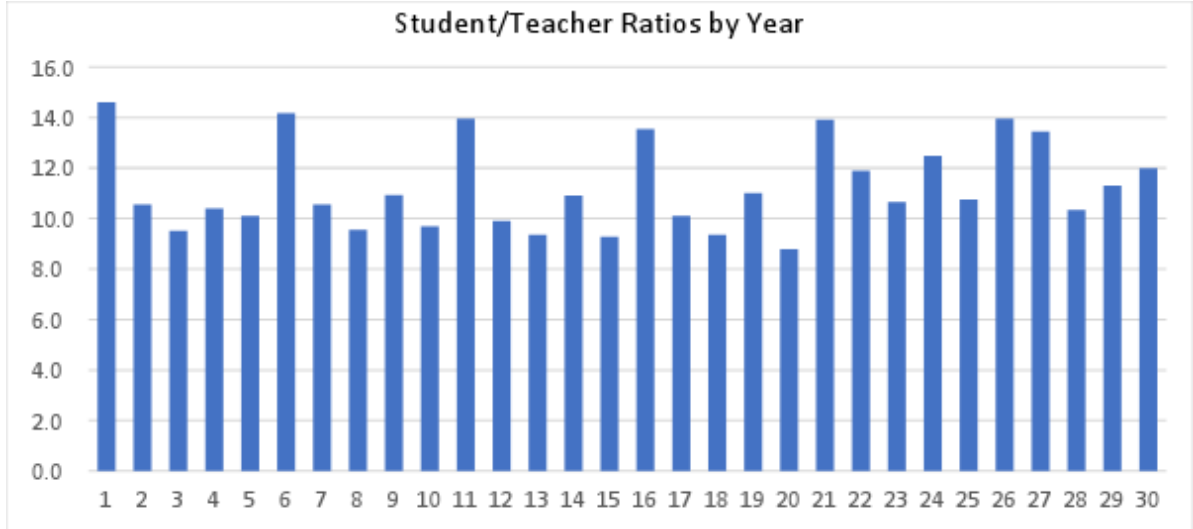
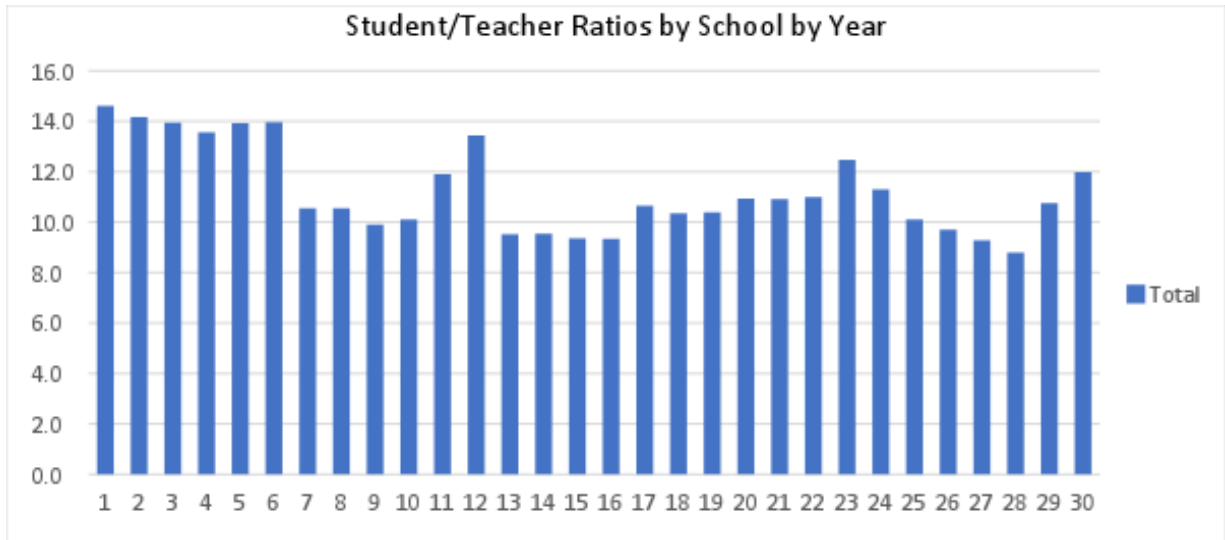
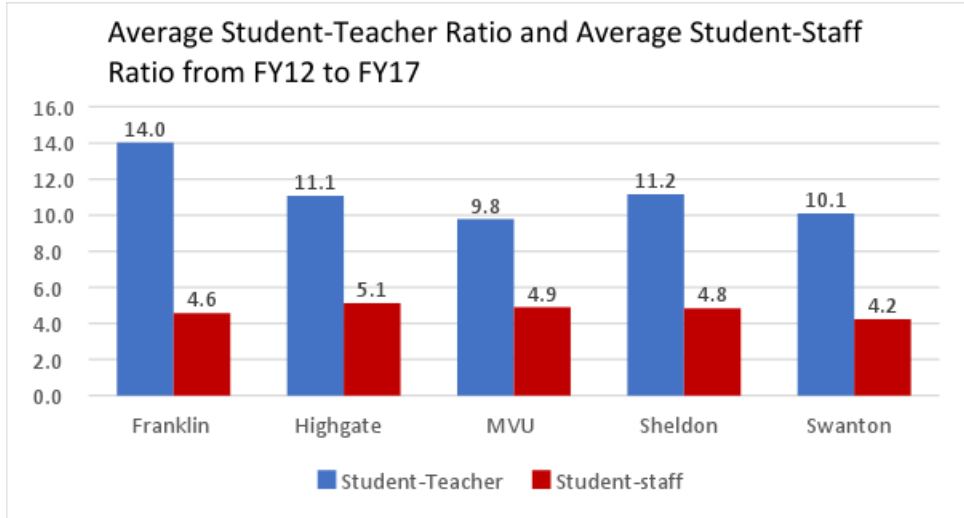
STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO

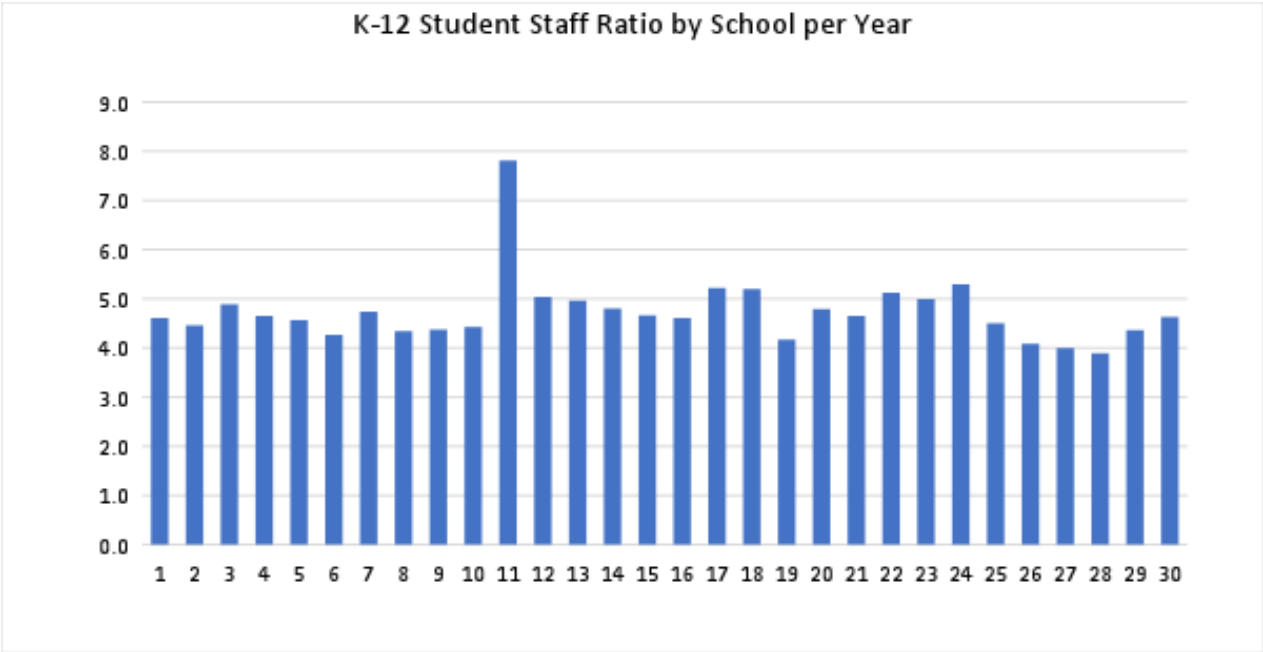
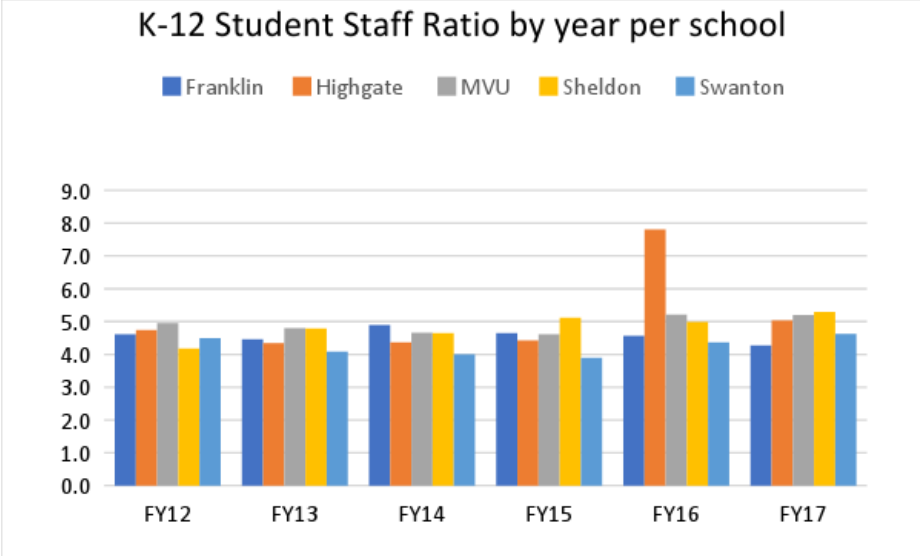
Included in the teacher count are:

- K-12 teachers
- Teachers of ungraded classes
- Itinerant ungraded teachers

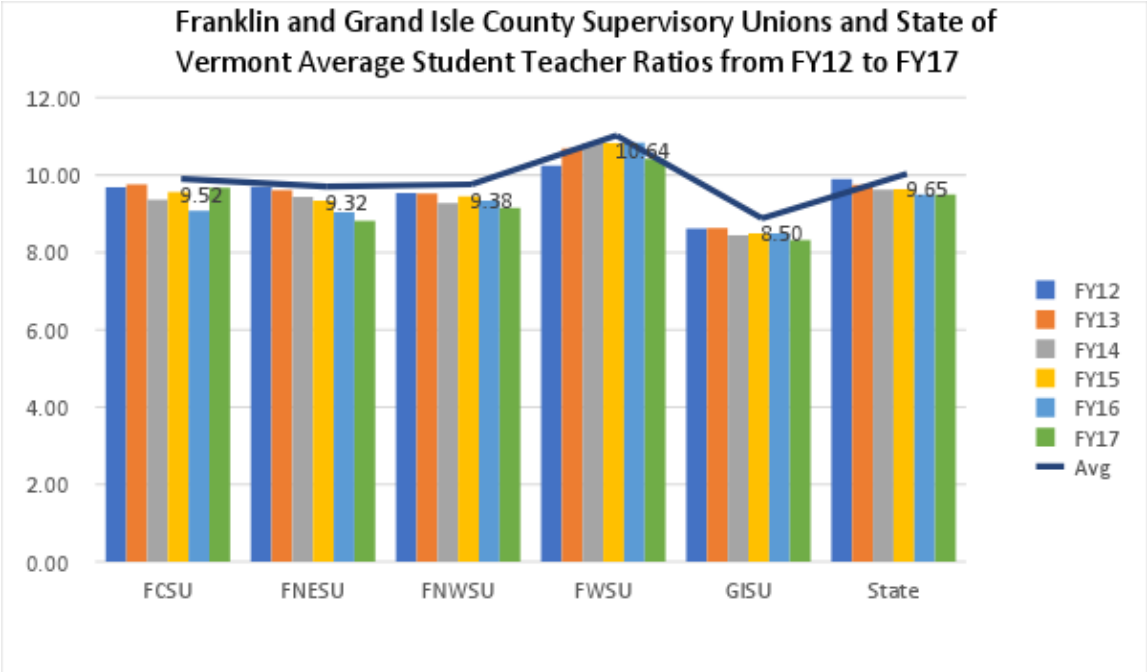
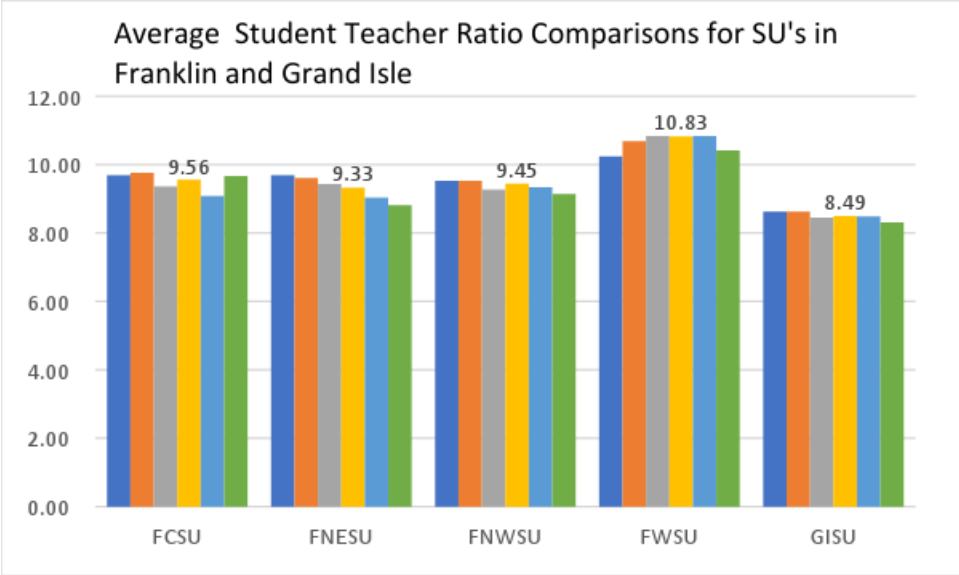
Student-teacher ratios are shown below. The table and first chart show average student/teacher and student/staff ratios from FY12 to FY17. The remaining charts show the different ratios among and between the schools over the years. Franklin consistently has the highest student-teacher ratio; Highgate has some of the highest student to staff ratios.

	Student-Teacher	Student-Staff
Franklin	14.027	4.574
Highgate	11.075	5.120
MVU	9.794	4.909
Sheldon	11.169	4.838
Swanton	10.099	4.245





Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union (FNWSU) has ratios similar to other supervisory unions in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. Franklin West Supervisory Union (FWSU) has the highest student to teacher ratios with an average of 10.83. Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union (FNESU) and Grand Isle Supervisory Union (GISU) have the lowest ratios at 9.6 and 8.5. All Franklin County supervisory unions are similar or above the state average.



School Need for Teachers Versus Merged Schools “Idealized” Need for Teachers

If one simply considers numbers, logically money could be saved if all students and all teachers were considered in staffing decisions rather than students and teachers needed at different schools. Under this premise, the number of students per grade in the supervisory union should dictate the number of teachers needed. We did the analysis and results are shown in the table below. Our analysis involved several years average enrollments, current teacher needs, 20-25 maximum pupils per classroom, and “ideal” teacher numbers. We rounded up when assessing number of teachers needed. Data indicates that we would need nine less teachers.

Grades	average total	Teachers needed per 20/25	current teachers	2017 total students	Current teachers needed 20/25	needed rounded up	Current teachers	teacher overage
EE	31							
PK	158			192				
K	164	8.6	11	181	9.5	10.0	11	1.0
1	160	8.4	10	161	8.5	9.0	10	1.0
2	162	8.5	10	155	8.2	9.0	10	1.0
3	165	8.7	10	166	8.7	9.0	10	1.0
4	162	6.8	8	153	6.4	7.0	8	1.0
5	160	6.7	10	148	6.2	7.0	10	3.0
6	161	6.7	8	164	6.8	7.0	8	1.0
	1134	54.4	67	1320	55.0	58.0	67	9.0

Opportunities to maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with the goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff.

- 1) It has been a major goal of the supervisory union leadership to manage, share, and transfer resources. This past year, union wide contracts were signed with paraprofessional staff and teachers. We will continue to look for opportunities.
- 2) One of the reasons our staffing ratios are lower is the increase in trauma experienced children. Our communities are being hit with opiate addictions, poverty and child abuse. The level of need is far greater than it was six to ten years ago.

Conclusion

We have not experienced the same level of student enrollment declines that has occurred in many other schools in the state. Because of this and other factors, our cost per pupil rates are lower than other schools. However, we are concerned that reducing staff may be difficult given the conditions in our communities and increasing student learning needs. We are, however, committed to strategic staffing and will continue to improve staffing ratios wherever possible.

Appendix D

Goals 4 and 5: Transparency, Accountability, Value

Goals 4 and 5

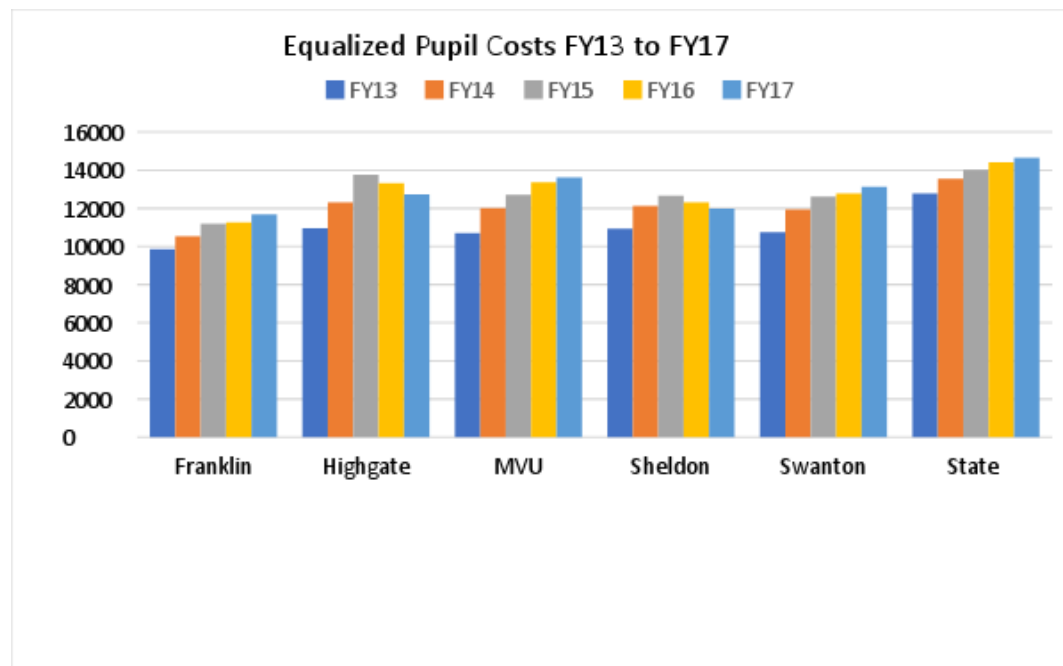
Promote transparency and accountability.

Deliver education at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.

Goals 4 and 5 deal with transparency and accountability, as well as delivering education at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value. They encompass all the previous goals.

Spending Per Equalized Pupil

FNWSU schools have some of the lowest per pupil costs in the state. In 2017, Franklin ranked 235th, Sheldon 229th, Highgate 216th, and Swanton 206th in the State Rank of Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil (from 1 to 256/266). A history of spending per equalized pupil is illustrated in the following chart.



Financial Implications of a “State Preferred Merger” of Franklin, Highgate, MVU, and Swanton School Districts

We realize that no study would be complete without an assessment of the financial implications of various governance structures. We have referenced the potential cost savings and efficiencies of an enhanced governance structure. The following section illustrates the financial implications of a state preferred merged governance structure. It contains three parts:

1. Potential cost savings of a merged governance structure
2. Impact on per pupil costs with a merged governance structure
3. Impact on town tax rates with a merged governance structure

1. Potential cost savings:

Savings Area	Potential Savings	Potential Costs	Total
Savings from 5 audits to 2 audits (Sheldon wanting to keep school choice and not merging with the other 4 districts)	New cost approx. \$35,000 versus \$45,000		\$10,000 savings
Savings for staff with accounting hours			\$10,000 savings
Savings of board member expenses	Approximately \$10,000		\$10,000 savings
Miscellaneous expenses like attorney fees, changing processes and paperwork, etc.		\$10,000	\$10,000 cost
Transportation, staffing, food services, maintenance, technical	Already occurring		Already occurring under current structure and will

services, buying in bulk, and other savings typical of merging districts			continue strategically under enhanced structure
			\$40,000 savings which is less than ¼ of 1% of the 55M annual budget

As the table above indicates, we would anticipate little additional savings from merging that couldn't be accomplished with our enhanced structure.

2. Impact on per pupil costs with a merged governance structure

A merger of the Franklin, Highgate, MVU and Swanton school districts means merging budgets into one budget and has financial implications for the towns involved. Our approach to studying per pupil cost changes involved taking a year, FY18 budget, and reviewing how things would be different if we had a merged district. We merged education spending totals per district for a total education spending budget (we did not alter any figures given the minimal percentage of total budget savings). We totaled the number of equalized pupils for all four districts. We divided total education spending by total number of equalized pupils for a merged per pupil cost. Then we looked at the different costs and what those differences would mean to the town education budgets. At first glance, costs increase quite significantly for Franklin. These costs are mitigated by the 5% spending cap, but that cap expires when the incentives expire. Swanton has the highest decrease in costs. All other districts cost per pupil expenses increased. The cost per pupil differences and the implications for town budgets are shown first without the 5% cap then with the 5% cap.

Without Sheldon

FY18 education spending revised budgets and FY18 equalized pupil numbers: Franklin, Highgate, Swanton

(This analysis includes the Highgate budget reduction of \$82,451.00 and the Swanton budget reduction of \$76,673.00. It is assumed the total amount of these reductions are used to reduce the amount to be raised by taxes.)

School	FY18	equalized students	p/p costs
Franklin	1,580,283		122.14
Highgate	4,426,469		322.47

Swanton-----7,541,257-----527.05-----14,308.43
 MVU-----11,835,212-----856.24-----13,822.31
 A) consolidated budget-----25,383,221
 B) consolidated eq. pupils-----1827.90
 C) consolidated p/pupil cost-----13,886.55

Change:

	Equalized pupils	Consolidated P/P cost	Pre-consolidated p/p cost	Change
Franklin	122.14	13,886.55	12,938.29	\$948.25 increase
Highgate	322.47	13,886.55	13,726.77	\$159.78 increase
MVU	856.24	13,886.55	13,822.31	\$64.24 increase
Swanton	527.05	13,886.55	14,308.43	\$421.88 decrease

Effect

Increase local costs

Franklin-----122.142 x 948.25 -----\$115,819.26
 Highgate-----322.47 x 159.78 -----\$51,524.26
 MVU-----856.24 x 64.24-----\$55,004.86

Decrease local costs

Swanton-----527.05 x 421.88-----\$222,351.86

Total Increase-----\$222,348.38
 Total decrease-----\$222, 351.86
 Total decrease due to consolidation-----\$3.48

WITH 5% CAP-----4 YEAR DURATION

Change:

	Equalized pupils	Consolidated P/P cost	Pre-consolidated	5% cap	Change p/p cost
Franklin	122.14	13,886.55	12,938.29	\$13,585.22	\$646.92 increase
Highgate	322.47	13,886.55	13,726.77	NA	\$159.78 increase
MVU	856.24	13,886.55	13,822.31	NA	\$64.24 increase
Swanton	527.05	13,886.55	14,308.43	NA	\$421.88 decrease

Effect

	Increase local costs
Franklin-----	122.14 x 646.92 -----\$79,014.81
Highgate-----	322.47 x 159.78 -----\$51,524.26
MVU-----	856.24 x 64.24-----\$55,004.86

	Decrease local costs
Swanton-----	527.05 x 421.88-----\$222,351.86

Total Increase-----	\$185,543.93
Total decrease-----	\$222, 351.86
Total decrease due to consolidation-----	\$36,807.93

With Sheldon

FY18 education spending revised budgets and FY18 equalized pupil numbers: Franklin, Highgate, Sheldon, Swanton

School	FY18	equalized students	p/p costs
Franklin-----	1,580,283-----	122.14-----	\$12,938.29
Highgate-----	4,426,469-----	322.47-----	\$13,726.77
Swanton-----	7,541,257-----	527.05-----	\$14,308.43
MVU-----	11,835,212-----	856.24-----	\$13,822.31
Sheldon-----	5,108,889-----	388.89-----	\$13,137.11
A) consolidated budget-----	30,492,110		
B) consolidated eq. pupils-----	2216.79		
C) consolidated p/pupil cost-----	13,755.07		

Change:

	Equalized pupils	Consolidated P/P cost	Pre-consolidated p/p cost	Change
Franklin-----	122.14-----	13,755.07-----	12,938.29-----	\$816.78 increase
Highgate-----	322.47-----	13,755.07-----	13,726.77-----	\$28.30 increase
Sheldon-----	388.89-----	13,755.07-----	13,137.11-----	\$617.96 increase
MVU-----	856.24-----	13,755.07-----	13,822.31-----	\$64.24 decrease
Swanton-----	527.05-----	13,755.07-----	14,308.43-----	\$553.36 decrease

Effect

Increase local costs

Franklin-----122.142 x 816.78 -----\$99,761.51
 Highgate-----322.47 x 28.30 -----\$9,125.90
 Sheldon-----388.89 x 617.96 -----\$240,318.46

Decrease local costs

MVU-----856.24 x 64.24-----\$55,004.86
 Swanton-----527.05 x 553.36-----\$291,648.39

Total Increase-----\$349,205.87
 Total decrease-----\$346,653.25
 Total increase due to consolidation-----\$2,552.62

WITH 5% Act 46 CAP-----4 YEAR DURATION

Change:

	Equalized pupils	Consolidated P/P cost	Pre-consolidated p/p cost	5% cap	Change p/p cost
Franklin	122.14	13,755.07	12,938.29	13,585.20	\$646.91 increase
Highgate	322.47	13,755.07	13,726.77	NA	\$28.30 increase
Sheldon	388.89	13,755.07	13,137.11	NA	\$617.96 increase
MVU	856.24	13,755.07	13,822.31	NA	\$64.24 decrease
Swanton	527.05	13,755.07	14,308.43	NA	\$553.36 decrease

Effect

Increase local costs

Franklin-----122.142 x 816.78 -----\$79,013.59
 Highgate-----322.47 x 28.30 -----\$9,125.90
 Sheldon-----388.89 x 617.96 -----\$240,318.46

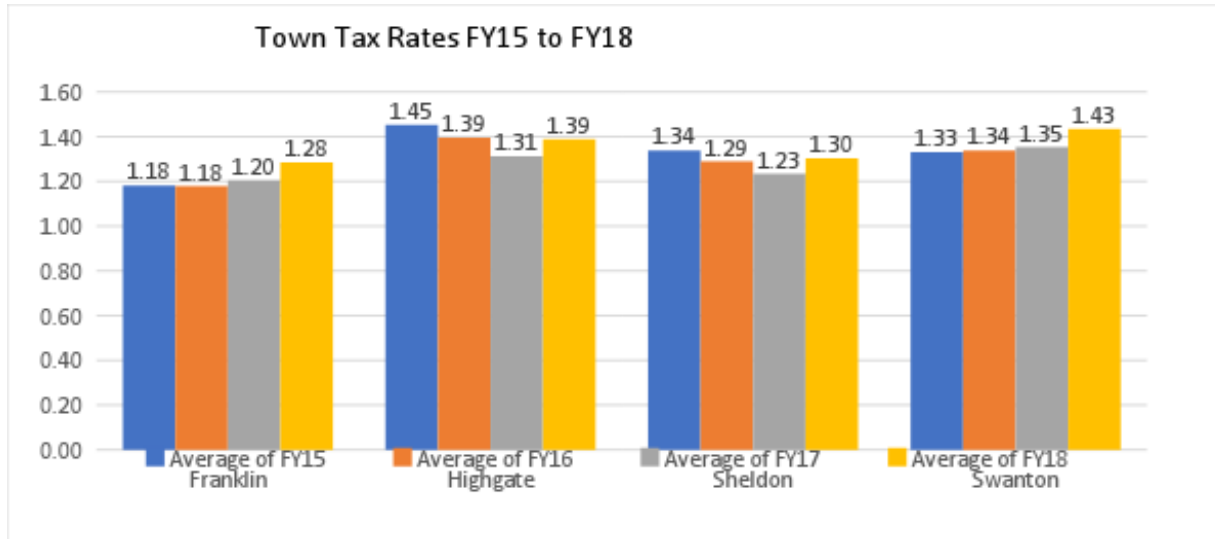
Decrease local costs

MVU-----856.24 x 64.24-----\$55,004.86
 Swanton-----527.05 x 553.36----- \$291,648.39

Total Increase-----\$328,457.95
 Total decrease-----\$346,653.25
 Total decrease due to consolidation-----\$18,195.30

3. Impact on town tax rates with a merged governance structure

The following chart illustrates the homestead taxes for Franklin, Highgate, Sheldon and Swanton over the past few years.



Taxes have been increasing in Swanton and Franklin and varying in Highgate and Sheldon. Do taxpayers say they are paying too much? On the first vote, the taxpayers of Swanton rejected the FY18 school budget. In Highgate, the budget was lowered to ensure its passage. Taxes are a concern for many community members.

Determining the cost “taxpayers value” is subjective. Many factors determine taxpayer value, with the tax rate being one of the primary ones. Realizing this, we knew it was critical to study the effects of merging on tax rates. We thought about forecasting possible tax rates in a merged and non-merged future but knew there were variables we could not control. We decided to look at past data to assess what the tax rates would have been in a merged past. We could then compare those rates to the actual rates, and get a sense of what merging would mean to our communities in the future.

We looked at actual taxes over the last few years and what they might have been if we had merged back in FY15 (2014-2015). A few premises are made in this calculation:

1. Merging would have created no savings – budgets would have been the same.
2. Each town would use its’ own CLA.
3. The incentives would start at .08 (as they would if a merger were to be approved by a November vote).
4. FY14 would be the last year before the merger; the merger would begin in FY15.
5. The 5% rule is applied: no merged town tax rate will increase more than 5% from the prior year.

(Merge MVU, Franklin, Highgate and Swanton Districts into one)

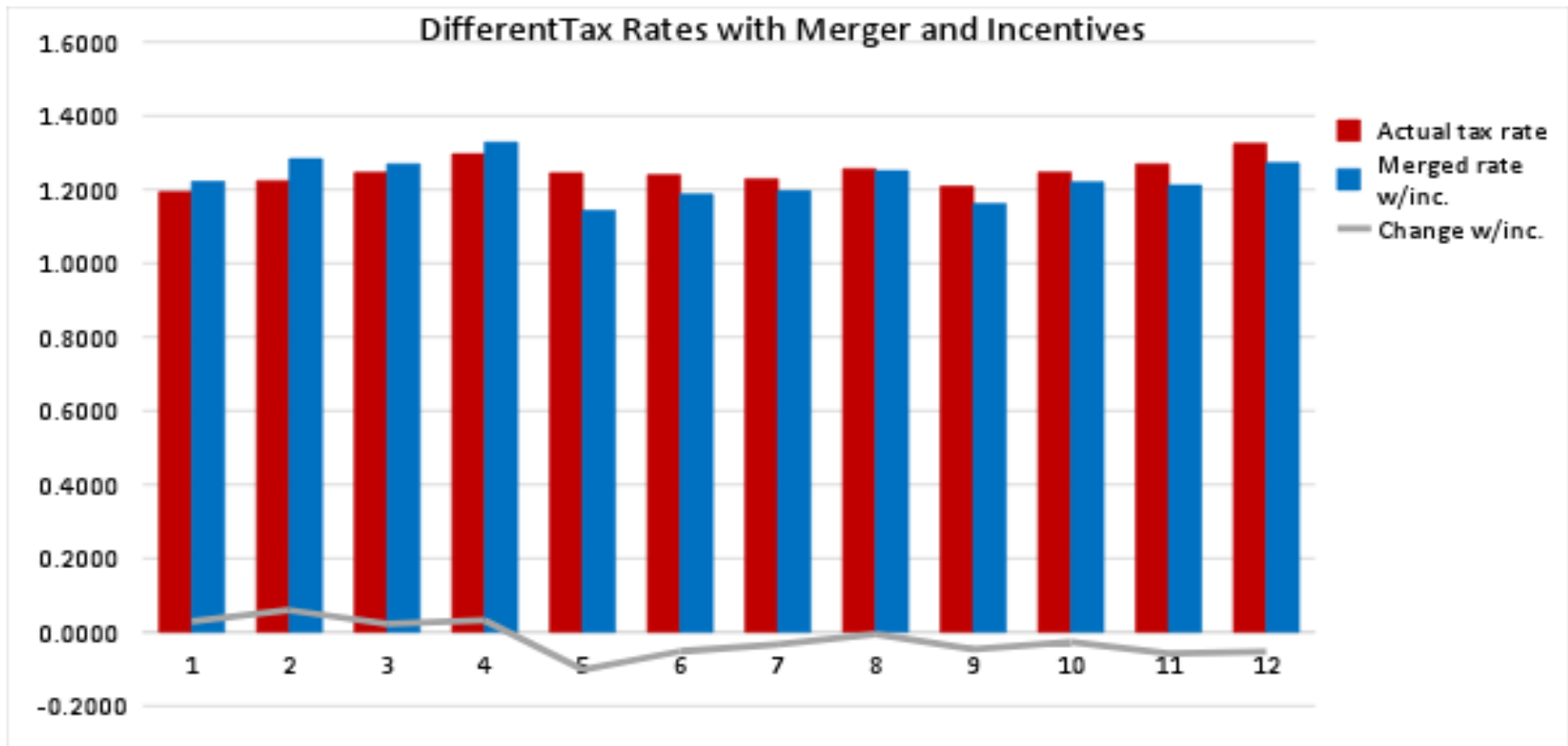
The following table illustrates the impact merging (simply merging pupil numbers and dividing existing costs) would have had on the tax rates from FY15 to FY18. A more detailed table follows that shows the data and methods used to arrive at the tax rates.

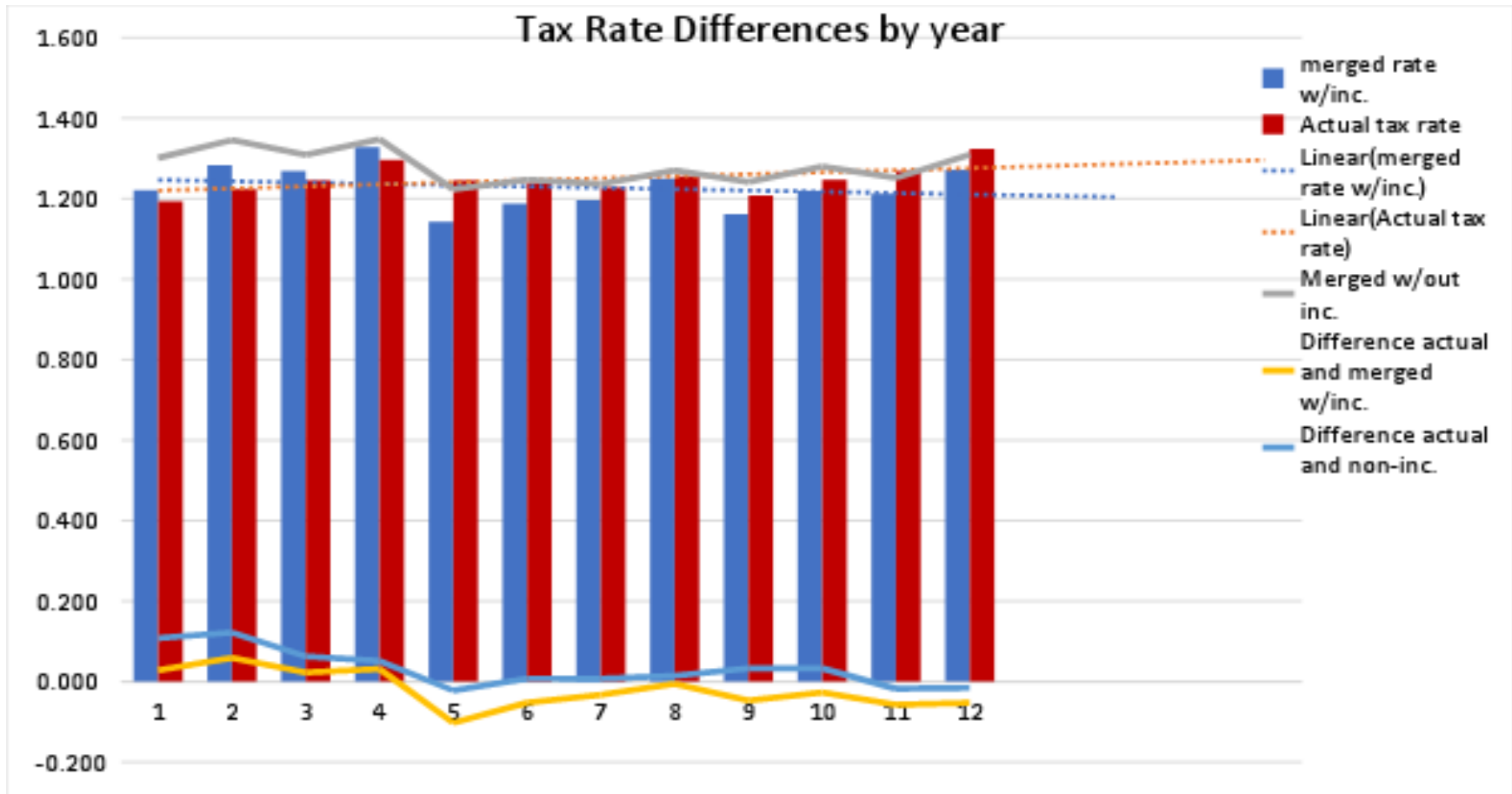
Row Labels	Actual tax rate	Merged rate w/inc.	Change w/inc.	Merged rate w/out inc.	Change w/out inc.
Franklin					
FY15	1.1933	1.2215	0.0282	1.3015	0.1082
FY16	1.2238	1.2830	0.0592	1.3459	0.1221
FY17	1.2461	1.2689	0.0228	1.3089	0.0628
FY18	1.2961	1.3277	0.0316	1.3477	0.0516
Highgate					
FY15	1.2451	1.1431	-0.1020	1.2231	-0.0220
FY16	1.2395	1.1872	-0.0523	1.2472	0.0077
FY17	1.2287	1.1960	-0.0327	1.2360	0.0073
FY18	1.2558	1.2504	-0.0054	1.2704	0.0146
Swanton					
FY15	1.2084	1.1615	-0.0469	1.2415	0.0331
FY16	1.2467	1.2199	-0.0268	1.2799	0.0332
FY17	1.2692	1.2117	-0.0575	1.2517	-0.0175
FY18	1.3245	1.2720	-0.0525	1.3091	-0.0154

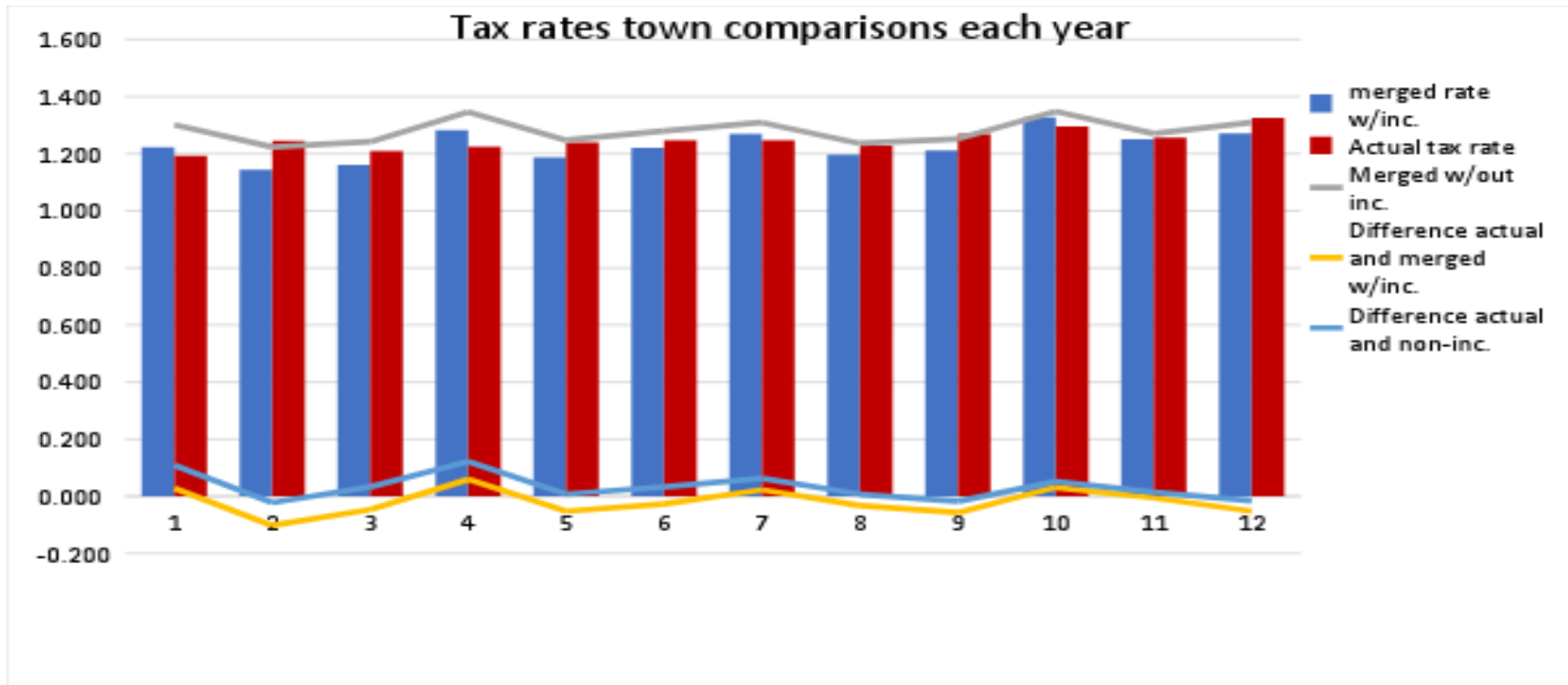
As indicated, with incentives and the 5% cap, Franklin taxes would have increased .028, .059, .023, and .03 over the years. Highgate and Swanton would have seen their tax rates decrease by as much as 5 and 8 cents.

However, without the incentives and 5% cap a different picture emerges. The cost for Franklin goes up as much as \$.12. The most any of the other towns save is .03 for Swanton. The incentives certainly make a difference. But what happens when the incentives end? Is anyone sure that the taxes will level out somewhat after five years of incentives so the cost to Franklin won't be as detrimental?

The tax differences are shown in the following graphs.







If Sheldon Gave Up Choice and All 5 Districts Merged into One SD

The committee also looked at the tax rates with Sheldon involved in the merger. Using the model of going back to what ‘could have been’ had we merged in 2015. The following table shows the changes. The calculations for the tax rates can be found at end of this section.

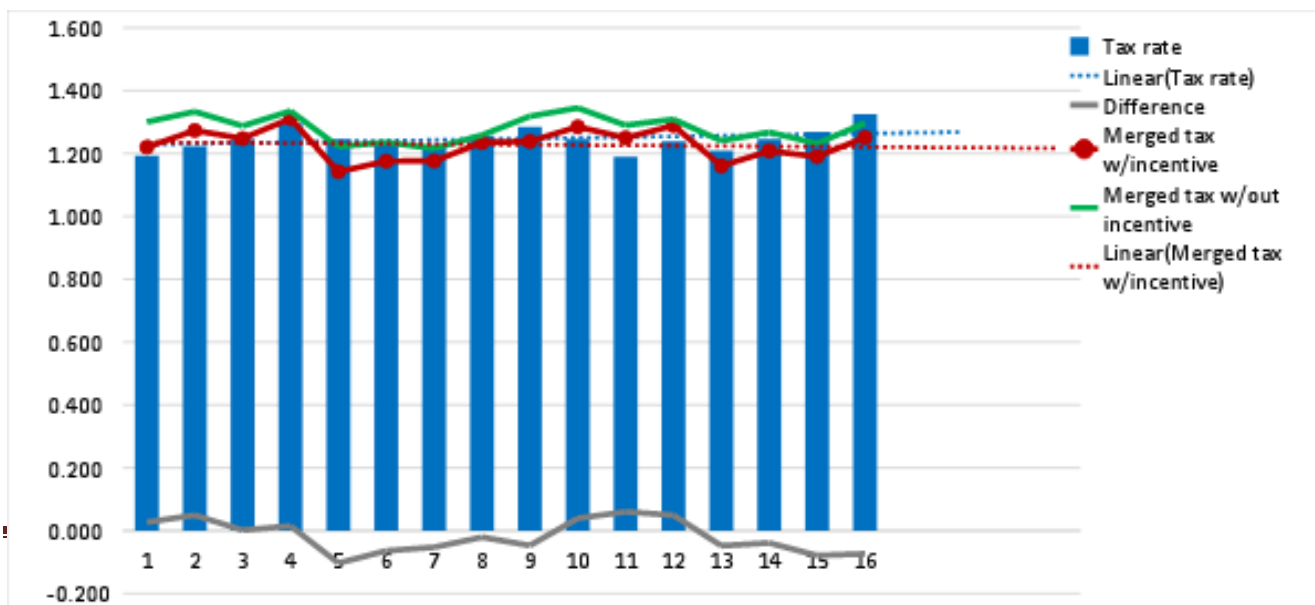
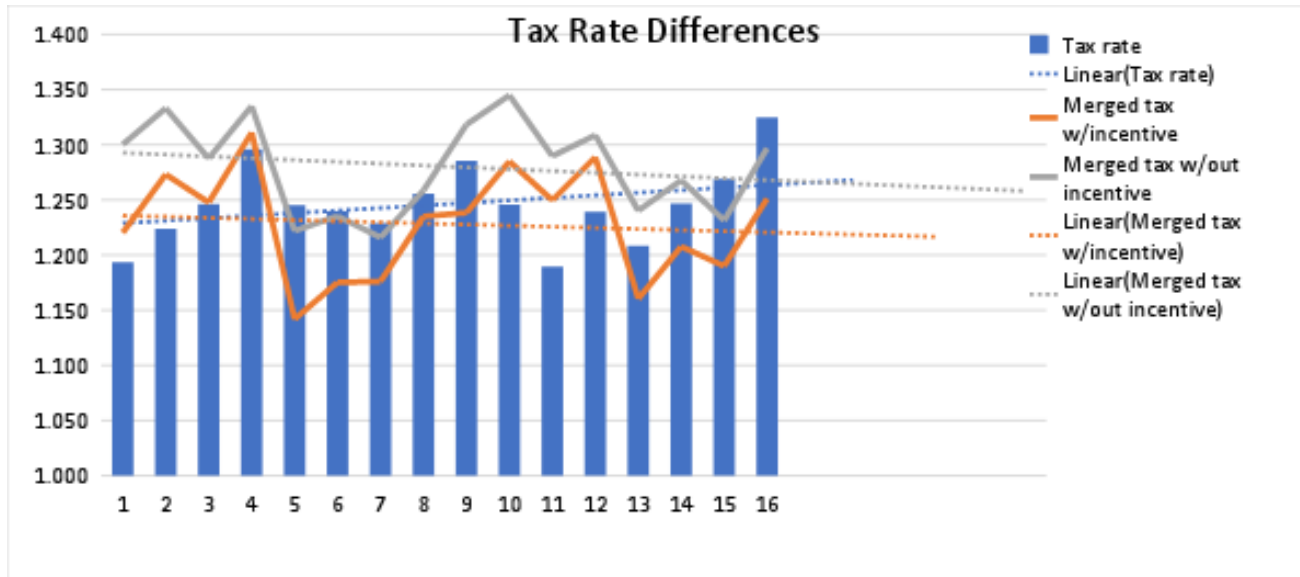
Town	Actual tax rate	Merged rate w/inc.	Change w/inc.	Merged rate w/out inc.	Change w/out inc.
Franklin					
FY15	1.1933	1.220	0.027	1.300	0.107
FY16	1.224	1.273	0.049	1.333	0.109

FY17	1.246	1.248	0.002	1.288	0.041
FY18	1.297	1.315	0.02	1.335	.039
Highgate					
FY15	1.245	1.142	-0.103	1.222	-0.023
FY16	1.240	1.175	-0.064	1.235	-0.004
FY17	1.229	1.176	-0.053	1.216	-0.013
FY18	1.256	1.235	-0.021	1.258	0.003
Sheldon					
FY15	1.286	1.238	-0.047	1.318	0.033
FY16	1.246	1.285	0.039	1.345	0.099
FY17	1.190	1.250	0.060	1.290	0.100
FY18	1.239	1.289	0.049	1.309	0.069
Swanton					
FY15	1.208	1.160	-0.048	1.240	0.032
FY16	1.247	1.208	-0.039	1.268	0.021
FY17	1.269	1.190	-0.079	1.231	-0.038
FY18	1.325	1.251	-0.0740	1.2971	-0.028

As indicated, with Sheldon included and with incentives and the 5% cap, Franklin taxes would have increased .027, .049, .002, and .02 from FY15 to FY18 (versus .028, .059, .023, and .03). Highgate sees little change with a difference from actual taxes of -0.103, -0.064, -0.053, and -0.021 with Sheldon involved versus -.102, -0.052, -0.033, and -0.005 without Sheldon. Swanton is similar to Highgate with changes of -0.048, -0.039, -

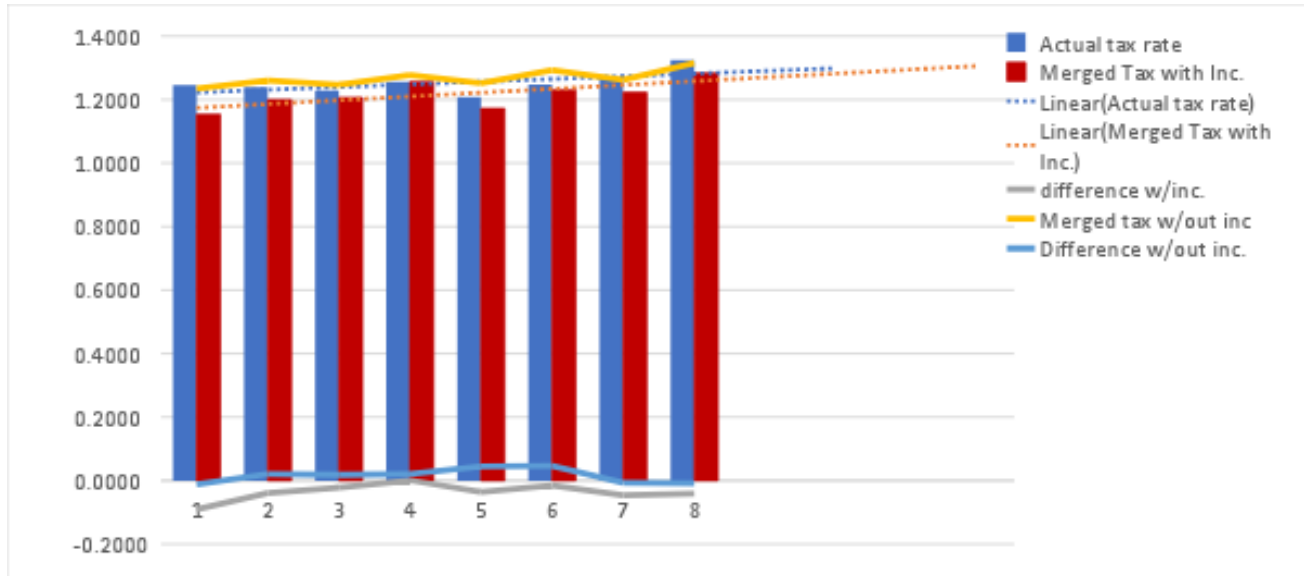
0.079, and -0.0740 versus -.0469, -.027, -.057, -0.053. However, the change for Sheldon is dramatic. The tax rates for Sheldon increase -0.047, 0.039, 0.060, and 0.049. Tax payers in Sheldon would have seen their tax rates increase from four to six cents each year.

Again, without incentives and the 5% cap a different picture emerges. The costs go up even higher for Franklin and Sheldon; the costs increase for Highgate and Swanton as well for two of the four years. Graphs reflecting these changes follow.



Lastly, a 3-1-1 MVU, Swanton, and Highgate as three schools in one district; Franklin as one district, and Sheldon as one district

Town	Actual tax rate	Merged rate w/inc.	Change w/inc.	Merged rate w/out inc.	Change w/out inc.
Highgate					
FY15	1.2451	1.1540	-0.0911	1.2340	-0.0111
FY16	1.2395	1.2003	-0.0392	1.2603	0.0208
FY17	1.2287	1.2068	-0.0219	1.2468	0.0181
FY18	1.2558	1.2568	0.0010	1.2768	0.0210
Swanton					
FY15	1.2084	1.1726	-0.0358	1.2526	0.0442
FY16	1.2467	1.2310	-0.0157	1.2933	0.0466
FY17	1.2692	1.2227	-0.0465	1.2627	-0.0065
FY18	1.3245	1.2840	-0.0405	1.3157	-0.0088



Projected Rates for 3-1-1

Row Labels	Projected tax	Actual tax
Franklin		
FY18		1.296
FY19	1.335	
FY20	1.375	
FY21	1.416	

Highgate

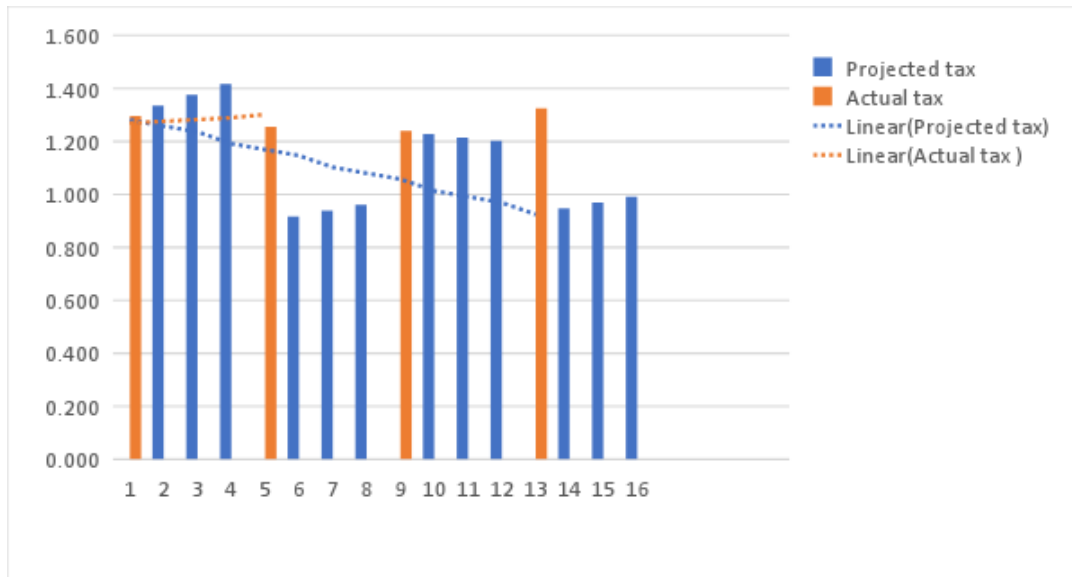
FY18		1.256
FY19	0.916	
FY20	0.938	
FY21	0.960	

Sheldon

FY18		1.239
FY19	1.227	
FY20	1.215	
FY21	1.203	

swanton

FY18		1.325
FY19	0.947	
FY20	0.969	
FY21	0.991	



More details on merger impact can be found in the tables on the next three pages.

Tax Rates if merged in 2015 (with incentives) considering 5% do no harm on taxes using FY14 as base (updated 8/27/17)

town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged w/out inc.	with inc.	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	merged rate	Actual rate	change	non inc.
									0.08							
Franklin Highgate	FY1 5	1483148	132.39	11202.87	9285	1.3723	105.44 %	1.3015	1.2215	1.1838	1.243	no	1.2215	1.1933	0.0282	0.1082
	FY1 5	4156669	302.04	13761.98	2	9285	112.20 %	1.2231	1.1431	1.125	1.181	no	1.1431	1.2451	-0.1020	-0.0220
MVU Swanton	FY1 5	1197101	9	12709.97	9285	1.3723										0.0000
	FY1 5	6881325	941.86	12605.46	7	9285	110.54 %	1.2415	1.1615	1.1445	1.202	no	1.1615	1.2084	-0.0469	0.0331
1District	FY1 5	2449216	1	1922.1	9	1.372										0.0000
	FY1 5		9	12741.8	3											0.0000
town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged	0.0600	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	merged rate	Actual rate	change	non inc. change
Franklin Highgate	FY1 6	1515497	134.56	11262.61	9285	1.4046	104.36 %	1.3459	1.2859	1.2215	1.283	yes	1.283	1.2238	0.059	0.1221
	FY1 6	4061553	304.83	13323.99	4	9285	112.62 %	1.2472	1.1872	1.1431	1.200	no	1.187	1.2395	-0.052	0.0077
MVU	FY1 6	1225604	6	13353.86	9285	1.4046										0.0000
	FY1 6	6	917.79	12789.70	7	9285	109.74 %	1.2799	1.2199	1.1615	1.220	no	1.220	1.2467	-0.027	0.0332
swanton	FY1 6	6776755	529.86	13041.51	9	9285				1.404						0.0000
1District	FY1 6	2460985	1	1887.0	4	1.404										0.0000
	FY1 6		4	13041.51	6											0.0000
town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged	0.0400	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	merged rate	Actual rate	change	non inc. change
Franklin Highgate	FY1 7	1527306	130.72	11683.80	9701	1.3605	103.94 %	1.3089	1.2689	1.283	1.347	no	1.269	1.2461	0.023	0.0628
	FY1 7	3956642	310.98	12723.14	9701	1.3605	110.07 %	1.2360	1.1960	1.187	1.247	no	1.196	1.2287	-0.033	0.0073
MVU	FY1 7	1199477	6	13625.47	9701	1.3605										0.0000
	FY1 7	6	880.32	108.69	9701	1.3605	108.69 %	1.2517	1.2117	1.220	1.281	no	1.212	1.2692	-0.057	-0.0175
swanton	FY1 7	6908208	525.73	13140.22	9701	1.3605										0.0000
1District	FY1 7	2438693	2	1847.7	5	1.360										0.0000
	FY1 7		5	13198.17	7	1.360										0.0000
town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged	0.0200	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	merged rate	Actual rate	change	non inc. change
Franklin	FY1 8	1580283	122.14	12938.29	10076	1.378	102.25 %	1.3477	1.3277	1.269	1.332	no	1.3277	1.2961	0.032	0.0516

Highgate	FY18	4426469	322.47	13726.76	2	10076	1.378	108.47	%	1.2704	1.2504	1.196	1.256	no	1.2504	1.2558	-0.005	0.0146
	FY18	1183521		13822.30														
MVU	FY18	2	856.24	14308.42	7	10076	1.378	105.26	%	1.3091	1.2891	1.212	1.272	yes	1.272	1.3245	-0.053	-0.0154
swanton	FY18	7541257	527.05	13886.54	8	10076	1.378											
1District	FY18	2538322	1827.9	13886.54	8	10076	1.378											

Tax Rates if all districts merged in 2015 (with incentives) considering 5% do no harm on taxes using FY14 as base (updatedn8/26/17)

town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged	with incentive	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	merged rate	Actual rate	change	non incent change
									0.08							
Franklin	FY15	1483148	132.39	11202.87	9285	1.3710	105.44	1.300	1.2203	1.1838	1.243	no	1.2203	1.1933	0.0270	0.1070
Highgate	FY15	4156669	302.04	13761.98	9285	1.3710	112.20	1.221	1.1419	1.125	1.181	no	1.1419	1.2451	-0.1032	-0.0232
MVU	FY15	11971019	941.86	12709.98	9285	1.3710					0.000					na
Swanton	FY15	6881325	545.9	12605.47	9285	1.3710	110.54	1.240	1.1603	1.1445	1.202	no	1.1603	1.2084	-0.0481	0.0319
Sheldon	FY15	4,694,451	370.62	12666.48		1.3710	104.00	1.318	1.2383	1.201	1.261	no	1.2383	1.2855	-0.0472	0.0328
1 District	FY15	29186612	2292.8	12729.63	1	1.3710										
									0.0600							
Franklin	FY16	1515497	134.56	11262.61	9285	1.3912	104.36	1.333	1.2731	1.2203	1.281	yes	1.2731	1.2238	0.049	0.1093
Highgate	FY16	4061553	304.83	13323.99	9285	1.3912	112.62	1.235	1.1753	1.1419	1.199	no	1.175	1.2395	-0.064	-0.0042
MVU	FY16	12256046	917.79	13353.87	9285	1.3912										na
swanton	FY16	6776755	529.86	12789.71	9285	1.3912	109.74	1.267	1.2077	1.1603	1.218	no	1.208	1.2467	-0.039	0.0210
Sheldon	FY16	4740614	385.07	12311.04	9285	1.3912	103.45	1.344	1.2848	1.2383	1.300	no	1.285	1.2455	0.039	0.0993
1 District	FY16	29350465	2272.1	12917.71	1	1.3912										

6 1

town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merge d	0.0400	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply ?	merged rate	Actual rate	change	non incent change
Franklin	FY1 7	1527306	130.72	11683.80	9701	1.3383	103.94 %	1.287 6	1.2476	1.2731	1.337	no	1.248	1.2461	0.002	0.0415
Highgate	FY1 7	3956642	310.98	12723.14	9701	1.3383	110.07 %	1.215 9	1.1759	1.1753	1.234	no	1.176	1.2287	-0.053	-0.0128
MVU	FY1 7	11994776	880.32	13625.47	9701	1.3383	108.69 %	1.231 3	1.1913	1.2080	1.268	no	1.190	1.2692	-0.079	-0.0379
swanton	FY1 7	6908208	525.73	13140.22	9701	1.3383	103.77 %	1.289 7	1.2497	1.2850	1.349	no	1.250	1.1897	0.060	0.1000
Sheldon	FY1 7	4738797	395.66	11976.94	9701	1.3383										
1 District	FY1 7	29125729	2243.4 1	12982.79	1.3383	1.33829										

town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merge d	0.0200	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply ?	merged rate	Actual rate	change	non incent change
Franklin	FY1 8	1580283	122.14	12938.29	10076	1.365	102.25 %	1.335 0	1.3150	1.2480	1.310	yes	1.311	1.2961	0.015	0.0389
Highgate	FY1 8	4426469	322.47	13726.76	10076	1.365	108.47 %	1.258 4	1.2384	1.1760	1.235	yes	1.235	1.2558	-0.021	0.0026
MVU	FY1 8	11835212	856.24	13822.31	10076	1.365	105.26 %	1.296 8	1.2768	1.1917	1.251	yes	1.251	1.3245	-0.074	-0.0277
swanton	FY1 8	7541257	527.05	14308.43	10076	1.365	104.31 %	1.308 6	1.2886	1.2500	1.313	no	1.289	1.2394	0.049	0.0692
Sheldon	FY1 8	5108889	388.89	13137.11	10076	1.365										
1 District	FY1 8	30492110	2216.7 9	13755.07	1.3651	1.36513										

Tax Rates if merged into a 3-1-1 in 2015 (updated 9/21/17)

town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged w/out inc.	with inc.	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	merged rate	Actual rate	change	non inc.
Highgate	FY15	4156669 1197101	302.04	13761.982	9285	1.3846	112.20 %	1.2340	1.1540	1.125	1.181	no	1.1540	1.2451	-0.0911	-0.0111
MVU	FY15	9	941.86	12709.977	9285	1.3846	110.54 %	1.2526	1.1726	1.1445	1.202	no	1.1726	1.2084	-0.0358	0.0442
Swanton	FY15	6881325 2300901	545.9	12605.468	9285	1.3846	110.54 %	1.2526	1.1726	1.1445	1.202	no	1.1726	1.2084	-0.0358	0.0442
1District	FY15	3	1789.8	12855.634	9285	1.3845594										0.0000
town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged	0.0600	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	0.0600	Actual rate	change	non inc.
Highgate	FY16	4061553 1225604	304.83	13323.994	9285	1.4193	112.62 %	1.2603	1.2003	1.1540	1.212	no	1.2003	1.2395	-0.039	0.0208
MVU	FY16	6	917.79	13353.867	9285	1.4193	109.74 %	1.2933	1.2333	1.1726	1.231	yes	1.231	1.2467	-0.016	0.0466
swanton	FY16	6776755 2309435	529.86	12789.709	9285	1.4193	109.74 %	1.2933	1.2333	1.1726	1.231	yes	1.231	1.2467	-0.016	0.0466
1District	FY16	4	8	13178.098	9285	1.419289										0.0000
town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged	0.0400	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	0.0400	Actual rate	change	non inc.
Highgate	FY17	3956642 1199477	310.98	12723.14	9701	1.3724	110.07 %	1.2468	1.2068	1.200	1.260	no	1.2068	1.2287	-0.022	0.0181
MVU	FY17	6	880.32	13625.473	9701	1.3724	108.69 %	1.2627	1.2227	1.231	1.293	no	1.2227	1.2692	-0.047	-0.0065
swanton	FY17	6908208 2285962	525.73	13140.22	9701	1.3724	108.69 %	1.2627	1.2227	1.231	1.293	no	1.2227	1.2692	-0.047	-0.0065
1District	FY17	6	3	13313.469	9701	1.3723811										0.0000
town	FY	spending	eq/pup	cost/pp	yield	new rate	CLA	merged	0.0200	prior yr rate	Max 5% increase	5% apply?	0.0200	Actual rate	change	non inc.
Highgate	FY18	4426469 1183521	322.47	13726.762	1007 6	1.3849	108.47 %	1.2768	1.2568	1.207	1.267	no	1.2568	1.2558	0.001	0.0210
MVU	FY18	2	856.24	13822.307	1007 6	1.3849	105.26 %	1.3157	1.2957	1.223	1.284	yes	1.223	1.3245	-0.041	-0.0088
swanton	FY18	7541257 2380293	527.05	14308.428	1007 6	1.3849	105.26 %	1.3157	1.2957	1.223	1.284	yes	1.223	1.3245	-0.041	-0.0088
1District	FY18	8	6	13954.447	1007 6	1.3849193										0.0000

Appendix E

FNWSU Foreign/Out of State Student Recruitment Process

The FNWSU Enhanced Alternative Governance Structure (AGS) is creating a Foreign/Out of State Student Marketing Team, consisting of the Superintendent, Business Manager, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Student Support Services Director, and interested School Principals from within the FNWSU.

Although FNWSU schools have not experienced significant student enrollment declines, there remains an opportunity to investigate and develop a process which enables MVU to offer high quality educational services to foreign and out of state students. The FNWSU Enhanced AGS recognizes many benefits resulting from the creation of this foreign/out of state student recruitment process which has proven successful with other public, private, and independent schools throughout Vermont. The focus of this recruitment team is to develop plans to promote and market the quality educational services provided by schools located within the FNWSU. In particular, Missisquoi Valley Union Middle/High School (MVU) is ideally located in the northwesterly corner of Vermont, in close proximity to Quebec and New York.

A preliminary investigation reveals that New York spent more per student in FY2015 than any other state in the nation and surpassed the national average by 86%. Figures from the United States Census Bureau show that the Empire State funded \$21,206 per student, which dwarfs the national per student expense average. Eight out of the top ten student spending districts are located in the northeast region of New York, a number of which don't operate high schools and pay tuition to nearby districts.

In 2017, the acclaimed Canadian independent non-partisan MEI think tank reported, "The Quebec government announced real spending per student has increased by 22% while the number of students has fallen by 6.5%. Quebec public spending in educational constant dollars for K-12 including vocational training grew from \$11.3 billion to \$12.9 billion, an increase of 14.1%. This increased spending per student has had a considerable effect on Quebec's public finances as education is the second largest spending item after healthcare." This provides an opportunity for MVU. Many Vermont students complete high school in Stanstead, Quebec. The time is right for MVU to attract and enroll Canadian students in our Vermont high school.

The convenient location of schools within the FNWSU, more specifically the unique geographic location of MVU, has caused our Act 46 independent study committee to conclude this situation presents a mutually beneficial opportunity to provide our New York, and Canadian neighbors a financially viable high school option. Therefore, one of the charges of this team is to conduct comprehensive research and to identify lucrative educational options that will increase the number of out of state tuition paying students who enroll at MVU.

The following is a list of targeted Canadian school districts; Noyan, Bedford, Cowansville, Stanbridge East, Dunham, Frelighsburg, Venise-E-Quebec, Mystic, Sutton, Knowlton, St. Jean, and St. Edouard.

Targeted New York school districts include; Altona, Champlain, Chazy, Elizabethtown, and Keesville.

MVU has already begun developing a collaborative relationship with Chinese schools through the SPIRAL International organization located in Burlington, Vermont and Beijing, China. Three MVU and Sheldon School administrators have been invited to further expand relations with China during an upcoming trip to Beijing in March, 2018. MVU's interest in this international partnership is five-fold to:

- a. Increase the number of tuition-paying students,
- b. Create a more diverse student body,
- c. Expand cultural awareness for Franklin County students and families,
- d. Receive a grant that would pay for an embedded Chinese teacher at MVU, and
- e. Recruit Chinese students who are bright and motivated learners.

MVU currently has recruited and enrolled over 50 students from Sheldon, Alburgh, North Hero, Isle le Monte, and Georgia. In addition to offering a sound education program, MVU also sends buses to these tuition towns, which makes MVU a convenient transportation choice for parents.

Our phase-two recruitment strategy will include identifying Franklin County families who are willing to board out of state and Chinese students, as they become enrolled at MVU. The boarding expenses will be borne by the new enrollee's families. By providing room and board options to students who live outside the boundaries of the FNWSU, MVU then begins to compete with area private and independent schools for tuition students.

When attracting tuition paying students from outside Vermont and the United States, MVU currently offers four opportunities designed to prepare, facilitate, and transition students into successful post-secondary careers. The process includes College Dual Enrollment, Early College Programs, Flexible Pathways, and the highly acclaimed MVU Agriculture Program. Programs like the above may not be available in the same way to students from New York, Quebec, and China. In the spirit of regional school collaboration, the MVU Ag Program staff has invited administrators from the Cold Hollow Career Center and Northwest Regional Career Center to meet on January 15, 2018 to further explore ways to collaborate and amplify current program opportunities among the three schools.

In support of the Governor's recently announced Education Summit goals, to reduce public school per pupil costs and to increase the number of young people enrolling and completing college, MVU's progressive entrepreneurial plan for attracting foreign/out of state students helps to maintain stable enrollment trends and expand program opportunities at our middle and high school.

A secondary goal, which would benefit the broader Vermont, is to create a college feeder program that expands Vermont college and university efforts to increase foreign student post-secondary enrollment. Vermont State College trustees have been engaged for some time now in efforts to attract foreign students and boost college enrollments. The number of international students coming to the United States for a college education has been on the rise since 2006 according to the Institute of International Education, and the Department of State. The biggest influx is from China. Last year 328,547 Chinese students studied in the United States. More than 1,700 Chinese students came to Vermont schools. The number of foreign students attending the University of Vermont has more than doubled since 2012 going from 387 to 822 in 2016. Chinese students account for 40% of the foreign students including Canadian students studying in Vermont. In 2016 foreign students brought \$75 million in revenue to Vermont, an increase from \$40 million just four years ago.

Finally, the process of creating a marketing/business plan designed to encourage increased enrollment within our schools will cause the added benefit of triggering the aggressive pursuit of

verifiable school improvement, similar to that in school systems that provide universal school choice. This will help schools to continue our four-year school transformation endeavor and increase performance for all 2000 students, currently educated in our five schools.

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When attracting tuition paying students from outside Vermont and the United States, MVU currently offers four opportunities designed to prepare, facilitate, and transition students into successful post-secondary careers. The process includes College Dual Enrollment, Early College Programs, Flexible Pathways, and the highly acclaimed MVU Agriculture Program. Programs like the above may not be available in the same way to students from New York, Quebec, and China. In the spirit of regional school collaboration, the MVU Ag Program staff has invited administrators from the Cold Hollow Career Center and Northwest Regional Career Center to meet on January 15, 2018 to further explore ways to collaborate and amplify current program opportunities among the three schools.

In support of the Governor's recently announced Education Summit goals, to reduce public school per pupil costs and to increase the number of young people enrolling and completing college, MVU's progressive entrepreneurial plan for attracting foreign/out of state students helps to maintain stable enrollment trends and expand program opportunities at our middle and high school.

A secondary goal, which would benefit the broader Vermont, is to create a college feeder program that expands Vermont college and university efforts to increase foreign student post-secondary enrollment. Vermont State College trustees have been engaged for some time now in efforts to attract foreign students and boost college enrollments. The number of international students coming to the United States for a college education has been on the rise since 2006 according to the Institute of International Education, and the Department of State. The biggest influx is from China. Last year 328,547 Chinese students studied in the United States. More than 1,700 Chinese students came to Vermont schools. The number of foreign students attending the University of Vermont has more than doubled since 2012 going from 387 to 822 in 2016. Chinese students account for 40% of the foreign students including Canadian students studying in Vermont. In 2016 foreign students brought \$75 million in revenue to Vermont, an increase from \$40 million just four years ago.

Finally, the process of creating a marketing/business plan designed to encourage increased enrollment within our schools will cause the added benefit of triggering the aggressive pursuit of

verifiable school improvement, similar to that in school systems that provide universal school choice. This will help schools to continue our four-year school transformation endeavor and increase performance for all 2000 students, currently educated in our five schools.