

**MONTGOMERY TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**C/O FRANKLIN NORTHEAST SUPERVISORY UNION**  
**P.O. Box 130, 80 Main Street, Richford, Vermont 05476**  
**Tel: (802) 848-7661/Fax: (802) 848-3531**

Rebecca Holcombe  
Vermont Secretary of Education  
219 North Main Street, Suite 402  
Barre, VT 05641

January 15, 2018

Dear Secretary Holcombe,

Attached please find a Section 9 Proposal for the Montgomery Town School District, submitted under the direction of the Montgomery Town School District Board. Following two previously failed voluntary Act 46 merger votes, this proposal satisfies the statutory requirements to (a) self-evaluate, (b) have regional discussions, and (c) propose steps to improve the district's ability to meet and exceed the five goals of Act 46. As such, we respectfully request you consider Montgomery's proposal to retain its existing governance structure and allow them to remain a single district in the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union.

The Montgomery voters have asserted their will and defeated two separate and different Act 46 unification proposals. The first, a 2016 Full-Merger proposed the five school districts merge into one preferred structure supervisory district and was defeated 52-219 in Montgomery. The second, a 2017 Alternative Governance Side-by-Side proposed the three Pk-8 district boards merge and the two Pk-12 district boards merge and that was defeated in Montgomery 137-151.

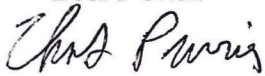
It is important to note that the Montgomery School District Board has worked hard and done their due diligence to explore options under Acts 46 and 49 and has presented the community with two options for merging to meet the intended goals. The community has not approved either proposal. The School Board is committed to improving equity, efficiency, and excellence in our school community. The board believes this proposal will demonstrate how the Montgomery Elementary School community is already meeting the goals of Act 46 & 49 and how they will continue to be reflective and approach this ongoing work with a growth mindset and a focus on continuous improvement efforts to maintain the excellence, equity and efficiency that already exist in this school.

Please note, an independent group of concerned citizens, the Montgomery Independent Citizens Committee, submitted a separate proposal on December 22, 2017 for your review as well.

The School Board, superintendent and administrative staff welcome our pending conversations to further discuss this Section 9 proposal. We appreciate our ongoing opportunity to submit additional data and/or analysis in response to any questions, suggestions and/or concerns you may have as you consider this Section 9 Proposal.

Sincerely,

Charles Purrier  
Board Chair



Bruce Mercy  
Board Vice-Chair



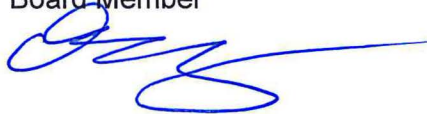
Cathy Howell  
Board Member



Mary Niles  
Board Member



Christina Suarez-Pratt  
Board Member



**Montgomery Town School District**  
**Section 9 Alternative Governance Proposal**  
**SCHOOL PROFILE**

**School District:** Montgomery Town School District

**School(s):** Montgomery Elementary School

**Supervisory Union:** Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union

**Proposed Governance Structure: Retain Existing Governance Structure and operate within Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union (FNESU)**

Montgomery currently operates a successful school which meets the goals required by Act 46. We propose Montgomery Elementary School District retain its current governance structure while continuing to work with the FNESU.

Over the past three years there have been extensive meetings with district boards within FNESU regarding possible merger plans to meet the requirements of Act 46. The 706b Study Committees were formed to explore merger opportunities and explore the available tax rate reductions outlined in Act 46 to help communities work towards a single tax rate. The town of Montgomery has twice rejected the two proposed merger options. The town of Montgomery is proud of its school's educational success, fiscal efficiency and the opportunities we are able to provide for our students. The school has been celebrated both publicly and by the Agency of Education.

Montgomery meets the goals of providing substantial equity in the the quality and variety of educational opportunities for all students at Montgomery Elementary School. Montgomery Elementary School Administrators and teachers, in collaboration with FNESU, will continue to assess the educational opportunities available to students as compared to opportunities provided around the State in order to ensure equity.

**Executive Summary**

The Montgomery Town School District proposes the current single district governance structure is retained. The School District will work collaboratively with other districts within the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union in order to provide high quality educational opportunities, share resources, and explore ways to provide greater equity and efficiency.

Montgomery's district operates its schools for all resident youth in pre-kindergarten through grade 8 and pays tuition for all resident students grades 9-12.

In this proposal we will:

- A. Assess how Montgomery currently meets/exceeds the goals of Act 46 and where improvements need to be made to better meet the goals of Act 46 moving forward.
- B. Document structural and geographical isolation.

## **A. Assessment of Montgomery’s Ability to Meet/Exceed the Five Goals of Act 46**

### **1. Provide substantial equity in quality and variety of educational opportunities statewide**

Montgomery Elementary School, like other schools in the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union, provides students with a variety of learning opportunities with a focus on personalization and differentiation to meet the unique needs and interests of all learners. There are always opportunities to reflect upon what we currently are able to offer and compare that to the potential for future learning opportunities.

Although we feel we are able to provide adequate services for students such as special education, occupational, physical and speech therapy, literacy and math intervention, nursing, school counseling, athletics, art, music, physical education, etc, it is challenging to balance the need to be financially efficient with the need to increase learning opportunities for all students. Districts choosing to spend significantly more per pupil are able to provide additional opportunities for students such as language immersion programs, literacy and math instructional coaching, etc.

The Montgomery Town School District will continue to explore ways to partner within and outside the Supervisory Union in order to share resources, and potentially staff, to fill part time positions within the school. The School District already works with neighboring schools (Berkshire and Franklin) in order to share nursing, music and guidance personnel. Future potential opportunities could include a shared language immersion teacher, shared literacy, math or behavior intervention instructional coaches, etc.

In an analysis of our most recent Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment data we compared the performance of our students based upon gender, disability, poverty, and made overall comparisons to state and local achievement levels in order to assess our progress towards providing substantial equity for our learners.

<b>SBAC Data Analysis</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>% Proficient in ELA</b>	<b>% Proficient in Math</b>
Montgomery Elementary School Students Grades 3-8	72%	69%
Vermont Students 3-8	53%	44%
FNESU Students 3-8	51%	47%
Female Montgomery Elementary School Students	85%	76%
Male Montgomery Elementary School Students	61%	63%
(Poverty) Montgomery Elementary School Students	67%	63%
(Non-Poverty) Montgomery Elementary School Students	81%	81%
Montgomery Elementary School Students with Disabilities	36%	55%
Montgomery Elementary School Students Non-Disability	78%	70%

### **Supervisory Union Comparison Data**

Montgomery students performed higher than the average performance of all FNESU students on both the SBAC ELA and the Math assessments. 72% of Montgomery students met or exceeded the proficiency standard in ELA compared with 51% of students in FNESU. 69% of Montgomery students met or exceeded the proficiency standard in Math compared with 47% of students in FNESU. Montgomery students continue to perform at high levels compared to students in FNESU.

### **State Comparison Data**

Montgomery students performed higher than the average performance of all students in Vermont on both the SBAC ELA and the Math assessments. 72% of Montgomery students met or exceeded the proficiency standards in ELA compared with 53% of students in Vermont.

69% of Montgomery students met or exceeded the proficiency standard in Math compared with 44% of students in Vermont. Montgomery students continue to perform at high levels compared to students in Vermont.

### **Gender Comparison Data**

In Montgomery, female students outperformed males students on both the SBAC ELA and the Math assessments. 85% of female students met or exceeded the proficiency standards in ELA compared with 61% of male students. 76% of female students met or exceeded the proficiency standard in Math compared with 63% of male students. There is a substantial gap between the performance level of girls versus the performance level of boys at Montgomery Elementary School. Research shows that boys learn differently than girls. This data analysis has led Montgomery's principal to begin working on researching and providing teachers with resources for how best to engage male learners. Ms. Alexander has identified researchers in the region to reach out to as a resource for future professional development options. There are also several professional development books being considered for analysis by staff during school-wide professional development days.

### **Disability Comparison Data**

In Montgomery, there is an achievement gap between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. 78% of students without disabilities met or exceeded the proficiency standard in ELA compared with 36% of students with disabilities. 70% of students without disabilities met or exceeded the proficiency standard in Math compared with 55% of students with disabilities. There is a substantial gap between the performance level of students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities in ELA and a lesser gap that exists between the same groups in math at Montgomery Elementary School. Closing this achievement gap will continue to be a priority of the administration and staff at Montgomery Elementary School. Analyzing how students are supported and the type and variety of targeted interventions and accommodations is, and will continue to be, an ongoing cycle within the established system of supports for students with disabilities.

### **Poverty Comparison Data**

In Montgomery, there is an achievement gap that exists between students living in poverty and students who do not live in poverty. 81% of students not living in poverty met or exceeded the proficiency standard in ELA compared with 67% of students living in poverty. 81% of students not living in poverty met or exceeded the proficiency standard in Math compared with 63% of students living in poverty. There is a gap between the performance level of students living in poverty and their peers not living in poverty in ELA and a wider gap that exists between the same groups in math at Montgomery Elementary School. Closing this achievement gap will continue to be a priority of the administration and staff at Montgomery Elementary School. Analyzing how students are supported and the type and variety of targeted interventions, supports and accommodations is, and will continue to be, an ongoing priority within the established system of supports for students with disabilities.

Montgomery is prepared to take actionable steps to continue working on closing the achievement gaps that have been identified for students in the categories identified above. It is worth noting that in almost every instance, the lower end of the achievement gap was still at a relatively high level and is, in many cases, still higher than the state average achievement level.

**Low Per Pupil Spending vs. Opportunities for Excellence**

We pride ourselves on providing exceptional learning opportunities for our students in a way that is fiscally efficient for taxpayers. While our frugality demonstrates our ability to meet goals around school spending efficiencies, it is a bit of a double-edged sword because our comparatively low per pupil spending in some ways limits our ability to provide more opportunities for excellence like additional physical education, a technology integration specialist or language immersion teacher. These shared resource opportunities will be explored with other districts in the region in the future.

**Equity in Course Offerings/Instructional Time Data**

The building leaders in the three Pk-8 elementary schools in FNESU examined course offerings and instructional time offered in each content area during the fall of 2018. After careful analysis, we determined that there is substantial equity in the type of course offerings and the amount of instruction time offered in math and literacy instruction. There are identified areas with less equitable instructional time in content areas such as science, social studies and physical education. The administration will continue to be mindful of equity when developing future master schedules. One particular challenge in Montgomery is that the length of the instructional day is shorter than in some other schools.

**17/18 Instructional Time – Bakersfield, Berkshire & Montgomery**

*(R- Reading, W – Writing, Balanced Lit – Combined Reading and Writing)*

<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	60/day	80/day R 60/day W	60/ wk	embedded	60/wk	60/wk	150/wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	90/day	120/day (balanced lit)	60/wk	embedded	40/wk	40/wk	40/wk
<b>Montgomery</b>	85/day	80/day R 27/day W	90/wk	embedded	45/wk	45/wk	90/wk

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	60/day	80/day R 55/day W	120/wk	embedded	60/wk	60/wk	150/wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	90/day	120/day (balanced lit)	60/wk	embedded	40/wk	40/wk	40/wk
<b>Montgomery</b>	85/day	100/day R, 25/day W	90/wk	embedded	45/wk	45/wk	90/wk

<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	75/day	90/day R 55/day W	120/wk	embedded	60/wk	60/wk	150/wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	90/day	120/day (balanced lit)	60/wk	embedded	40/wk	40/wk	40/wk
<b>Montgomery</b>	90/day	100/day R 30-40/day W	60-90/wk	embedded	45/wk	45/wk	90/wk

<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	105/day	70/day R 50/day W	100/wk	embedded	60/wk	60/wk	150/wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	90/day	120/day (balanced lit)	60/wk	embedded	40/wk	40/wk	40/wk
<b>Montgomery</b>	84/day	92/day R 40/day W	90/wk	embedded	45/wk	45/wk	90/wk



<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	105/day	70/day R 50/day W	100/wk	embedded	60/wk	60/wk	150/wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	90/day	120/day (balanced lit)	60/wk	embedded	40/wk	40/wk	40/wk
<b>Montgomery</b>	102/day	90/day R 20-30/day W	90/wk	embedded	45/wk	45/wk	45/wk

<b>Grade 5</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Global Citizenship</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	60/day	60/day	60/day	60/day	45-90/wk	60/wk plus band, chorus	90 /wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	75/day	150/day (balanced lit)	75/day	embedded	40/wk	40/wk	40/wk
<b>Montgomery</b>	87/day	90/day R 20-25/day W	20/day	embedded	45/wk	45/wk	45/wk

<b>Grade 6</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Global Citizenship</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	60/day	60/day	60/day	60/day	45-90/wk	60/wk plus band, chorus	90/wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	75/day	150/day (balanced lit)	75/day	embedded	40/wk	40/wk	40/wk
<b>Montgomery</b>	85/day	60/day R 20/day W	40/day	60/day	45/wk	45/wk	45/wk

<b>Grade 7</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Global Citizenship</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	60/day	60/day	60/day	60/day	Min 45/wk, max 90/wk	90/wk band 90 /wk chorus as electives	90/wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	75/day	150/day (balanced lit)	75/every other day	75/every other day	40 min/wk*	40 min/wk*	40 min/wk*
<b>Montgomery</b>	86/day	46/day R 15/day W	60/day	25/day	45/wk	45/wk	45/wk

\* Minimum exposure to art instruction in a year is 3 – quarter long 40 min/wk exploratory courses

<b>Grade 8</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Global Citizenship</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>PE</b>
<b>Bakersfield</b>	60/day	60/day	60/day	60/day	Min 45/wk, max 90/wk	90/wk band 90/wk chorus as electives	90 /wk
<b>Berkshire</b>	75/day	150/day (balanced lit)	75/every other day	75/every other day	40 min/wk*	40 min/wk*	40 min/wk*
<b>Montgomery</b>	88/day	46/day R 20/day W	60/day	25/day	45/wk	45/wk	45/wk

\* Minimum exposure to art instruction in a year is 3 – quarter long 40 min/wk exploratory courses

### **Equity in Access to Student Support Services**

The building leaders in the three Pk-8 elementary schools in FNESU analyzed student support services available in each school during the fall of 2018. Given the difference in size between the three schools, there are some proportional differences in support services that are to be expected. Montgomery offers substantially equitable interventionists in literacy and math and special education services. Montgomery has not decided to use the instructional coaching

model in the school. However, there does not appear to be a negative impact given the strong results of the schoolwide data.

	Literacy Interventionists	Math Interventionists	Literacy Instructional Coach	Math Instructional Coach	Special Educator(K-8)	Home School Coordinator	% teachers with ≤5 years experience
<b>Bakersfield Elementary School</b>	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	1.0 FTE	0	80%
<b>Berkshire Elementary School</b>	1.75 FTE	1.75 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	2.0 FTE	0	38%
<b>Montgomery Elementary School</b>	0.8 FTE	0.4 FTE	0	0	1.2 FTE	0	46%

## **Equity in Access to Supervisory Union Level Resources**

### **Teacher Retention**

In our area of the state, we continue to struggle with teacher retention and turnover. 46% of Montgomery’s licensed teachers have less than five years experience teaching (see data above). The other two PK-8 schools in FNESU have challenges as well. Berkshire is quite similar to Montgomery. and Bakersfield has substantially more new teachers. Given the data around teacher turnover, we intend to keep new teacher support and training at the forefront of our priorities in order to be able to continuously provide students with high quality learning experiences at all levels.

### **New Teacher Mentoring**

All schools in Franklin Northeast benefit from the supports of our annual New Teacher Training each summer and our New Teacher Mentor throughout the year. Our mentor is a long-time local retired educator who provides assistance and training to new teachers throughout the district on a weekly and bi-weekly basis. The new teacher cohort also receives additional training for the equivalent of three additional days per year on things like Mental Health First Aid, Classroom Management, Curriculum and Instruction, and Trauma Informed Practices.

## **FNESU Teacher Academy**

All teachers in Franklin Northeast are assigned to a teacher cohort group either by grade level or content area. These groups work collaboratively on curriculum, instruction and assessment at SU inservices throughout the year and at regularly scheduled teacher academy days. These full or half-day professional development days are used to support all teachers and work towards rigor, relevance and substantial equity in all FNESU School.

## **FNESU Instructional Leadership Teams**

The FNESU Directors of Instruction and Learning work regularly with the building level literacy and math instructional coaches in order to plan for professional development and instructional coaching opportunities within each school. Although Montgomery does not employ instructional coaches, there are teachers from Montgomery who attend these team meetings and bring the information back to the school level.

## **FNESU Special Education Coaching**

All new special educators in Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union benefit from the support of the FNESU Special Education Coach. All new special educators work in a cohort and receive support, training and in-building coaching on a regular basis.

## **Equity of Access Will Remain**

Montgomery teachers currently have equitable access to all supports at the Supervisory Union level. Should Montgomery's Section 9 proposal be approved and no changes to our Supervisory Boundaries are made, Montgomery will have the same access to the SU supports that currently exist.

## **2. 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**

Montgomery Elementary School leads its students to meet or exceed the State's Education Quality Standards starting with our Vision and Mission Statements:

### **Vision:**

We will create a community that will build lifelong, confident learners, who have the tools necessary for success in a changing world.

### **Mission:**

The Montgomery Elementary School strives to be an exemplary learning community by:

- \* Building strong relationships in a family-like setting
- \* Fostering the development of the whole person
- \* Challenging ourselves and others to identify strengths for continual improvement

- \* Promoting open communication
- \* Learning and growing together through respectful interactions and celebrations

Montgomery Elementary School has been fortunate to retain local community members in leading its school. Former Montgomery Principal, Beth O'Brien, was celebrated for her success in "[Montgomery Elementary School Beats the Odds on Student Achievement](#)" (Seven Days, 2013) (see Appendix B) and commended by State Director of Educational Assessment, Michael Hock. Seven Days noted that, "These stats make Montgomery a leader not just in Vermont but nationally: The school is one of four profiled in the forthcoming book [Growing Into Equity: Professional Learning and Personalization in High-Achieving Schools](#), due out in June 2018. Coauthor Sonia Caus-Gleason calls Montgomery "extraordinary," and "one of the schools that is really in the advance team for schools across the country." A 2012 case study of Montgomery Elementary School by Lawrence Picus and Allan Odden is found in a report entitled "[An Evaluation of Vermont's Education Finance System](#)". This comprehensive review of MES highlights the achievements from 2005-2010 concluding that "Montgomery Pre-K to 8 School is exemplary. It has produced an impressive record of student performance, showing consistent gains over the last six years." Current principal, [Sandy Alexander](#) (whose grandchildren attend Montgomery Elementary School) is continuing to foster this success.

The Montgomery Elementary School Continuous Improvement Plan (see Appendix A) states that we are committed to providing high quality, professional learning opportunities for our teachers that are embedded, ongoing, promote teacher collaboration, and focus on improving learning. On our quest to improve student learning, teachers meet several times per week in their Professional Learning Communities, and also attend other professional development opportunities such as the FNESU "Academy." Through these efforts, we are committed to ensuring that all students are meeting challenging academic content standards as well as increasing overall achievement. In addition, through our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, we are committed to narrowing the achievement gaps between high and low performing students by providing interventions that address difficulties while accelerating learning.

In May of 2017, the state of Vermont once again participated in the SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) to assess student progress toward meeting the Common Core Standards in literacy and math. In Montgomery, students in grades 3-8 were tested. Below you will find average scores for Vermont, FNESU, and Montgomery. As you can see, Montgomery's scores continue to be strong. Montgomery continues to excel in this arena despite having a 58.22% free and reduced lunch population (AOE 2015/16).

Grade	English Language Arts/Literacy			Math		
	Proficient and Above Vermont	Proficient and Above FNESU	Proficient and Above Montgomery	Proficient and Above Vermont	Proficient and Above FNESU	Proficient and Above Montgomery
3	49%	52%	77%	52%	50%	62%
4	49%	50%	60%	47%	55%	67%
5	55%	49%	62%	42%	43%	62%
6	52%	56%	93%	39%	48%	86%
7	55%	51%	67%	44%	46%	67%
8	55%	50%	88%	41%	41%	63%

While academic excellence is always at the forefront, there are many other facets to the well-rounded education that students are afforded at Montgomery Elementary School. Hands down, Montgomery Elementary School is the epitome of a student-centered, family-like community, and we are fortunate that the Montgomery community at large is so supportive of our school. We are proud of our community connection and thankful for the various people who partner with us to volunteer, offer programming, and include the school in community events. When visitors come to Montgomery, we often hear about a certain “feel” that they experience. Our students contribute to that feel by taking an active role in our day-to-day routines, as well as their education.

Last year teachers collaborated together at a two-hour workshop to create a “Code of Character” that was introduced at the start of the school year. All students and staff understand the meaning of each and every trait, and are expected to “Live the Code” on a regular basis. The following traits are focused on daily at Montgomery Elementary School, and we encourage families to recognize students using these traits at home.

**Integrity**  
**Respect**  
**Responsibility**  
**Empathy and Compassion**  
**Collaboration**  
**Perseverance**  
**Craftsmanship**

The following is a list of community enrichment activities, partnerships and unique programming which contribute to the excellence at Montgomery Elementary School.

### **Community Enrichment Activities**

- One School Two Books Family Literacy Event - In January, families come together in the evening for dinner and the distribution of two books - one for the lower grades and another for the higher grades. Throughout the following weeks, family reading homework is assigned, and trivia questions with prizes take place at school.
- Community Holiday Lunch - In December, the community is welcomed into the school for a holiday lunch and preview (dress rehearsal) of our Winter Concert.
- Community Appreciation Spring Luncheon - In May, we honor community members and organizations who have volunteered at, or donated goods or services to our school.
- Building Bright Futures Tumble Time - On Fridays throughout the year, parents and young children play and socialize in the gym. Our PlaySchool group joins in on the fun during this time.
- Green Up Day - Our school was asked to join in the Town's efforts on Green Up Day. We scheduled our own day during the same week and covered a lot of ground!
- Penny Palooza and Holiday Support - This annual event is completely student led and raises over \$1,000 each year to help needy families during the holidays.
- CLiF Literacy Events - Last summer we were awarded a CLiF Summer Reading grant, which brought a storyteller to Montgomery Elementary during summer school. The Montgomery Recreation Department Summer Camp joined us for this event, and each student went home with two brand new books. Since then, our Early Ed program and LEAPS after school program have been awarded the same grant.
- Rec Summer Day Camp - Students attend this camp during the summer free of charge. Montgomery Elementary School works closely with camp counselors to transfer students back and forth to and from summer school. Our programs run in tandem to make it convenient for families whose children attend summer school until noon.
- Safe Kids Worldwide Helmet Program - This program offers helmets to students at a reduced cost.
- Playground Community Build - A new early ed playground was purchased and we saved thousands of dollars using the "community build" option. Several community members and staff members worked tirelessly together to make this happen.

### **Community Partnerships**

- Montgomery Conservation Commission – This group has sponsored several assemblies for our school on topics such as raptors, reptiles and bats. This programming was brought to us through the Vermont Institute of Natural Science and also with support from the Richford Conservation Commission and the Wild and Scenic River Committee.

- Snyder's Martial Arts Centers - Every Friday afternoon Master Snyder holds Taekwondo classes in the Montgomery Elementary School gym. These classes are very well attended, and help to reinforce the tenets of our Code of Character.
- Ballet Arts – Kathleen McCloskey-Scott offers ballet classes two days a week for two different age groups. Each year these students perform at Candles & Carols before the holidays and also at a spring recital held at the Montgomery Center for the Arts.
- Jay Peak Resort - Students in grades 4-8 enjoy skiing and snowboarding at Jay Peak. In addition, Jay Peak has rewarded Montgomery Elementary School students with complimentary trips to the water park. One reward was to celebrate outstanding SBAC scores, and another was for our Green Up Day efforts.
- Hazen's Notch Association Nordic Center and Summer Camp - While students in grades 4-8 enjoy time at Jay Peak, younger students snowshoe at Hazen's Notch Nordic Center. In addition, the Hazen's Notch Association sponsors three Montgomery students to attend the Hazen's Notch summer camp each year.
- Montgomery Fire Department - Delivers an annual Fire Safety Assembly each fall.
- United Way Foster Grandparent Program - We are fortunate to have two Foster Grandparents volunteering in our first, second and third grade classrooms.
- Therapy Dogs of Vermont - This year Montgomery Elementary will have a weekly visit from Megan, a certified Therapy Dog. This program will be piloted in the first grade classroom.
- Phineas Swann Bed & Breakfast - This local business supports our school in various ways. At Halloween they host the "Haunted Phineas" and all donations from the event are donated to our school. In addition, students are invited to participate in this bone-chilling event. Also, our "Little Girls Club" and "Big Girls Club" (enrichment groups from our LEAPS after school program) have visited the Phineas Swann for Tea Parties, which have been a big hit.

## **Unique Programs**

- LEAPS After School Program - This program, made possible by the 21st Century Grant, keeps our school buzzing from 7:30 in the morning until 5:00 at night. This is our fourth year of the program, which offers a wide variety of enrichment opportunities for our students. Some offerings include cooking, gardening, chess, outdoor games, art, drama, cheerleading, science, yoga, Zumba, Taekwondo, and ballet. The LEAPS staff includes parent and high school volunteers, current and former Montgomery Elementary School staff members, and various members of the community.
- Shakespeare - For more than 20 years Montgomery Elementary students have been performing in our annual Shakespeare play. In January approximately 35 students begin rehearsals in preparation for the April performance. This is a community "must see" event.
- SMILE (Students Making Ideal Living Everywhere) - This group was started in 2015 by an 8th grade student in an effort to give students more responsibility in the day to day



operations of our school. These students meet directly with the Principal on a regular basis to discuss ideas, concerns, etc.

- Author Talks - Our Librarian invites authors to come in as guest speakers in hopes of inspiring our young writers.
- Jump Rope for Heart - For many years Montgomery students have been participating in this fundraiser for the American Heart Association.
- Washington DC Trip - This 5-night 8th grade class trip to our Capital has been a tradition for 35 years!

### **Increased consistency and equity of opportunity by sustaining early education at Montgomery Elementary School.**

- Early school experiences and interventions are the building blocks of student success in school, and are fundamental in promoting positive learning behaviors and characteristics. Our plan recognizes the benefits of our Pre-K program at Montgomery Elementary School. Students currently receive 10 hours of playschool (age 3) and 19.5 hours of preschool (age 4) weekly.
- Additionally, every Friday, Montgomery provides its gymnasium for playgroup time (mostly ages 0-3). The State sponsors the playgroup through the Parent Child Program (f/k/a Building Bright Futures, f/k/a Success By Six). It is run by community liaison, Amanda Starr. This fantastic program, Tumble Time, encourages our youngest community members to become active learners in our school building. It prepares them to be familiar and relaxed in our learning environment as well as bringing parents together for community building.
- The value of early childhood education cannot be overstated, which is why Montgomery Elementary School chooses to offer nearly double the required hours for Preschool Students. 3-year-olds begin in PlaySchool with the mandated 10 hours per week, however, the following year PreSchool students attend for 19.5 hours per week. This provides a gradual progression while facilitating a more natural transition to kindergarten and also allows added time for academics without losing playtime.
- We will continue to offer these programs and work with the Franklin Northeast SU to enhance teacher training, share information and resources specific to pre-K instruction, curriculum implementation and assessment protocols in order to strengthen the educational outcomes for our pre-K students.
- It should be noted that Montgomery's preschool program has been awarded 5 STARS, the highest possible rating from the Vermont Department of Children and Families. STARS is Vermont's quality recognition system for child care, preschool, and afterschool programs. Programs that participate in STARS are stepping ahead — going above and beyond state regulations to provide professional services that meet

the needs of children and families.

### **3. Maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff**

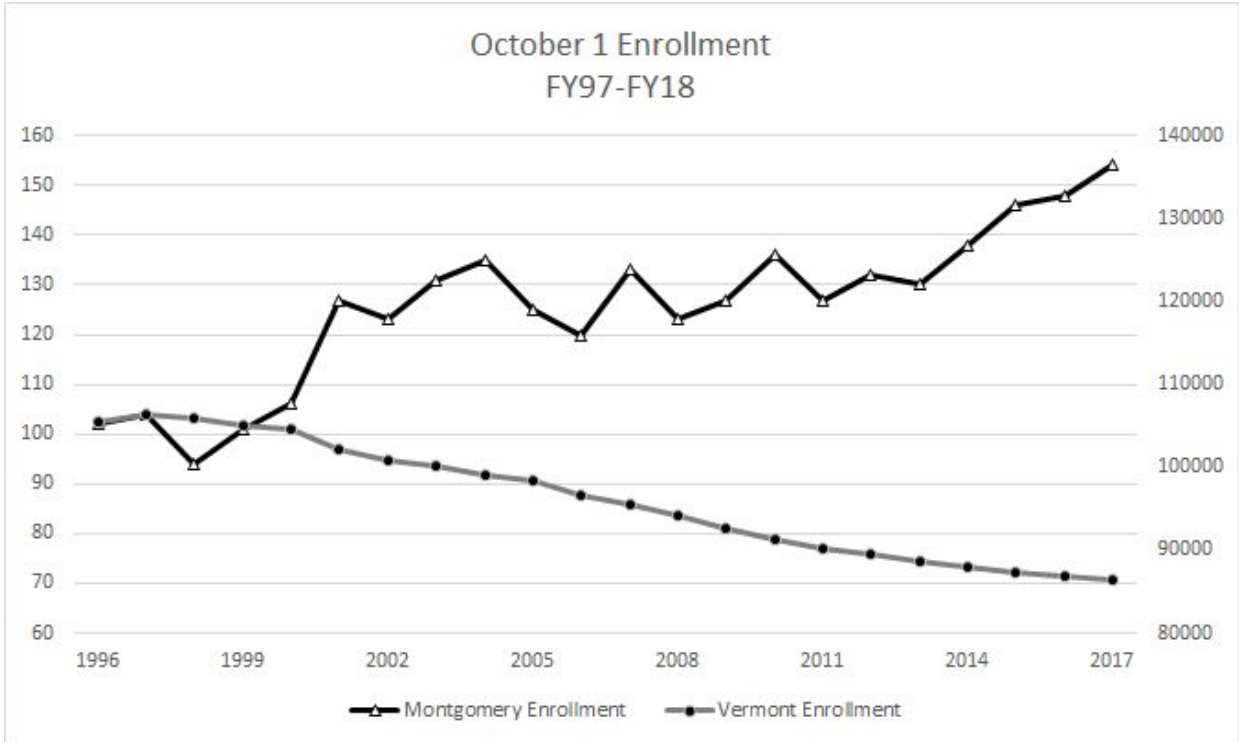
The Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union has already realized many operational efficiencies already by:

- Centralizing special education services for all students
- Centralizing transportation services
- Centralizing collective bargaining for professional staff
- Aligning policies and procedures
- Streamlining the accounting system
- Centralizing purchasing of products and services

In addition, the Montgomery Town School District Board believes it has already demonstrated the ability to meet the goals of Act 46 to “maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff” and to deliver services “at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.”

### **ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS**

The first finding in Section 1 of Act 46 recognizes Vermont’s decline in the number of students over the past two decades. This drop in students has been a major driver in the decrease of student-staffing ratios and in the increase of per-pupil spending. However northwestern Vermont in general, and Montgomery specifically, have been largely insulated from this trend:



This data below is taken from the latest “Comparative Data for Cost-Effectiveness” report, prepared by the AOE and presented to voters each year. It shows Montgomery Elementary School (FY16 Data) has the highest student/teacher ratio of all 33 schools in its cohort, those K-8 schools with a student enrollment under 200. Montgomery Elementary had a student/teacher ratio of 14.08; the average for the cohort was 11.34, and the lowest ratio was half that of Montgomery Elementary at 7.01.

School	Enrollment	Total Teachers	Student/Teacher Ratio
<b>Montgomery Elementary</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>9.80</b>	<b>14.08</b>
Glover Community School	134	10.30	13.01
Barton Graded School	194	15.00	12.93
Sutton Village School	110	8.80	12.50
Irasburg Village School	140	11.41	12.27
Millers Run School USD #37	116	9.51	12.20
Dummerston Schools	168	14.00	12.00
Westford Elementary School	186	15.50	12.00
Washington Village School	92	7.70	11.95

Waterford Elementary School	152	12.74	11.93
Stamford Elementary School	76	6.40	11.88
Newton School	127	10.90	11.65
Bakersfield School	156	13.40	11.64
Benson Village School	99	8.70	11.38
Orange Center School	102	9.10	11.21
Orleans Elementary School	115	10.40	11.06
Lunenburg/Gilman Schools	120	10.85	11.06
Putney Central School	181	16.60	10.90
Albany Community School	94	8.70	10.80
Marlboro Elementary School	86	8.00	10.75
Troy Elementary School	184	17.48	10.53
Tunbridge Central School	114	11.20	10.18
Brownington Central School	106	10.60	10.00
Orwell Village School	110	11.10	9.91
Folsom Ed and Community Ctr	134	13.80	9.71
Readsboro Elementary School	58	6.10	9.51
Walden School	93	10.40	8.94
Halifax School	47	5.30	8.87
Charleston Elementary School	122	13.80	8.84
Lowell Graded School	115	13.70	8.39
Newark School	59	7.20	8.19
Coventry Village School	106	13.13	8.07
Brighton Elementary School	93	13.27	7.01

Comparing Montgomery Elementary School to all 296 operating schools in the state for that same data set, Montgomery had a higher student-teacher ratio than 241 of them. Montgomery's student-teacher ratio exceeded the state average by 2.38.

### **NON-SPECIAL EDUCATION SPENDING PER PUPIL**

Looking again to the "Comparative Data" Report, when compared to its District cohort (34 K-8 districts with a student FTE count under 200), Montgomery School District has a non-SPED per-pupil spending of \$10,596, the lowest of the group (FY15 data). Montgomery spent almost *\$3,500 less per pupil* than the average of this group.

District	Expenditures Excluding SPED	FTE	EdSpending (no SPED) Per Pupil
<b>Montgomery</b>	<b>\$1,404,277</b>	<b>132.53</b>	<b>\$10,596</b>
Irasburg	\$1,574,290	141.58	\$11,120
Lowell	\$1,327,682	116.55	\$11,391
Stamford	\$878,132	75.31	\$11,660
Bakersfield	\$1,708,049	143.72	\$11,885
Troy	\$2,131,882	179.18	\$11,898
Barton ID	\$2,281,778	191.29	\$11,929
Brownington	\$1,332,103	106.38	\$12,522
Glover	\$1,691,512	129.29	\$13,083
Sutton	\$1,410,315	107.79	\$13,084
Orleans ID	\$1,481,674	112.59	\$13,159
Grand Isle	\$2,631,380	198.50	\$13,256
Strafford	\$1,655,569	124.24	\$13,325
Readsboro	\$742,613	55.21	\$13,452
Charleston	\$1,438,757	106.78	\$13,474
Orwell	\$1,510,607	109.28	\$13,824
Benson	\$1,261,020	91.16	\$13,833
Albany	\$1,331,814	95.62	\$13,928
Coventry	\$1,528,059	108.46	\$14,089
Waterford	\$2,087,445	147.69	\$14,133
Walden	\$1,306,904	88.77	\$14,722
Orange	\$1,530,865	103.29	\$14,822
Washington	\$1,328,056	89.42	\$14,852
Newark	\$878,144	58.86	\$14,920
Putney	\$2,704,316	178.25	\$15,171
Westford	\$2,851,568	183.42	\$15,547
Brighton	\$1,466,145	93.94	\$15,607
Lunenburg	\$1,639,540	104.40	\$15,704

Halifax	\$772,272	47.62	\$16,218
Tunbridge	\$1,683,498	103.47	\$16,271
Marlboro	\$1,369,261	83.71	\$16,357
Millers Run USD #37	\$1,669,790	101.92	\$16,383
Dummerston	\$2,794,809	162.15	\$17,236
South Hero	\$2,422,226	124.56	\$19,446

Comparing Montgomery School District to the state as a whole for that same data set, only eight of the 223 districts that operated a school spent less (non-SPED) per pupil than Montgomery. Montgomery spent \$2,600 per pupil less than the state average.

As required by Act 153 of 2010, Sections 15 & 16, the schools in FNESU have adopted a minimum class size policy. (See Appendix C) In the 2017/2018 school year, enrollment in all classes K-8 met or exceeded the minimum average for grade clusters. No classes exceeded the maximum average per grade cluster.

Montgomery Elementary School						
Grade	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18 (Ant.)
Pre-K3	8	8	9	9	16	16
Pre-K4	10	10	11	10	11	11
K	13	11	12	15	12	12
1	10	15	13	14	15	12
2	14	11	16	14	19	15
3	7	11	13	18	13	19
4	9	10	14	13	16	13
5	17	8	15	14	13	16
6	10	16	9	14	13	13
7	17	11	17	7	13	13
8	17	19	9	18	7	13
<b>Total:</b>	132	130	138	146	148	153

We have not experienced the same level of decline in student enrollment that has occurred in other parts of the state, rather enrollment has steadily increased over the last two decades. Since 1996, Montgomery Elementary has seen an average 2% increase per year compared to a 1% decrease Statewide over the same time frame. Our spending per pupil continues to be comparatively low. Given that we already meet goals around efficiency, reducing staff further could jeopardize the success of the students we serve. However, we will continue to be strategic and mindful about how decisions are made to support students.

#### **4. Promote transparency and accountability**

The Montgomery Board and Administration promote transparency in a variety of ways:

- 1) The annual budget meeting is held locally at the school and is open to the public. Voters are given ample time to ask questions of the School Board and administration in order to understand the operational expenses and budget being proposed. Voters appreciate this opportunity and place for discussion. Voice in decision making is a local value which is appreciated in Montgomery. In recent years this meeting does not last long as the community has had a long standing trust in the board's decisions. The budget is usually passed with a near unanimous voice vote. Both of the unification proposals presented to voters proposed a change to an Australian Ballot. Maintaining our current governance structure allows the community to continue the longstanding tradition of voting at the Annual School Meeting from the floor.
- 2) School board meetings are open to the public and are conveniently located in our school building in the evening when most community members are available to attend.
- 3) Board meetings are posted and warned at the local Post Offices, Town Clerk's Office, the School, and on the FNESU website.
- 4) Three members of the Montgomery School Board, serve as board members on the FNESU Board. Each of the five member districts in FNESU have equal representation on this 15 member board, as defined in Vermont State Statute.
- 5) Montgomery hosts a website <http://www.mesk8.net/> containing information about the school and school board agendas as well as minutes for the public. Further, a weekly school newsletter is sent home to families and posted for community members to view.
- 6) Annual School Reports are published in the Town Report.
- 7) Audits are performed annually and are available for review publicly

Montgomery promotes and will expand accountability measures through the following actions:

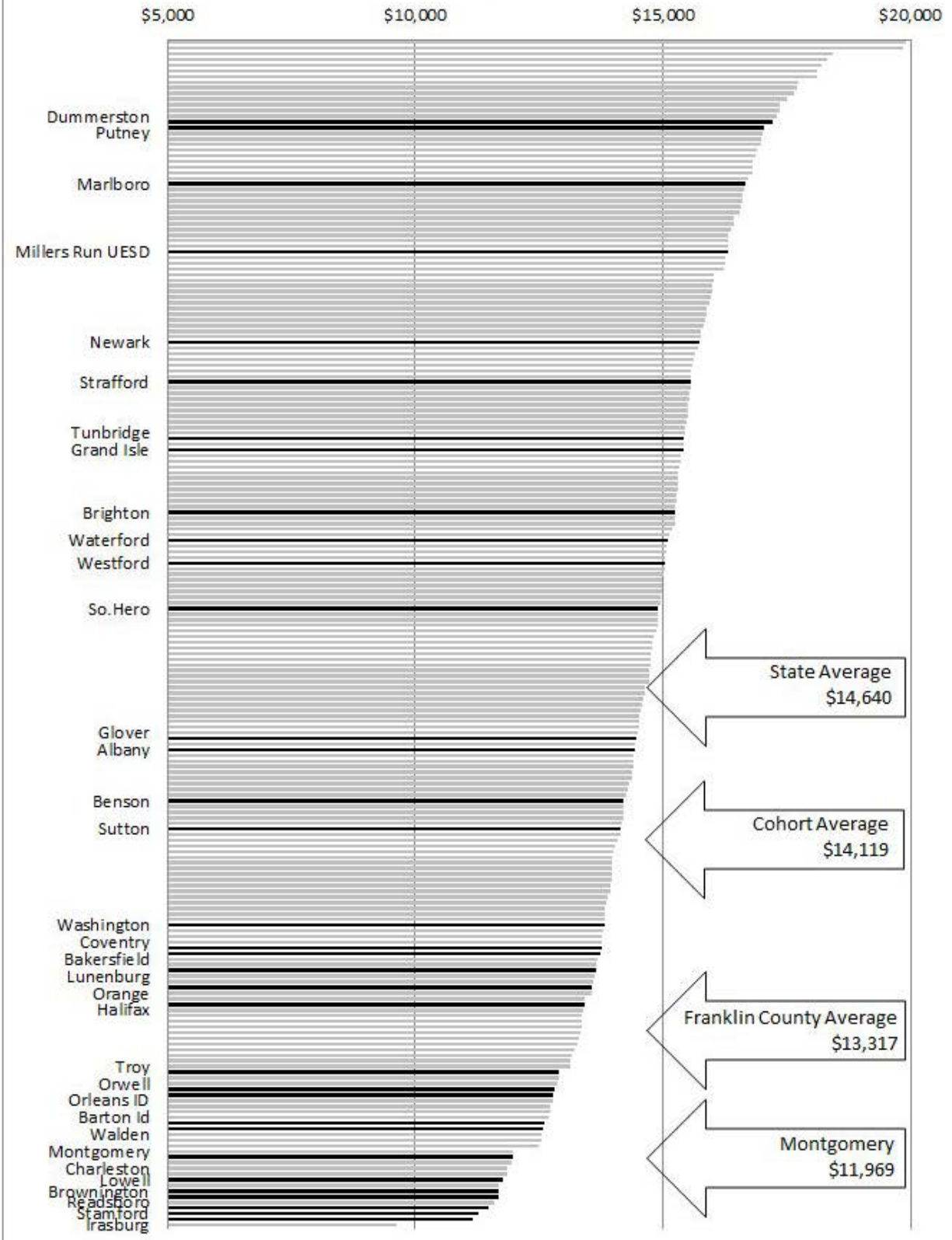
1. Participation in the FNESU Local Assessment Plan
2. Participation in school-level and FNESU level analysis of SBAC results
3. Ongoing development of FNESU standards based report card/proficiency based reporting documents
4. The Montgomery Board will create an email list serve and/or add to the school website additional information, including: agendas, policies, and actions to increase community knowledge and understanding of board workings and decisions
5. Montgomery is currently improving its website to increase transparency and communication with families and the community.

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

Montgomery Town School District’s overall per-pupil spending has consistently been below the State average, below the Franklin County average, and is below its cohort (34 K-8 districts with a student FTE count under 200) average. The table below shows per pupil education spending for all operating districts. In FY17, Montgomery spent \$1,348 less per equalized pupil than the Franklin County average, \$2,150 less than this cohort average, and \$2,671 less than the State average.



## FY17 Education Spending Per Pupil Operating Districts



## **B) Structural and Geographic Isolation**

### **2/21/17 Draft 3400 Proposals for Alternative Structures**

3450.10 "Description of Region, including (1) Identity of each district that the district making the proposal considers to be in its Region that is NOT part of the proposal ("NPD") (2) Regional relationships and transportation between the district's) making the proposal and the identified NPD(s): (A) Current and historic relationship among the districts (B) Distances and quality of roads between the districts and between schools, if any (i) Transportation concerns, especially those related to current low equity of opportunities and/or concern about future diminishment of equity (pg. 13)."

### **Geographic & Structural Isolation**

#### ***Regional relationships and transportation (Draft 3400: #2)***

#### ***Driving Distance & Time (Section 21 of Act 153 )***

#### ***Lengthy Driving Time & Inhospitable Routes (9/20/17 Memorandum)***

Montgomery takes great pride in its distinction as "Vermont's Covered Bridge Town" with 6 historic bridges linking multiple dirt roads that branch out from the Center and the Village. The Center and The Village are two separate entities that function as one town. They are located 2.6 miles apart on State Rt. 118, a quick four minute drive. Montgomery even has two post offices. Montgomery is connected to the region by only two State Class 1 Roads, Rt. 118 and 242. With a total square mileage of 56.75, Montgomery ranks 16th out of 242 towns. Montgomery consists of 8 arteries that reach out from the Village and the Center (Zoning Map) <http://www.nrpcvt.com/Publications/ZoningMaps/MontgomeryZoningMap.pdf>. From the Center, three of the main roads are only Class 3 (Amidon Rd., The Reagan Road, and The Gibou). Most of these roads service Class 4 roads as well as private roads (The Deep Gibou and Alpine Haven) that are not all serviced by our busing system or town plow. As for the Village, there are also four main roads that are only Class 3 (North Hill Rd., Black Falls Rd., West Hill and Hill West Rds.) Hill West turns into an unmaintained Class 4 road connecting to the Deep Gibou, and is only open to those who dare with an appropriate vehicle in the summertime. Hazen's Notch Road is the only Class 2 road. It is closed at the Montgomery/Lowell boundary for the winter. Montgomery is bordered by five towns: Bakersfield, Belvidere, Eden, Enosburg Falls, Richford and Westfield.

The VSA states in VSA 19 Section § 302. that "the selectboard have authority to determine whether a class 3 highway, or section of highway, should be plowed and made negotiable during the winter." While our town does an excellent job maintaining the roads in the winter, there are consistently times during significant weather events when the road crew is unable to keep pace with snowfall and ensure the safety of the roads. During these times, buses are advised to wait at the bottom of each hill in order to follow the plow up as the road is cleared and sanded. Montgomery is at the base of Jay Peak Resort and what locals call "The Jay Cloud" frequently inundates the town with snow. We experience [the highest snowfall records](#)

in the state making travel difficult. "Mud Season" also makes maintaining our roads extremely difficult, frequently causing our buses to only be able to pick kids up at the bottom of each of the 8 arteries where they reach the State Roads.

Currently, under normal weather conditions, Montgomery Elementary School has documented the following busing times, which depending on inclement weather can vary by as much as 15 minutes. These times are only based on pick up, and do not include the minutes it takes from the last stop to arriving at school. Again, many of these stops do not include the Class 4 and Private roads. During inclement weather, families on these roads are required to drive their children to the nearest bus stop.

- 1) The first bus route services roads off of State Rt. 118. Students getting on the bus and riding for approximately 38 minutes. Their day begins at 7:20 AM though school does not begin until 8:40, adding an hour and 20 minutes to their school day, not including the ride home.
- 2) The second route services State Rt. 242 and the Amidon and Hazen's Notch roads. The first children picked up are on the bus at 8:03 AM for a total of 27 minutes.
- 3) The third route picks children up at 7:10 AM. They are on the bus for an hour and 15 minutes.

Bus routes were adjusted for the 2017/18 school year in response to the new busing arrangements made with the Supervisory Union to meet the goals of Act 46. To add time to these routes to travel to any of the following schools is unjust for young children as total rides for students will range from 27 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes not including driving time to the bus pick up or driving time to the next nearest school. Some Montgomery students would be on a school bus for over 3 hours a day should Montgomery school be closed or re-structured.

Travel on Vermont roads can be dangerous. According to VT Trans Crash Query Tool, between 12/20/2016 and 12/20/2017 there have been 85 crashes in Montgomery and its neighboring towns. It is the goal of the Montgomery School Board to minimize additional travel time for students. In Montgomery's case it can be argued that driving time in the winter and spring is significantly increased thus adding to the isolation of this community.

#### Section 21 of Act 153 of the 2009 Session Study on Small School Grant Eligibility Due to Geographic Necessity

In 2009 the town of Montgomery was found to be "eligible due to geographic necessity" to receive a small schools grant dependent on "the driving distance and time to the next closest school with a similar grade configuration. (pg. 5)" While it is understood that this designation will be replaced with newly approved geographic isolation metrics by the SBE in June 2018, this designation comes from the only document detailing geographic isolation in existence until the new metrics are formally approved.

### September 20th, 2017 Memorandum on Small Schools Grants

Citing a 2011 Report, “A school was initially identified by arbitrary cut points of a distance of greater than 10 miles or a driving time of greater than 15 minutes (pg. 3).” Montgomery was on this list. The memo also notes that the legislature made two changes to the eligibility criteria qualification for Small Schools Grants in 2015 noting that a school may apply to qualify based on “lengthy driving times or inhospitable routes to the nearest school with excess capacity; or the academic excellence and operational efficiency of the small school.”

*The Montgomery Board can argue Montgomery Elementary School qualifies for both determinations. In Montgomery’s case, it can be argued that driving time is significantly increased in the winter and springtime, and that the quality of roads, or lack thereof, also increases our isolation.*

The 2011 report validated its data by using “three mapping programs to determine both the driving distance and time from a small school to the nearest school with the same or similar grade configuration.” The data also acknowledge that “personal knowledge of the roads and areas was used to refine the list, as one school more distant than another may be adjacent to better roads, thus significantly reducing driving time.” For the purposes of this argument Google Maps was used to measure distances and times. “Personal knowledge” of the roads and their Class status was used to determine quality. Weather reports also support this data.

### **Berkshire**

#### **Montgomery is both structurally and geographically isolated from Berkshire.**

Montgomery does not share a town line with Berkshire making it structurally isolated. The distance between Montgomery Elementary and Berkshire School is 10.7 miles which is approximately a 17 minute drive in optimal conditions. This distance and drive time meet the criteria for geographical isolation.

From the furthest point in south east Montgomery down State Rt. 242, reaching Berkshire is 15.2 miles with a travel time of 24 minutes. From Avery’s Gore, the southernmost point in the Montgomery district on State Rt. 118, it is a 16.4 mile drive with a travel time of 24 minutes; a deep gore, it also experiences heavy and drifting snow. Berkshire is not a qualifying match for Montgomery.

### **Bakersfield**

#### **Montgomery is geographically isolated from Bakersfield.**

Bakersfield Elementary is 16.2 miles with a 30 minute drive in optimal conditions; making it even further away than Berkshire. Accessible only via Longley Bridge Road (Class 3) from the Montgomery/Enosburg town line one must then traverse two other Class 2 roads to reach the school. From the southernmost point in Avery’s Gore one would have to travel 21.8 miles for a drive time of 38 minutes. To reach Bakersfield via Class 1 Routes, State Rd. 118 to State Rd.

109, would require passing through a different Supervisory Union to reach Lapland Rd., a Class 3 road, traveling 21 miles for 36 minutes. From the southeastern most point on State Rd. 242 via Longley Bridge Rd., travel distance and time would be 21 miles in 36 minutes, or taking Rt. 118 (Class 1), through Lamoille North Supervisory Union, for 30 miles and a travel time of 46 minutes. While Montgomery does share a town border with Bakersfield in the west there is no road due to mountainous terrain. While we are not technically structurally isolated from Bakersfield we are extremely geographically isolated from Bakersfield. Bakersfield is clearly not a merger match for Montgomery.

### **Other Options With Neighboring Towns**

There are six other towns bordering Montgomery: Richford, Enosburg, Belvidere, Eden, Lowell and Westfield.

### **Schools Within FNESU:**

#### **Richford**

Montgomery School is 11 miles and approximately 16 minutes drive time to Richford elementary school which exceeds the geographic isolation rules being considered by the state. The town of Montgomery and Richford have twice voted down merger proposals. Montgomery is structurally different from Richford and is not “the next closest school with a similar grade configuration” as Richford is a K-12 while Montgomery is a K-8 and tuitions 9-12. Because Montgomery is structurally isolated from Richford it is not a potential merger partner. Therefore Richford, for the purposes of Act 46 and Alternative Governance Structures and Small Schools Grants, is not a viable reference point based on Montgomery’s geographic isolation.

#### **Enosburg Falls**

Enosburg Falls, a K-12 district, is also not a match for Montgomery as it is not a like structure. In addition it is 12 miles away with a 21 minute commute. As the “Dairy Center” of Northern Vermont, all one needs to slow this commute down is a manure spreader, dairy truck or tractor, adding a significant number of minutes to the commute.

Again, the State Board has stated in draft rules that more than a 10 mile 15 minute drive from school to school is too far for young students to travel.

### **Schools Outside FNESU**

The State board has also stated in Act 46 3400 Proposals that with determination of geographic and structural isolation “a ‘Region’ is not defined by current supervisory union boundaries, but nevertheless should be identified based on a common-sense view of districts in and outside the current supervisory union (3410.6, pg 2).”

Belvidere has merged with Lamoille North Supervisory Union. Belvidere does not have its own school and tuitions to Waterville Elementary, a K-8 school that does not have school choice for grades 9-12, operates in a different SU, and from whom we are structurally isolated. In addition, Waterville Elementary is 16.2 miles from Montgomery Elementary School with a drive time on State Rd. 118 and 109 for 23 minutes. Ironically to travel on state roads one would have to pass Waterville Elementary to reach Bakersfield. Waterville is not a match for Montgomery, and this point only strengthens the argument that Bakersfield is also not a match.

Eden, while a K-8, is not a like structural school as Eden has also merged with Lamoille North and does not tuition 9-12 students. From Montgomery Elementary School to Eden Elementary it is 16.3 miles for a total of 23 minutes of drive time. Eden is not a match for Montgomery.

Lowell also a K-8 again is not a like structural school, as they also do not tuition, and Lowell is with the North Country Supervisory Union. While Lowell is accessible via a Class 2 road, Rt. 58, aka the Hazen's Notch Road, within the 15 mile range, that is only during the autumn and spring months as the Notch is closed in the winter. Alternate routes to Lowell include Rt. 242 to Rt. 100 for a total of 22.9 miles and 34 minutes or Rt. 118 for a total of 25.3 miles and 32 minutes. Lowell is not a match for Montgomery.

Westfield is not a match as it tuitions its students to Jay Elementary. The town of Jay does not border Montgomery. The Jay Westfield school, also in the North Country Supervisory Union, is not a like structure as it only services K-6 and does not tuition. To reach Jay vehicles must traverse over the mountain, at elevation 2200+ feet, where the mountain snow storms rival any other part of Vermont.

## **Nearby towns with like structures**

Anecdotally there have been many discussions since the passage of Act 46 about Sheldon joining FNESU as it borders Enosburg. Sheldon Elementary, a part of neighboring Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union, has a like structure with Bakersfield, Berkshire and Montgomery as a K-8 that tuitions its students. It is not a town that borders Montgomery and is 20.5 miles and 30 minutes from Montgomery Elementary. For the same reasons that Montgomery Elementary School cannot merge with Bakersfield and Berkshire, Sheldon does not serve as a functional partner.

*In conclusion, using a "...a common-sense view of districts in and outside the current supervisory union (pg.2)..." Montgomery has been paired with Richford to determine geographic isolation but is a school that we are structurally isolated from. Towns and districts with whom we share a border that have like structures are all far beyond the 10mile/15 minute requirement to be considered partners. Our children currently spend far too much time on buses in order to reduce transportation costs to meet the requirements of Act 46. Montgomery is clearly a geographically and structurally isolated town.*

## **Additional Considerations**

Montgomery is very similar to the town of Marlboro in making this case. Marlboro has received approval to retain its own operating structure as Montgomery is requesting. Marlboro made their application via Act 49 and 2/4/1 status. Marlboro was not structurally isolated, as it shares a town border with Halifax but Marlboro was geographically isolated from Halifax due to distance and road conditions. Therefore Marlboro was unable to merge with Halifax its neighbour which also operates PK-8. In Montgomery's case we are not structurally isolated from Bakersfield however, we have a short town border that is extremely mountainous and over which no quality roads cross. We are geographically isolated from Bakersfield just as Marlboro was from Halifax, in fact the distance to reach Bakersfield from Montgomery is further than the distance from Marlboro to Halifax which the SBE has already approved. Marlboro School is 10 miles and 23 mins from Halifax. Montgomery School is 18 miles and 27 mins from Bakersfield.



Bus Crash in Berkshire, February 24th, 2014







Mud Season, Black Falls Road, Montgomery, VT, Spring 2012



The Montgomery Town School District proposes the current single district governance structure is retained. The School District will continue to work collaboratively with other districts within the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union in order to provide high quality educational opportunities, share resources, and explore ways to provide greater equity, efficiency, and excellence.

Montgomery's district operates its schools for all resident youth in pre-kindergarten through grade 8 and pays tuition for all resident students grades 9-12.

In this proposal we have demonstrated:

- A. How Montgomery currently meets/exceeds the goals of Act 46 and where improvements need to be made to better meet the goals of Act 46 moving forward.
- B. How the community is impacted by structural and geographical isolation.

We look forward to ongoing conversations about this proposal and would welcome the opportunity to provide you with any additional information you request.

## **Appendix**

- A. Montgomery Elementary Continuous Improvement Plan 2016-2018**
- B. 7 Days Article - Montgomery Elementary School Beats the Odds on Student Achievement**
- C. FNESU - Class Size Policy**

**Appendix A.**

**Montgomery Elementary School**  
**Continuous Improvement Plan 2016-2018**

(Addressing Education Quality Standards, AYP Plan and Title I Schoolwide Plan Requirements)

School Name: Montgomery  
 Supervisory Union: Franklin Northeast

Title I Schoolwide (Y/N): Yes

Current Superintendent: Lynn Cota  
 Superintendent Email: lcota@fnesu.net

SU Phone: 848-7661

Former Superintendent: Jay Nichols  
 Superintendent Email: jnichols@fnesu.net

SU Phone: 848-7661

Principal: Sandy Alexander  
 Principal Email: salexander@montgomeryk8.net

School Phone: 326-4618

<p><b>Goal #1:</b>  <b>(Purpose)</b>          Standards-Based Outcomes (SBO)</p>	<p><b>Statement of Goal/Statement of Purpose:</b> We are committed to ensuring that all students are meeting challenging academic content standards and to increasing achievement overall.</p>
<p><b>Goal #2:</b>  <b>(Purpose)</b>          Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)</p>	<p><b>Statement of Goal:</b> We are committed to narrowing achievement gaps between high &amp; low performing students by providing interventions that prevent difficulties and/or accelerate learning.</p>
<p><b>Goal #3:</b>          Professional Learning Communities (PLC)</p>	<p><b>Statement of Goal:</b> We are committed to providing high quality, relevant professional learning opportunities that are embedded, ongoing, promote teacher-collaboration and focus on improved learning.</p>

<b>Goal #1: (Purpose)</b> Standards- Based Outcomes (SBO)	<b>Statement of Goal/Statement of Purpose:</b> We are committed to ensuring that all students are meeting challenging academic content standards and to increasing achievement overall.
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<b>Objective # 1</b> Standards- Based Outcomes	<b>Task / Timeline (strategy)</b>	<b>Product/Evidence/ Resources</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>
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<p><b>A. Improve Student Achievement in Math</b></p> <p><b>SMART Goal: By June 2018, 80% of students in grade 3-8 will be proficient or higher on the SBAC math assessment.</b></p> <p><b>(Currently, our school-wide results are 73%)</b></p>	<p><b>2016-17:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial installation of CCSS-math aligned, research-based K-5 program to ensure that all students have access to content &amp; resources aimed at rigorous, grade level standards.</li> <li>2. Provide professional development for K-5 math teachers prior to support implementation of research-based math program.</li> <li>3. Use data and Math Interventionist to provide students with targeted support and progress monitoring.</li> </ol> <p><b>2017-2018:</b></p> <p>Implementation of K-5 CCSS-math aligned, research-based math program.</p> <p><b>Ongoing:</b></p> <p>Provide Instructional Coaching aimed at the use of research-based, effective instructional strategies.</p> <p>Continue to support Early Education (preschool/playschool) opportunities beyond what is required.</p> <p>Support School-Based Math Representative’s participation on SU Math Leadership Team to ensure consistent content expectations, assessment practices, evaluation criteria and related communication.</p> <p>Support School-Based Math Representative’s attendance of various professional development opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Evidence:</b></p> <p>School-based, SU-wide &amp; statewide assessment data. (including PNOA, OGAP, SBAC)</p> <p>Teachpoint data related to instructional strategies.</p> <p><b>Resources:</b></p> <p>Local Funds</p> <p>CFP Funds</p> <p><b>Product:</b></p> <p>SU wide common K-8 problem solving tasks &amp; scoring criteria.</p> <p><b>Resources:</b></p> <p>School-based math representative</p>	<p>Principal Classroom Teachers Math Interventionist School-based Math Representative FNESU Co-Director of Learning</p>
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<p><b>B. Improve Student Achievement in Literacy</b></p> <p><b>SMART Goal:</b>  <b>By June 2018, 80% of students in grade 3-8 will be proficient or higher on the SBAC ELA/Literacy assessment.</b></p> <p><b>(Currently, our school-wide results are 75%)</b></p>	<p><b>2016-17: and ongoing Units of Study Training New Teachers</b></p> <p><b>2017-2018 Ongoing:</b>  Utilize Literacy Interventionist to provide students with targeted support and progress monitoring.</p> <p>Continue to support Early Education (preschool/playschool) opportunities beyond what is required.</p> <p>Provide Instructional Coaching aimed at the use of research-based, effective instructional strategies.</p> <p>Support School-Based Literacy Coach's attendance of various professional development opportunities.</p> <p>Classroom teachers attend SU-based trainings, such as FNESU Academy and Inservice.</p>	<p><b>Evidence:</b>  School-based, SU-wide &amp; statewide assessment data. (including SRI, F&amp;P, SBAC interim and summative results)</p> <p><b>Resources:</b>  CFP funds</p> <p>Local Funds</p> <p>Literacy Coach/Interventionist</p> <p><b>Product:</b>  Aligned SU wide common curriculum maps</p>	<p>Principal</p> <p>Classroom Teachers</p> <p>Literacy Coach/ Interventionist</p> <p>FNESU Co-Director of Learning</p>
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<p><b>C. Improve Student Achievement in Science</b></p> <p><b>SMART Goal:</b> By June 2018, 60% of students in grades 4 and 8 will be proficient or higher on the Science NECAP exam.</p> <p>(Currently, our school-wide results are 46% for grade 4 and 56% for grade 8)</p>	<p><b>2016-18:</b> Support NGSS Representative participation in NGSX/special science study group aimed at implementation of instructional shifts required by NGSS.</p> <p><b>2017-18:</b> Classroom teachers attend local inservice and FNESU Academy trainings.</p> <p><b>Ongoing:</b> Provide Instructional Coaching aimed at the use of research-based, effective instructional strategies.</p>	<p><b>Evidence:</b> School-based &amp; statewide assessment data. (including local teacher-designed assessments and Science NECAP)</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> Local funds  CFP Funds</p> <p><b>Product:</b> Aligned SU wide common curriculum maps</p>	<p>Principal  Classroom Teachers  School-Based NGSS Representative  FNESU Co-Director of Learning  Special Science Study Group</p>
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<p><b>Goal #2:</b> <b>(Purpose)</b> Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)</p>	<p><b>Statement of Goal:</b> We are committed to narrowing achievement gaps between high &amp; low performing students by providing interventions that prevent difficulties and/or accelerate learning.</p>
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<p><b>Objective #2</b> Multi-Tiered Systems of Support</p>	<p><b>Task / Timeline</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence/ Resources/Product</b></p>	<p><b>Person(s) Responsible</b></p>
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<p>A. Use assessment data to provide specific academic interventions.</p>	<p><b>2016-2018 Ongoing:</b> Utilize Literacy Interventionist to provide students with targeted support and progress monitoring.</p> <p>Utilize Math Interventionist to provide students with targeted support and progress monitoring.</p> <p>Regularly use a variety of formative assessments to gather data to inform instruction.</p> <p>Offer Extended School Day &amp; School Year services</p>	<p><b>Evidence:</b> School-based, SU-wide &amp; statewide assessment data. (including SRI, F&amp;P, PNOA, OGAP, SBAC interim and summative results)</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> Classroom Teachers Literacy Interventionist Math Interventionist Local Funds CFP Funds</p> <p><b>Product:</b> SU Assessment Plan is used to guide impact of instruction.</p>	<p>Principal Classroom Teachers Math Interventionist Literacy Interventionist</p>
<p>B. Use data to provide specific social/emotional intervention.</p>	<p><b>2016-2018 Ongoing:</b> Improve educator capacity to meet diverse social-emotional needs through Responsive Classroom Course.</p> <p>Implementation of Montgomery Elementary School Code of Character</p> <p>Utilize EST plans targeted to improve student access to academics and achievement of rigorous standards.</p> <p>Utilize NCSS school-based counselor.</p>	<p><b>Evidence:</b> School-wide review of discipline data</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> Classroom teachers implementing Responsive Classroom school wide. CFP Funds Local funds</p>	<p>Principal Classroom Teachers School Counselor NCSS School-based Counselor</p>

<p><b>Goal #3:</b> Professional Learning Communities (PLC)</p>	<p><b>Statement of Goal:</b> We are committed to providing high quality, relevant professional learning opportunities that are embedded, ongoing, promote teacher-collaboration and focus on improved learning.</p>
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<p><b>Objective # 3</b> Professional Learning Communities (PLC)</p>	<p><b>Task / Timeline</b></p>	<p><b>Product/Evidence/ Resources</b></p>	<p><b>Person(s) Responsible</b></p>
<p>A. PLC Leaders will facilitate scheduled PLC meetings and discussion of topics which could include: effective instructional strategies, looking at student work, developing lesson plans based on student needs, data analysis, co-planning, etc.</p>	<p><b>2016-17:</b> PreK-3 and 4-8 PLCs will meet twice per week throughout the school year.</p> <p><b>2017-2018 Ongoing:</b> Provide meeting time aimed at the use of research-based, effective instructional strategies and improving student learning.</p> <p>Provide PLC leaders with professional development that will assist them in guiding teachers in effective instructional practices.</p>	<p><b>Evidence:</b> PLC team minutes</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> Math Representative Classroom teachers Local funds CFP Funds</p> <p><b>Product:</b> Shared Professional Development Plan</p>	<p>PLC Leaders</p> <p>Literacy Coach/ Interventionist</p> <p>Math Representative</p> <p>Classroom Teachers</p> <p>Principal</p>

<p>B. All K-5 teachers will have opportunities to observe peers throughout the school year.</p>	<p><b>2016-17:</b> Create a system for K-8 teachers to informally observe colleagues.</p> <p><b>Ongoing:</b> Provide &amp; support professional development aimed at the use of research-based, effective instructional strategies, including FNESU Academy Professional Learning days.</p>	<p><b>Evidence:</b> PLC team minutes</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> Principal Classroom Teachers Math Coach Literacy Interventionist</p>	<p>Principal Classroom Teachers</p>
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**Montgomery Elementary School Continuous Improvement Team Members and Roles:**

Sandy Alexander, Montgomery Elementary School Principal

Lara Morales, Literacy Coach/Interventionist

Taylor Rivard, Math Interventionist

Kristina Bowen, Classroom Teacher/PLC Leader/School-based Math Representative

Sara Caldwell, Classroom Teacher/PLC Leader/School-based NGSS Science Representative

## Appendix B

NEWS + OPINION + EDUCATION

APRIL 10, 2013

### Montgomery Elementary School Beats the Odds on Student Achievement

By KATHRYN FLAGG @K\_FLAGG

Nationwide, educators are grappling with one of the biggest challenges to hit schools in decades. Since the 1960s, the difference in test scores between economically privileged and underprivileged students has grown 40 percent. Increasingly, **income determines a student's likelihood of success**, more so even than factors such as race.

It's a problem everyone recognizes but few know how to address. Which makes the case of **Montgomery Elementary School**, a small, rural prekindergarten-through-eighth-grade school near the Canadian border, all the more compelling.

"We have a persistent achievement gap in this state," explains Michael Hock, the director of educational assessment for the Vermont Agency of Education. "It ranges from school to school — interestingly enough, except for Montgomery. Montgomery stands out as having no achievement gap."

Fifty-one percent of Montgomery's students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, the measure the state uses to track students living in poverty. (Statewide, **nearly 41 percent of students** qualify for the benefit.) Yet across the board, **yearly test scores at the school**, which this year enrolled 130 students, are staggeringly high. Last year, 94 percent of Montgomery students were judged "proficient" or "proficient with distinction" in reading skills according to the New England Common Assessment Program, compared with 73 percent statewide. Ninety-nine percent achieved those levels in math, versus 65 percent statewide.

The numbers are equally startling when one breaks out the statistics for students living in poverty. In Vermont, 17 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch scored the lowest possible score — "substantially below proficient" — on the reading portion of the NECAP. At Montgomery, not one socioeconomically disadvantaged student fell into that category. In math, 28 percent of disadvantaged students scored at the lowest level statewide, versus a mere 4 percent at Montgomery.

Montgomery students' success stretches beyond test scores. The number of special education students on individualized education programs, or IEPs, has dropped in recent years from 25 percent to 14 percent — and special education teacher Lara Morales says that's not because of shifting demographics. Rather, Montgomery students who are held to high standards and helped along with additional instruction often end up "graduating" from the special education program. "It's like we're adding tools to their toolbox," Morales says.

The school does all this while spending roughly \$10,700 to educate each student — less than the statewide average of roughly \$12,300.

These stats make Montgomery a leader not just in Vermont but nationally: The school is one of four profiled in the forthcoming book *Growing Into Equity: Professional Learning and Personalization in High-Achieving Schools*, due out in June. Coauthor Sonia Caus-Gleason calls Montgomery "extraordinary," and "one of the schools that is really in the advance team for schools



MATTHEW THORSEN

Principal Beth O'Brien in the hall between classes at Montgomery Elementary School



"We're like families," says 14-year-old Misha Hubacek, a Montgomery eighth grader. She and her classmates say they learn a lot. A few are chafing against the bounds of Montgomery's small classes and are eagerly looking forward to high school. But, aside from the usual eighth-grader complaints about algebra homework and teachers' rules, they seem remarkably appreciative.

"The education is much better," confides Steven Rosploch, an eighth grader who moved to Montgomery from New Hampshire in 2012. "I'm actually learning stuff this year."

"We care about [doing well]," Hubacek says.

Anica Koontz-Miller agrees: "You want to make your teachers proud."

O'Brien, whom teachers and onlookers credit with much of Montgomery's success, says she and her staff feel equally committed to making themselves, their peers and their students proud. "We're never going to be perfect," she says.

But as test scores go up year by year, O'Brien and her teachers are setting the bar higher and higher. "Everyone holds themselves to that high standard," she says. "There's a culture of shared accountability."

If the techniques to which O'Brien and others attribute Montgomery's success are common sense, they're not necessarily easy. O'Brien says she sympathizes with teachers and principals at other schools who spend more time putting out the small fires of disciplinary problems and day-to-day stresses than envisioning school-wide, systemic changes. It's not easy, or quickly achievable, to overhaul the culture of a school.

And yet O'Brien accomplished just that. When she took the lead as principal at Montgomery, the school's test scores were roughly average when judged against the rest of the state. As the culture changed, test scores followed.

Hock and other educational professionals say that Montgomery should be an inspiration to other schools. There, he says, teachers are proving that demographics are not destiny. Crucial to their efforts appears to be the conviction that every student is capable of success, and that teachers should not view themselves as having been dealt a "bad hand" because their school serves a high population of low-income students.

"There are things that work, that do make a difference," Hock says. "Just because a student comes from a poor family, or they're in a town where there isn't much money, doesn't mean they aren't going to succeed. We see that in a place like Montgomery."

*The original print article was headlined "Making the Grade: In*

*Montgomery, one school beats the odds on student*

*achievement"*

Got something to say?  
Send a letter to the editor and we'll  
publish your feedback in print!

## speaking of , local issues



Memoriam:  
Diane Gabriel  
Jan 15, 2018



Obituary: John  
W. Hennessey  
Jr., 1925-2018  
Jan 15, 2018



Eat This Week,  
January 10,  
2018: Getting  
Wasted  
Jan 10, 2018



Hackie:  
Seventeen in '18  
Jan 10, 2018



Free Will  
Astrology  
(1/10/18)  
Jan 10, 2018

MORE >

# Appendix C

## FRANKLIN NORTHEAST SUPERVISORY UNION COMMON POLICY MANUAL

For the Bakersfield, Berkshire, Enosburgh, Montgomery, and Richford Town School Districts  
and the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union

### G1 CLASS SIZE POLICY

It is the intent of the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union and its member districts to comply with Sections 15 and 16 of Act 153 of 2010 requiring Superintendents to work with School Boards to develop policy guidelines for minimum and optimal average class sizes in regular and technical education classes. Class size guidelines will be used to inform annual decisions related to staffing and program offerings.

#### Implementation

1. The Superintendent or his or her designee shall, in consultation with Building Principals, develop Supervisory Union wide class minimum, maximum and optimum average class size guidelines that take into account the instructional needs of specific elementary grade intervals and required and elective courses at the secondary level.
2. Class size guidelines in the Supervisory Union may vary as necessary to reflect differences among school districts due to geography and other factors, such as school size and programmatic needs.
3. The guidelines shall also ensure compliance with state or federal requirements related to matters such as student-teacher ratios, special education, technical education and English Language Learners.
4. The Superintendent shall report to the Board at least annually on the implementation of this policy, and shall include in his or her report information related to the use of the guidelines in determining actual class sizes and program offerings in the schools within the Supervisory Union.

Legal Reference: Act 153 of 2010, §§15 & 16

G1 Class Size Policy		
	Tentative Approval	Final Approval
Bakersfield	October 17, 2016	December 19, 2016
Berkshire	November 17, 2016	December 13, 2016
Enosburgh	October 18, 2016	November 15, 2016
FNESU	November 3, 2016	January 5, 2017
Montgomery	November 14, 2016	August 14, 2017
Richford	October 24, 2016	November 28, 2016

**FRANKLIN NORTHEAST SUPERVISORY UNION**  
**COMMON POLICY MANUAL**  
*For the Bakersfield, Berkshire, Eaosburgh, Montgomery, and Richford Town School Districts*  
and the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union

**Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union**  
**Class Size Policy Guidelines**

**Notes:**

1. Any area where a subject or class group does not meet the minimum class size guidelines will cause a report from the Principal to be made to the Superintendent of Schools and local School Board explaining the rationale for the number of students in the class.
2. Class size guidelines will be used as a tool to develop School Budgets and related staffing plans.
3. Special Education classes are not to be included in class size policy guidelines.

Grade Cluster	Instructional Area	Minimum Average for cluster	Optimal Average Range per grade cluster	Maximum Average per grade cluster
K-2	Math/Reading	10	10-15	20
K-2	All Others	12	12-18	20
3-6	Math/Reading	12	12-15	20
3-6	All Others	14	14-18	25
7-8	All (except PE)	14	14-20	25
9-12	PE	20	20-25	30
9-12	Music	15	15-20	25
9-12	General Classes	16	16-22	25
9-12	Special Courses	14	14-22	25
Tech. Center Classes	All	10	10-16	20

# Montgomery Elementary School

Sandy Alexander, Principal

249 School Drive ♦ Montgomery Center, VT 05471

Phone (802) 326-4618 ♦ Fax (802) 326-2109

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December 21, 2017

Secretary Rebecca Holcombe, Ed.D.  
State of Vermont Agency of Education  
219 North Main Street, Suite 402  
Barre, VT 05641

Dear Secretary Holcombe:

As you know, the Montgomery Town School District Board has previously entered into 706b study committees, both which ended in merger plans that were rejected by Montgomery voters. The Montgomery Town School District will not be in a "preferred structure" as of July 1, 2019, per Acts 46 and 49, and therefore our board is required to submit a proposal for an Alternative Governance Structure under section 9 of Act 46.

A group of community members volunteered to draft the Section 9 plan in conjunction with the board. We are submitting an outline of that plan today and intend to submit a detailed addendum in January.

Montgomery Town School District currently operates a successful district, which meets Act 46 goals and it proposes to retain its current district as a part of the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union ("FNESU").

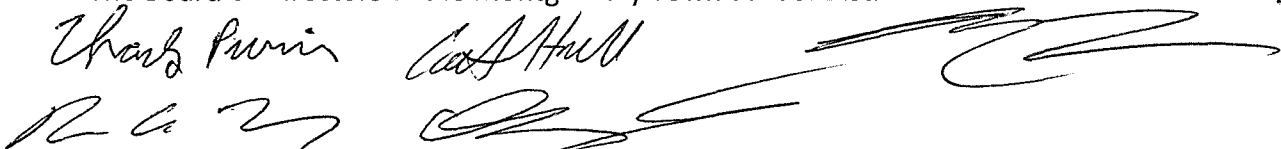
Montgomery is proud of its school's educational success, fiscal efficiency and sense of community. It has been celebrated both publicly and by the Agency of Education, and should serve as a model for other schools and districts in the state.

*The proposal will:*

- Briefly Review Montgomery's Demographic and Town History;
- Document our Geographic and Structural Isolation;
- Address Goals of Act 46
  - State how Montgomery currently meets or exceeds goals
  - Present plans for how Montgomery will sustain the Goals while working independently and in collaboration with Supervisory Union Partners; and
- Analyze finances if Granted Existing District Status.

Regards,

The Board of Directors of the Montgomery Town School District

The block contains several handwritten signatures in black ink, representing the members of the Board of Directors of the Montgomery Town School District. The signatures are written in a cursive style and are arranged in two rows. The first row has two signatures, and the second row has three signatures.



December 22, 2017

Secretary Rebecca Holcombe, Ed.D.  
State of Vermont Agency of Education  
219 North Main Street, Suite 402  
Barre, VT 05641

To whom it may concern,

We, the undersigned are members of the Montgomery Act 46 Independent Study Committee. The Independent Study Committee was tasked by the Montgomery School Board and Interim Superintendent Lynn Cota on 12/11/17 with writing the Alternate Governance Structure application under section 9 of Act 46.

We have been working hard under a time crunch since the NO vote for merger in Montgomery on November 30th. After review, by our school board last night it was decided that the proposal needed further work jointly between the board and committee to create a proposal all feel expresses clearly Montgomery's wishes.

We intend to work collaboratively with the school board to submit the final proposal which the committee and board will jointly submit in mid January.

We are submitting this draft proposal reflecting our good faith effort to date and expressing the wishes of the voters of Montgomery, VT to retain its current governance model. An updated and final document will be submitted in January.

We are submitting this document on December 22, 2017 to meet the December 26, 2017 deadline. Montgomery School District currently operates a successful district, which meets Act 46 goals and it proposes to retain its current district as a part of the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union (FNESU).

Montgomery is proud of its school's educational success, fiscal efficiency and sense of community. It has been celebrated both publicly and by the Agency of Education, and should serve as a model for other schools and districts in the state.

Regards,

Jared Jewett, Resident

Jonathan Betts, Resident

Sarah Silva, Resident

Greta Quintin, Resident

Karie Quintin, Resident

For you records: this is what the Montgomery School Board submitted 12/22/17

Dear Secretary Holcombe:

As you know the Montgomery Town School District Board has previously entered into a 706b study committees, both which ended in merger plans that were rejected by Montgomery voters. The Montgomery Town School District will not be in a “preferred structure” as of July 1, 2019, per Acts 46 and 49, and therefore our board is required to submit a proposal for an Alternative Governance Structure under section 9 of Act 46.

A group of community members volunteered to draft the Section 9 plan in conjunction with the board. We are submitting an outline of that plan today and will submit an addendum in January.

Montgomery Town School District currently operates a successful district which meets Act 46 goals and it proposes to retain its current district as a part of the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union (“FNESU”).

Montgomery is proud of its school’s educational success, fiscal efficiency and sense of community. It has been celebrated both publicly and by the Agency of Education, and should serve as a model for other schools and districts in the state.

*The proposal will:*

1. Briefly Review Montgomery’s Demographic and Town History;
2. Document our Geographic and Structural Isolation;
3. Address Goals of Act 46
  - a. State how Montgomery currently meets or exceeds goals
  - b. Present plans for how Montgomery will sustain the Goals while working independently and in collaboration with Supervisory Union Partners; and
4. Analyze finances if Granted Existing District Status.

Regards,

The Board of Directors of the Montgomery Town School District

**Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union  
Montgomery Elementary  
Alternative Governance Structure Section 9 Proposal  
For Review by the State Board of Education  
December 2017**

**School Profile**

**School District:** Montgomery Town School District

**School:** Montgomery Elementary School

**Proposed Governance Structure:** Maintain current, “Traditional Vermont’ governance structure and operate within Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union.

Montgomery currently operates a successful district which meets Act 46 goals (hereinafter referred to as “Goals”) and it proposes to retain its current district. We would like to continue to be a part of the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union (“FNESU”).

Over the past three years extensive meetings with district boards within FNESU took place regarding possible merger plans to meet the requirements of Act 46. The committees formed sought to ensure the decision to receive tax incentives were presented to the electorate and twice the town of Montgomery turned down merger proposals. The committee feels a merger is a bad educational and fiscal proposal for our town, as it increased cost per pupil, sold our real property at a devastating loss, subjected us to an inequitable debt burden, and provided no tangible educational returns for our children. Montgomery is proud of its school’s educational success, fiscal efficiency and sense of community. It has been celebrated both publicly and by the Agency of Education, and should serve as a model for other schools and districts in the state.

**Executive Summary**

As of this date, Montgomery Elementary School (herein referenced as “MES” or “Montgomery”) is a Remaining District subject to Act 46, Sec. 9, as it will not be in a Preferred Structure by July 1, 2019. We have met with the board of several other remaining Districts in our region, including the Bakersfield/Berkshire, Enosburg, and Richford boards to discuss ways to promote improvement throughout the region. We are proposing the Alternative Structure of the FNESU be composed of multiple member districts, each with its separate school board. FNESU schools are not a Preferred Structure because they are composed of multiple districts. Montgomery’s District operates its school for all resident youth in pre-kindergarten through grade 8 and pays tuition for all resident students in grade 9 through grade 12. Maintaining local control best ensures Montgomery actualizes all of the following Goals:

- (1) provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities statewide;
- (2) 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;
- (3) maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources, with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff;
- (4) promote transparency and accountability; and
- (5) delivers education at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.

Act 46, Sec. 5(c) recognizes that what the Legislature identified as the Preferred Structure may not be "possible or the best model" to achieve the Goals. The Alternative Structure of the FNESU can meet the Goals. It has the smallest number of school districts practicable. The region did attempt to merge the schools of Montgomery, Bakersfield, and Berkshire, as they are structurally similar. Montgomery formally rejected this proposal. Without the town's approval, the school board cannot sell the school; or merge or relinquish its authority as a school board. The school board's authority over the school property is subject to the town's electorate. *See 16 V.S.A. § 563 (3)*. Only a person having authority to convey the real estate may do so. *See 27 V.S.A. § 301*. Only by a majority vote at a meeting, can a town school district authorize its school directors to enter into contracts to convey the property. *See 16 V.S.A. § 571*.

Furthermore, it is not practicable to merge districts because Montgomery is geographically isolated from surrounding schools with like governance structures. Driving time exceeds 15 minutes to Berkshire and Bakersfield. Bakersfield is at least 30 minutes on clear roads. Now that they are joined, there is no Berkshire District to speak of. The only other school nearby (still at least 15 minutes away on a good day with good driving conditions) is Richford, which operates a different governance structure, pre-k-12.

Montgomery has concerns that a merged board may vote to restructure our schools, as in [Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union](#). This would be unjust for Montgomery, Berkshire and Bakersfield children due to our geographic isolation

***BY SECTION, this proposal will:***

1. **Briefly Review Montgomery's Demographic and Town History;**
2. **Document our Geographic and Structural Isolation;**
3. **Address Goals of Act 46**
  - a. **Assess how Montgomery currently meets or exceeds goals**
  - b. **Present plans for how Montgomery will sustain the Goals while working independently and in collaboration with Supervisory Union Partners; and**
4. **Analyze finances if Granted Existing District Status.**

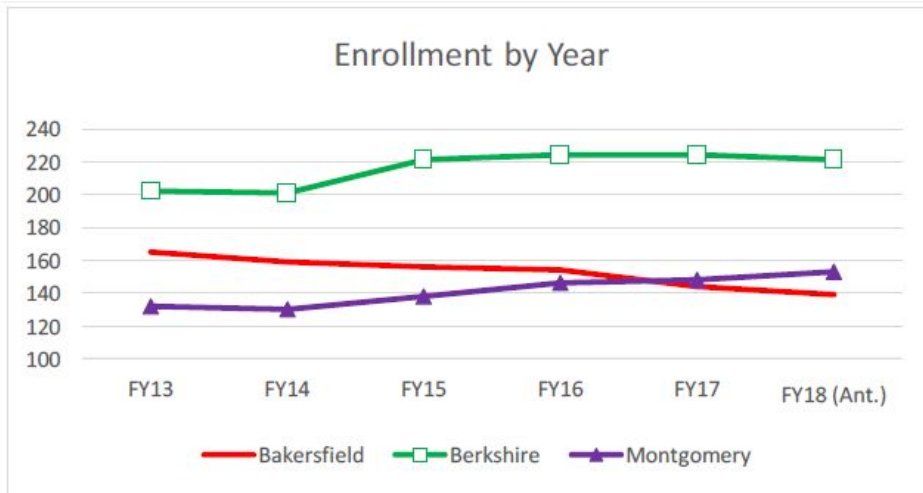
**[2/21/17 Draft 3400 Proposals for Alternative Structures](#)**

3450.10 Description of Region, including (1) Identity of each district that the district making the proposal considers to be in its Region that is NOT part of the proposal ("NPD") (2) Regional

relationships and transportation between the district(s) making the proposal and the identified NPD(s): (A) Current and historic relationship among the districts (B) Distances and quality of roads between the districts and between schools, if any (i) Transportation concerns, especially those related to current low equity of opportunities and/or concern about future diminishment of equity.

## Section 1: Demographics & Town History

Since the 1990 US Census the town of Montgomery has grown 41.6% ([Town of Montgomery](#)). We are a growing and thriving community dependent on the tourism industry established by the still thriving Jay Peak Resort; the opposite of the decreasing population the rest of Vermont is experiencing. While the state as a whole has seen a 24% decline (Act 46) in K-12 student population, Montgomery has experienced an approximate 17% *increase* since 2013. Progressively so, there is not an expectation of declines in the foreseeable future as it is the ***school district and quality of life*** that attract people to the community. This reduces the necessity for merger with others.



Historically Montgomery had an early interest in education, voting to appropriate funds to educate children in 1804. As town historians W. R. Branthoover and Sara Taylor studied and reported in "Montgomery Vermont - The History of a town" there were at one time as many as 12 separate school districts with their own buildings to educate the children in the various arteries of roads, valleys, hamlets and gores that were frequently isolated due to climate and the technology of the times.

In 1946 and 1947 some sort of school consolidation occurred but Branthoover and Taylor note there is little information to glean from town reports at that time. Two schools resulted at that time, one in the Village and one in the Center and they were "enumerated for grades 1 - 8." In 1963 the two schools were combined into one and located in the Center. Though no data exists, one can assume a bussing system must have been developed in this time period.

Montgomery has recently consolidated for geographic equity. According to our Town Clerk, Deanna Robitaille, in March of 1993 the town opened a portion of a new school that was built in between the Village and the Center to promote greater geographic equity of travel between the two separate

communities. By 2005 our school was in need of adding two additional wings to support our community's growing population and bonded to do so, creating the school that is in fine shape, and that we currently cherish.

Montgomery Elementary School						
Grade	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18 (Ant.)
Pre-K3	8	8	9	9	16	16
Pre-K4	10	10	11	10	11	11
K	13	11	12	15	12	12
1	10	15	13	14	15	12
2	14	11	16	14	19	15
3	7	11	13	18	13	19
4	9	10	14	13	16	13
5	17	8	15	14	13	16
6	10	16	9	14	13	13
7	17	11	17	7	13	13
8	17	19	9	18	7	13
<b>Total:</b>	132	130	138	146	148	153

The residents and students of Montgomery Elementary appreciate our class sizes. The mission of Montgomery Elementary and the recent developed **"Code of Character"** are strongly supported because of our class sizes. This is evidenced by our town's consistent support of our school budget to retain quality teachers for each grade.

**Vision:**

We will create a community that will build lifelong, confident learners, who have the tools necessary for success in a changing world.

**Mission:**

The Montgomery Elementary School strives to be an exemplary learning community by:

- \* Building strong relationships in a family-like setting
- \* Fostering the development of the whole person
- \* Challenging ourselves and others to identify strengths for continual improvement
- \* Promoting open communication
- \* Learning and growing together through respectful interactions and celebrations.

**The MES Code of Character**

***INTEGRITY***

***RESPECT***

***RESPONSIBILITY***

***EMPATHY AND COMPASSION***

***COLLABORATION***

## **PERSEVERANCE**

## **CRAFTSMANSHIP**

*Montgomery town residents also nurture the elementary school's dedication to personalized education. Advocating for "existing district" status would further support our continued 'community will,' benevolence, and preserve the ethos of community connection which makes MES special and vital to the community as a whole. In keeping our local board, voters are able to easily access board members. Voters see board members at the library, the post office, the grocery store etc. This allows for a connectedness which would be compromised in the event of a merger as Montgomery's board would be diluted with fewer board members directly accessible around town. The more standardized the system becomes, the less responsive it is to addressing the unique needs of our school and students.*

### **Section 2: Geographic & Structural Isolation**

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#### ***Regional Relationships and Transportation (Draft 3400: #2)***

#### ***Driving Distance & Time ([Section 21 of Act 153](#))***

#### ***Lengthy Driving Time & Inhospitable Routes (9/20/17 Memorandum)***

Montgomery takes great pride in its designation as "[Vermont's Covered Bridge Town](#)" with 6 historic bridges linking the multiple dirt roads that branch out from the Center and the Village. The Center and The Village are two separate entities functioning as one town. They are located 2.6 miles apart on State Rt. 118, a quick four minute drive. Montgomery even has two post offices. Montgomery is connected to the region by only two State Class 1 Roads, Rt. 118 and 242. *It has the 16th largest (out of 242 towns) number of square miles for a Vermont town at 56.75.*

Montgomery consists of 8 arteries that reach out from the Village and the Center ([Zoning Map](#)). From the Center, three of the main roads are only Class 3 (Amidon Rd., The Reagan Road, and The Gibou). Most of these roads service Class 4 roads as well as private roads (The Deep Gibou and Alpine Haven) that are not all serviced by our busing system or town plow. As for the Village, there are also four main roads that are only Class 3 (North Hill Rd., Black Falls Rd., West Hill and Hill West Rds.) Hill West turns into an unmaintained Class 4 road connecting to the Deep Gibou, and is only open to those who dare with an appropriate vehicle in the summertime. Hazen's Notch Road is the only Class 2 road. It is closed at the Montgomery/Lowell boundary for the winter. Montgomery is bordered by five towns: Bakersfield, Belvidere, Eden, Enosburg Falls, Richford and Westfield.

Class 3 highways are not always plowed. “The selectboard has authority to determine whether a class 3 highway, or section of highway, should be plowed and made negotiable during the winter.” See [VSA 19 § 302](#). While our town does an excellent job maintaining our roads in the winter, there are consistently times during significant weather events when the road crew is unable to keep pace with snowfall and ensure the safety of the roads. During these times, buses are advised to not travel the back roads and to wait at the bottom of hills for the plow to go ahead of them and clear the way. Additionally, Rt. 242 becomes inundated with snow from the “Jay Cloud” frequently throughout the winter. Jay Peak Resort reports that the average total snowfall in the winter totals 349”. “Mud Season” also makes maintaining our roads extremely difficult, frequently causing our buses to only be able to pick kids up at the bottom of each of the 8 arteries where they reach the State Roads.

Currently, under normal weather, MES has documented the following [busing times](#), which parents know depending on inclement weather can vary by as much as 15 minutes. These times are only based on pick up, and do not include the minutes it takes from the last stop to arriving at school. Again, many of these stops do not include the Class 4 and Private roads, requiring parents during inclement weather to drive their children to the nearest bus stop. The first bus route that services the roads off of the State Rt. 118 artery has students getting on the bus and riding for approximately 38 minutes. Their day begins at 7:20 AM though school does not begin until 8:40, adding an hour and 20 minutes to their school day, not including the ride home. The second route that services State Rt. 242 and the Amidon and Hazen’s Notch roads has children on the bus beginning at 8:03 AM for a total of 27 minutes. The third route picks children up beginning at 7:10 am to ride for an hour and 15 minutes to school. The routes were adjusted this school year in response to the new busing arrangements made with the Supervisory Union to meet the Goals. To add time to these routes to travel to any of the following schools is unmerited for young children as total rides for students will range from 27 mins to 1 hour 30 mins not including driving time to the bus pick up or driving time to the next nearest school. Some Montgomery students would be on a school bus for over 3 hours a day should Montgomery school be closed or restructured.

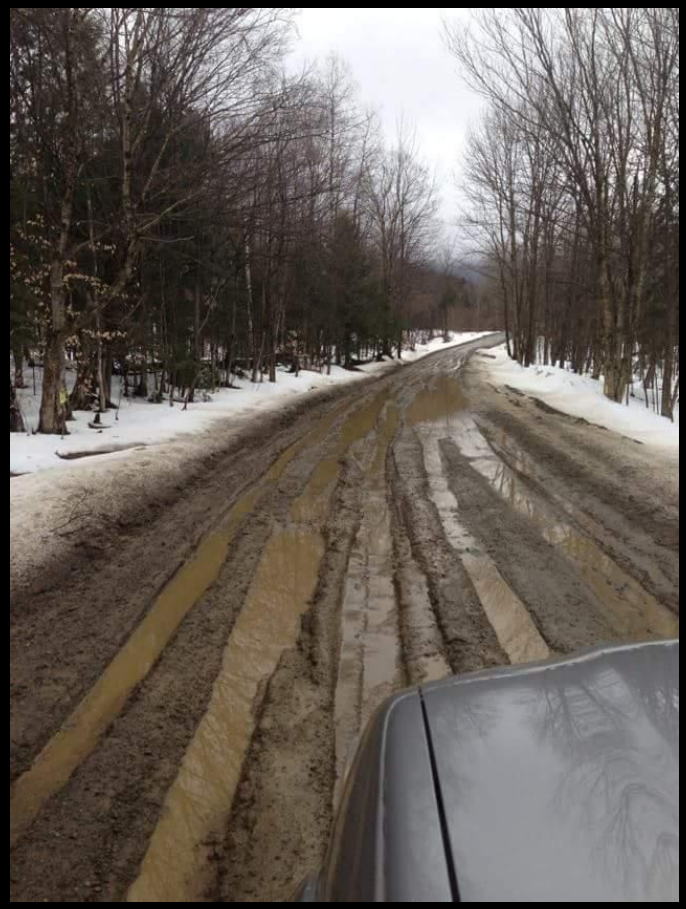
Travel on Vermont roads is dangerous and should be avoided when possible. Snow and ice, cell phone distracted drivers, alcohol use, and a raging opiate crisis put our youth at great risk on the roads. There are many reports about heroin users shooting up while driving. In October of 2016, 5 teens were killed by a driver, 37, of Williston, who tested positive for fentanyl, a powerful opiate, and other drugs.

According to the VTrans Crash Query Tool, in the past year, 12/20/2016-12/20/2017, there have been 85 crashes in Montgomery and its neighboring towns. See Appendix A for a list of



crashes. Keeping control of our school will prevent the risk of additional travel that would come with reconfiguration or school closure.

*In Montgomery’s case, it can be argued that driving time is significantly increased in the winter and springtime, and that the quality of roads, or lack thereof, also increases our isolation.*



Mud Season, Black Falls Road, Montgomery, VT, Spring 2012



Mud Season, Hazen’s Notch Road, Montgomery Center, VT



[Section 21 of Act 153 of the 2009 Session Study on Small School Grant Eligibility Due to Geographic Necessity](#)

In 2009 the town of Montgomery was found to be “eligible due to geographic necessity” to receive a small schools grant dependent on “the driving distance and time to the next closest school with a similar grade configuration. (pg. 5)”

[September 20th, 2017 Memorandum on Small Schools Grants](#)

Citing a 2011 AOE Report, “A school was initially identified by arbitrary cut points of a distance of greater than 10 miles or a driving time of greater than 15 minutes (pg. 3).” Montgomery was on this list. The memo also notes that the legislature made two changes to qualification for Small Schools Grants in 2015 noting that a school may apply to qualify based on “lengthy driving times or inhospitable routes to the nearest school with excess capacity; or the academic excellence and operational efficiency of the small school, (the statute references some factors to consider).

***Despite the State Board’s notation that these lists are not relative to the Act 46 and 49 legislation, Montgomery vociferously believes the above historic designations fit our school, are tied to Section 2 A & B of the 2/21/17 Alternative designations and are key factors in the town’s need for remaining an existing district in the FNESU.***

***Berkshire***

Montgomery is geographically isolated from Berkshire. Montgomery does not share a town line with Berkshire, and Montgomery Elementary to Berkshire is 10.7 miles and a 17 minute drive when driving conditions are optimal. Between the months of November through May road conditions are often challenging in Montgomery. Berkshire is near capacity with 224 total students and an average of 24.88 students per classroom.

<http://education.vermont.gov/documents/teacher-staff-student-ratios>

## Bus Crash in Berkshire, February 24th, 2014



<http://www.samesseenger.com/school-bus-crashes-in-berkshire-friday/>

From the furthest point in south east [Montgomery down State Rt. 242, reaching Berkshire is 15.2 miles](#) with a travel time of 24 minutes in optimal conditions. From Avery's Gore, the southernmost point in the Montgomery district on [State Rt. 118, it is a 16.4 mile](#) drive with a travel time of 24 minutes; a deep gore, it also experiences heavy and drifting snow. Berkshire is not a qualifying match for Montgomery.

## **Bakersfield**

### **Montgomery is geographically isolated from Bakersfield.**

Even further from MES Bakersfield Elementary is [16.2 miles with a 30 minute](#) drive. Accessible only via a Class 3 road from the Montgomery/Enosburg town line after the covered bridge, Longley Bridge Road, one must then traverse two other Class 2 roads to reach the school. From the southernmost point in [Avery's Gore](#) one would have to travel 21.8 miles for a drive time of 38 minutes. To reach Bakersfield via Class 1 Routes, State Rd. 118 to State Rd. 109, would require passing through a different Supervisory Union to reach Lapland Rd., a Class 3 road, traveling 21 miles for 36 minutes. From the [southeastern most point](#) on State Rd. 242 one could travel 21 miles in 36 minutes also taking the road out of Montgomery, or taking the route out of our Supervisory Union for 30 miles and a travel time of 46 minutes. While Montgomery does share a town border with Bakersfield in the west there is no road directly connecting the towns due to mountainous terrain. While we are not structurally isolated from Bakersfield we are extremely geographically isolated from Bakersfield. Bakersfield is clearly not a merger match for Montgomery.

## **Other options with neighboring towns**

There are six other towns that border Montgomery: Richford, Enosburg, Belvidere, Eden, Lowell and Westfield.

## Other SU Schools

### Richford

As previously noted [9/20/17 AOE Board Minutes on Geographic Isolation](#) Montgomery was on the original list from 2011. Montgomery School is 11 miles and 16 mins from Richford Elementary School which exceeds the draft geographic isolation rules being considered by the state. The towns of Montgomery and Richford have voted down a merger twice. Further, Montgomery is structurally different from Richford and is not, “the next closest school with a similar grade configuration” as Richford is a pre K-12 and Montgomery is a pre K-8 with tuition 9-12.

As Montgomery is structurally isolated from Richford it is not a potential merger partner for Montgomery. Therefore Richford, for the purposes of Act 46 and Alternative Governance Structures and Small Schools Grants, is not a viable reference point based on Montgomery’s geographic isolation.

### Enosburg Falls

Enosburg Falls is also not a match for Montgomery as it is not a like structure as a pre K-12 district. In addition it is [12 miles away with a 21 minute](#) commute. As the “Dairy Center” of Northern Vermont, travel time from Montgomery to Enosburg is often lengthened due to manure spreaders and dairy trucks or tractors.

Again, the State Board has stated in draft rules that more than a 10 mile 15 minute drive from school to school is too far for young students to travel.

## Schools outside Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union

The State board has also stated in [Act 46 3400 Proposals](#) that with determination of geographic and structural isolation a ‘Region’ is not defined by current supervisory union boundaries, but nevertheless should be identified based on a common-sense view of districts in and outside the current supervisory union.”

[Belvidere](#) has merged with Lamoille North Supervisory Union. Belvidere does not have its own school and tuitions to Waterville Elementary, a pre K-8 school that does not have school choice for grades 9-12, operates in a different SU, and from whom we are structurally isolated. [Waterville Elementary is 16.2 miles](#) from MES with a drive time on State Rd. 118 and 109 for 23 minutes. Ironically to travel on state roads one would have to pass Waterville Elementary to reach Bakersfield. Waterville is not a match for Montgomery, and this point only strengthens the argument that **Bakersfield is also not a match.**

[Eden](#), while a pre K-8, is not a like structural school as Eden has also merged with Lamoille North and does not tuition 9-12 students. From [MES to Eden Elementary](#) it is 16.3 miles for a total of 23 minutes of drive time in optimal conditions. Additionally, there are stretches during this drive where there

is no cell service which greatly compromises safety in the event of an accident or going off the road due to inclement weather. **Eden is not a match for Montgomery.**

[Lowell](#) also a pre K-8 again is not a like structural school, as they also do not tuition, and Lowell is with the North Country Supervisory Union. While Lowell is accessible via a [Class 2 road, Rt. 58](#), aka the Hazen's Notch Road, within the 15 mile range, that is only during the autumn and late spring months as the Notch is closed from November through May. Alternate routes to Lowell include Rt. 242 to Rt. 100 for a total of 22.9 miles and 34 minutes or Rt. 118 for a total of 25.3 miles and 32 minutes. **Lowell is not a match for Montgomery.**

[Westfield](#) is not a match as it tuitions its students to Jay Elementary. The town of Jay does not border Montgomery. The Jay Westfield school, also in the North Country Supervisory Union, is not a like structure as it only services pre K-6 and does not tuition. To reach Jay vehicles must traverse over Jay Peak mountain, at elevation 2200+ feet, where the mountain snow storms rival any other part of Vermont. The Jay/ Westfield School is 13 miles and 20 minutes from MES. **Jay/Westfield is not a match for Montgomery.**

### **Nearby towns with like structures**

Anecdotally there have been many discussions since the passage of Act 46 about Sheldon joining FNESU as it borders Enosburg. [Sheldon](#) Elementary, a part of neighboring Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union, has a like structure with Bakersfield, Berkshire and Montgomery as a K-8 "which" tuitions its students. It does not border Montgomery and is [20.5 miles and and 30 minutes](#) from Montgomery Elementary in optimal driving conditions. For the same reasons that MES cannot merge with Bakersfield and Berkshire, **Sheldon does not serve as a functional partner.**

*In conclusion, using "...a common-sense view of districts in and outside the current supervisory union (pg.2)..." Montgomery has been paired with Richford to determine geographic isolation but is a school that we are structurally isolated from. Towns and districts with whom we share a border that have like structures are all far beyond the 10mile/15 minute requirement to be considered partners. Our children currently spend far too much time on busses in order to reduce transportation costs to meet the requirements of Act 46. **Transportation from Montgomery's geographically isolated location risks the safety of our children. Montgomery is clearly a geographically isolated town qualifying to be deemed an existing district under Act 46 and to be included as an Alternative Structure under Section 9.***

### **Section 3a & 3b: Goals of Act 46 with both Independence and Collaboration**

#### ***Summary of Proposed Plan***

The work done in the context of the Act 46 process provides data and analysis to reinforce our belief that this current proposal will be the best way forward. We are confident the Goals are being fulfilled in the status quo and the actions planned ensure sustainability of meeting and exceeding the Goals. Montgomery's traditional governance structure works for our town.

Retaining its district will continue to meet the Goals. The welcome changes laid out in our Action Plan ensure the Goals will be exceeded in the future. To improve student outcomes and to encourage continual self-improvement this plan is autonomously designed to support local decision making and enhance student educational opportunities.

1. Allowing Montgomery to continue to support and be supported by the districts in the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union. Our districts have a long history of interdependence and collaboration. This new arrangement will build on those strengths.
2. Allowing Montgomery to take advantage of its proximity to and historic connections with the Franklin Northeast SU while also having the freedom to strengthen student opportunities through programmatic connections with the Franklin Northeast SU.
3. Allowing Montgomery to continue its current operating pattern, operating a school for grades pre K-8 and to tuition high school students.
4. Creating a structure which will support achievement of the Goals described in detail below.

**Goal # 1 - "EQUITY OF OPPORTUNITY" - provide substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities statewide.**

Montgomery meets the goal of providing substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunities for all students in Montgomery's District. This education will be monitored to ensure it is substantially equitable to education provided statewide. Montgomery's success will improve opportunities for students throughout the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union, as we will be working closely with these schools to learn from each other. Montgomery's youth are provided an excellent education at Montgomery Elementary School and provided the opportunity to attend the high school best suited to with tuition. Maintaining Montgomery's traditional governance structure and implementation of additional actions geared to exceed Act 46 Goals will result in:

**A. Increased consistency and equity of opportunity by continuing participation on the current Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union Board.**

- Montgomery intends to work with boards in order to outline a broader, more unified vision for all students' experiences as part of FNESU. A larger, more strategic plan for students in all schools will help achieve more consistent support and sustain more systemic learning opportunities, providing more cohesive outcomes for all students.
- Montgomery will continue to work with FNESU to ensure students have access to a consistent curriculum plan, consistent PK-8 assessment plans, consistency in special education delivery models and multi-tiered systems of support.
- We intend our professional and non-professional staff to continue to grow

their collaborative efforts. All schools working with the Franklin Northeast SU will continue to benefit from common professional development and teacher collaboration.

- Common professional development opportunities and information sharing across partnering FNESU schools will help to ensure that all students are exposed to high quality instructional practices, rigorous learning experiences, and objective feedback and assessment aimed at improving student outcomes.
- Additionally, students will benefit from teachers' participation in the FNESU professional development based on the CIP (Continuous Improvement Plan), and from teachers' participation in the FNESU-wide mentoring program for new educators. This program intends to increase efficiency in supporting the training of new teachers in currently existing initiatives and programs, ensuring more consistency and fidelity that further strengthens student outcomes.

**B. Increased consistency and equity of opportunity by sustaining early education at Montgomery Elementary School.**

- Early school experiences and interventions are the building blocks of student success in school, and are fundamental in promoting positive learning behaviors and characteristics. Our plan recognizes the benefits of our Pre K program at Montgomery Elementary School. Students currently receive 10 hours of playschool (age 3) and 15 hours of pre-K education (age 4) weekly. We will maintain this current level of operation.
- Additionally, every Friday, Montgomery provides its gymnasium to the playgroup (mostly ages 0-3). The State sponsors the playgroup through the Parent Child Program (f/k/a Building Bright Futures, f/k/a Success By Six). It is run by community liaison, Amanda Starr. This fantastic program, Tumble Time, encourages our youngest community members to become active learners in our school building. It prepares them to be familiar and relaxed in our learning environment as well as bringing parents together for community building.
- The value of early childhood education cannot be overstated. We will continue to offer these programs and work with the Franklin Northeast SU to enhance teacher training, share information and resources specific to pre-K instruction, curriculum implementation and assessment protocols in order to strengthen the educational outcomes for our pre-K students.

**C. Increased consistency and equity of opportunity by increased opportunities for Montgomery students within the FNESU through mutual agreement and collaborative programming when practicable.**

- Montgomery already shares teachers with surrounding schools. Mr. Hoh and Ms. Hardy and Guidance Counsellor, Christine Muratore all do this.
- Montgomery will actively seek opportunities to share even more resources with FNESU



so students can participate with other FNESU schools in sports, theater, music and arts programming. Examples could include hiring of a shared theater director or coordinator of intramural sports between districts, shared marching band instructors and combined bands for events like the June Dairy Day parade.

- Montgomery would like to propose school-to-school events within the SU, such as Science Fairs or Engineering Challenges. FNESU is a perfect partner for this type of collaboration due to our history of working together and similarly sized elementary schools.

**D. Montgomery residents are concerned that ‘teacher movement’ within a merged district could compromise a teacher’s relationship with students and staff if said teacher is moving between schools and doesn’t have a stable, continuous connection to just one school. *MES staff is committed to the vision, mission and code of character, and this is surely part of Montgomery’s success.***

**E. The Montgomery Board currently provides flexibility for the use of facilities and resources.** The Montgomery Board allows use of the school facilities and financial resources within the District to support all students and educational programs. Currently many families who live closer to Montgomery Elementary than their own town schools utilize our Building Bright Futures “Tumble-Time” program for babies and toddlers. Further, Snyders Martial Arts offers Tae-Kwon-Do classes that are available to anyone, as well as Ballet Arts under the direction of Ms. Kathleen M. Scott. Currently, there are children who reside in Troy and Newport that attend Montgomery’s Ballet Arts program. Our LEAPS After School Program also serves students of educators who work in our district but live within the SU, and the FNESU transportation system accommodates this.

**E. Local control of teachers allows Montgomery to choose the best suited candidates for our students.** Local staff and board are more attune to the direct needs of its students and the culture of the school to choose the candidates that are a best fit. While merger may permit moving teachers who could potentially be riffed to other schools, that may not be the best choice for a building. Also, considering the driving time between our schools, a teacher who lives out of district may be forced to make an undoable commute, thereby not ensuring the retention of a quality, but with less seniority, teacher.

**Goal 2 - “EXCEED THE STATE QUALITY STANDARDS” - 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.**

**Montgomery leads its students to meet or exceed the State’s Education Quality Standards.**

Montgomery Elementary has been fortunate to retain local community members in leading its school. Previous principal Beth O’Brien, an SU local, was celebrated for her success in [“beating the odds in student achievement”](#) and commended by State Director of Educational Assessment, Michael Hock. Seven Days noted that

“These stats make Montgomery a leader not just in Vermont but nationally: The school is one of four profiled in the forthcoming book *Growing Into Equity: Professional Learning and*

*Personalization in High-Achieving Schools*, due out in June. Coauthor Sonia Caus-Gleason calls Montgomery “extraordinary,” and “one of the schools that is really in the advance team for schools across the country (Flagg, 2013).”

Current principal [Sandy Alexander](#) (whose grandchildren attend MES) is continuing this success rate.

**Montgomery Elementary has some of the highest test scores in the state.** Merging could dilute this success as our success is partially attributable to the responsive local governance provided by Montgomery’s local school board, to our school community connections and to our success in the engagement of all families in supporting student success. Montgomery Elementary far exceeds both the State and FNESU at every level and measure. Montgomery has consistently excelled in this arena for more than a decade and will continue to build on this achievement moving forward.

### Montgomery SBAC Assessment Results 2016/2017

Grade	Vermont ELA	FNESU ELA	MES ELA	Change	Vermont Math	FNESU Math	MES Math	Change
3	49%	52%	77%	N/A	52%	50%	62%	N/A
4	49%	50%	60%	+10%	47%	55%	67%	+23%
5	55%	49%	62%	+4%	42%	43%	62%	-5%
6	52%	56%	93%	+8%	39%	48%	86%	+1%
7	55%	51%	67%	-12%	44%	46%	67%	-12%
8	55%	50%	88%	-----	41%	41%	63%	-23%

Grade	Vermont ELA	FNESU ELA	Change	Vermont Math	FNESU Math	Change
3	49%	52%	N/A	52%	50%	N/A
4	49%	50%	-12%	47%	55%	+6%
5	55%	49%	-2%	42%	43%	+7%
6	52%	56%	+8%	39%	48%	-1%
7	55%	51%	-----	44%	46%	-4%
8	55%	50%	-1%	41%	41%	-3%
11	59%	51%	(+33%)	37%	27%	(+7%)

Notes:

FNESU students score at or above state average on 8 of 14 measures.

FNESU students score below state average on 6 of 14 measures.

Montgomery has been able to achieve this despite having a 58.22% free and reduced lunch rate ([AOE, 2015/2016](#)). Our successful engagement of all families in supporting student success is a key part of our strategy and responsive connected local governance is a key element of that success.

**Montgomery Elementary School has consistently achieved SBAC Assessment results that are significantly higher than the state average and that of the other districts within its SU.**

Montgomery students will achieve or exceed the State Quality Standards based on:

1. **Montgomery’s staff will continue collaboration with and use of the FNESU**

curriculum co- directors to implement standards based curriculum, supported by professional development opportunities for staff that will result in more consistent learning opportunities for all students. This work will help Montgomery and FNESU to develop and implement much needed accelerated and intervention programs tailored to improve student performance and outcomes;

2. Development of standards based and research based assessment tools for individual student learning (CIP / PLP);
3. "Outside Work" which includes field research, the garden program, and the composting program;
4. Collaborative access with FNESU to share the teacher substitute pool for consistent instructional quality and operational protocols; necessary components to help students maintain consistency in their daily educational experiences when regular staff are absent;
5. Participation in the FNESU Teacher Evaluation System Use of the FNESU LCAS (Local Common Assessment System) and SBAC to measure and assure student progress toward EQS;
6. Continued use of the Special Education director to strengthen development, oversight, and implementation of IEP's and compliance with IDEA, and current best-practice instructional techniques that are individualized to meet the needs of all students;
7. Since the adoption of SBAC, Montgomery has seen significant increases in student achievement. On average, the percentage of students scoring Percent Level 3 or above increased by 9% in ELA and 13% in Math from the 15-16 to 16-17 school year. Growth can be contributed to improved curriculum that is aligned to the CCSS, using SBAC results to support students who were not meeting benchmark, and teacher professional development provided in and out of the SU. For the 17- 18 school year, we are committed to further improving student's academic growth by adopting the FNESU's LCAS into our CIP and participating in teacher professional development provided by the SU;
8. Use of PLP's (Personal Learning Plans) in 7th and 8th grades to identify individual student learning needs and improve student performance. PLP's will maximize student opportunities to engage in experiences that enhance the acquisition of transferable skills;
9. I Projects (Independent Study) as one way for students to pursue interests identified in their PLP's;
10. 7th/8th grade teachers will participate in the Graduation Portfolio process;
11. Montgomery will commit to working with FNESU to develop and ensure consistent student access to technology resources; and
12. Montgomery will continue to work with FNESU to develop a Proficiency Based Learning and Reporting system that aligns with the other pre-K-8 schools and prepares students to understand and achieve Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements..

**Goal 3 - “MAXIMIZE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES”** Maximize operational efficiencies through increased flexibility to manage, share, and transfer resources...

Montgomery will maximize operational efficiency by working independently and in collaboration with supervisory union partners. Montgomery students are well served with its current ratios. [FNESU](#)

FNESU currently has four autonomous but connected school districts which provide education to all children PK-12. FNESU Member Boards have a long history of working collaboratively. In 1915, the school districts of Berkshire, Montgomery and Richford joined to form FNESU. In 1924, the Enosburg Town School District joined FNESU. The Enosburg Falls ID School District joined in 1940. In 1954, the two Enosburg districts merged to form one district. The Bakersfield School District joined FNESU in 1968. The long-standing partnerships in this supervisory union and the sense of community shared among the five towns make moving forward under a more unified system both exciting and appealing to members of this committee, staff, administration, local boards and to many members of our communities.

Within our existing School District and Supervisory Union we:

1. Provide greater consistency in delivery of Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS);
2. Provide for an opportunity to utilize interventionists ;
3. Coordinate opportunities for students in all schools to provide accelerated learning opportunities;
4. Coordinate high-quality professional development opportunities through access to the inhouse expertise that exists within the SU;
5. Continue to standardize common curriculum goals and assessment priorities among the PK-8 schools;Work towards consistency of technology access;
6. Continue to develop a Proficiency Based Learning system s;
7. Continue to align Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements for middle schools and Transferable Skills
8. Continue to develop a system of building Personalized Learning Plans

There are efficiencies already being realized at the FNESU level—including the Supervisory Union Superintendent, senior administrators, special education, curriculum, policy, transportation, and negotiations with teacher and support staff unions. Each of the individual school boards separately hires staff, prepares and adopts budgets, and performs many functions that are crucial decisions to be made at the town level.

*Because FNESU is a highly functioning Supervisory Union, it is already meeting many of the Goals. All FNESU schools are currently governed by unified policies, hire and manage teachers based on the same negotiated master agreement, share in the costs of special education services, and rely on the instructional leadership of the Central Office administration for both curriculum and professional development. Given some of the centralized functions that have been in place for quite some time, local*

*School District Board members have demonstrated their ability to work without prejudice to meet the needs of the collective communities.*

The Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union has already realized many operational efficiencies by:

1. Centralizing special education services for all students;
2. Centralizing transportation services;
3. Centralizing collective bargaining for professional staff;
4. Aligning policies and procedures;
5. Streamlining the accounting system;
6. FNESU currently has a Director of Technology who oversees our technology systems; however, the quality and quantity of support and infrastructure is different in each building and district. The ability to perform these functions in an effective and efficient manner is significantly influenced by the variances in equipment, building support personnel, and software within FNESU schools. FNESU could seek ways to streamline these systems at the SU level to ensure greater equity; and
7. Collecting, reporting and analyzing student data across PreK-12 systems in FNESU would continue to support the coordination, continuity and responsible allocation of resources throughout the organization. Results will be analyzed at the school, district and Supervisory Union levels. The analysis will look at grade level performance over time and cohort performance.

### Montgomery

Montgomery is committed to working collaboratively within FNESU to build on the achievements made so far, to centralize what makes sense and retain local decision making around areas key to the success of Montgomery students. We can make collaborative and contractual agreements within our SU as we have in the past to better achieve the goals of act 46 without the merger of all school districts. Local control is key to Montgomery's efficiency.

Montgomery School does and will continue to share services/personnel within the FNESU, such as instrumental music teacher, guidance counselor, physical education teacher, music teacher, art teacher, and special education paraprofessionals.

We have a local maintenance staff that knows our school inside and out and knows our student population. That personal knowledge is invaluable. Troubleshooting and problem solving is maximized with the knowledge of the inner workings of our building and its heating, electrical, water, and student systems. Merging would likely replace our maintenance with corporate SU contractors. With big contractors comes inconsistency with personnel and therefore, knowledge of Montgomery's systems. Lack of awareness of how things work at our school leads to inefficient troubleshooting and wasteful problem solving. This will increase costs substantially.

Our maintenance crew helps our academic success as well. For instance, Raven, one of our beloved custodians helps students by socially interacting with them on a regular basis and is key

support in nurturing the MES Code of Character of “Respect and Craftsmanship.” He makes students smile in the hallways daily. Students who are happy and relaxed learn better.

Local contractors lower cost and are more effective because they feel socially responsible for our school, students and their tax dollars. For instance, our school electrician is the father of two students at Montgomery. He charges a fraction of the cost of a large contractor and does not mark up the costs of parts. Big contractors always markup the cost of parts. Corporate contractors can cause delays waiting for them to fit us into their schedule. Locals can help in a jiffy to fix unexpected failures. Getting the lights back on quickly keeps students learning. Consolidating maintenance with SU-wide contractors would increase costs. They also ensure our local economy thrives. Replacing local contractors would reduce goodwill towards the school.

FNESU serves a transient population of students in this part of Franklin County. The Montgomery Board is committed to ensure the ability to allow students to finish the year at their home school. This could have a positive effect on individual students who move and often experience several months of regression in a new school environment.

Ending local control would eliminate our efficiency edge of local institutional knowledge by possibly replacing local contractors with regional contractors.

#### **Goal 4 - “PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY”**

Montgomery meets this goal in many ways already. School board meetings are open to the public and are conveniently located in our school. Montgomery hosts a website <http://www.mesk8.net/> containing information about the school and school board minutes for the public. Local operation of the school board meetings makes it possible for parents and community members to attend. The budget meeting is held locally at our school and open to the public. Reports are published in the Town Report. Audits are performed annually.

Montgomery will promote transparency and accountability through the following actions:

1. Participation in FNESU Assessment Plan);
2. Participation in FNESU analysis of SBAC results;
3. Montgomery School annual fiscal audit (4 copies of Montgomery’s 2015-2016 audit enclosed with this proposal);
4. Development of FNESU standards based report card/proficiency based reporting documents;
5. The Montgomery Board will create an e-mail list serve or add to the school website additional information, including: agendas, policies, and actions to increase community knowledge and understanding of board workings and decisions; and
6. Montgomery is currently improving its website to increase transparency and communication with families and the community.

## **GOAL 5 - "EDUCATION DELIVERED AT A COST PARENTS, VOTERS AND TAXPAYERS VALUE"**

Retaining its district will allow Montgomery to continue to meet and even exceed this goal as we do deliver education that we value. Montgomery is efficient with great educational outcomes. Our current structure has done an excellent job and will continue to do so. Those closest love our children more than anyone else, will help make and implement the policies that make our school successful in education and efficiency. Our town elects our community members we know and trust to represent us on the school board. Our school board knows our unique community, our children, our values. Having a school board that represents and advocates the interests of our town is key to the success of Montgomery Elementary School. Merging would have moved us away from the Goals. It would decrease the value of our tax dollars by increasing per pupil costs by over \$800, without receiving any additional education for our children. Merging would mean losing local control and significant value in our educational investments.

Residents have expressed concern that merging would remove local control of who represents us on the school board. Both our representation and control would be affected.

Montgomery voters vote by floor on the school budget. Voters appreciate this opportunity and place for discussion. Voice in decision making is a local value which is appreciated in Montgomery. In recent years this meeting does not last long as the community has had a long standing trust in the board's decisions. The budget is usually passed with a [near unanimous voice vote](#). In merger discussions some community members were displeased with the change to an Australian Ballot for this action. This loss of voice in discussion and understanding of the school budget would be significant and could put at risk school programming and outcomes.

Concerns arose regarding "equal" representation on a merged board. All members of the towns in the merged district would be able to vote for all members of the merged school board representatives. Because their combined electorate is much larger than Montgomery's electorate, other towns would have the ultimate say in who "represents" our children.

Each town in the merged board would have only 2 representatives on a board of 6. Anytime Montgomery's interests become at odds with the other towns, we would possibly lose, particularly considering the large debt already in existence for Berkshire and Bakersfield. A 2/3's majority would control all policy decisions. Our voice would be silenced.

Local control allows Montgomery Elementary School to improve faster. We can learn from more successful schools and institute changes faster because there are fewer people to convince in order to do so.

The Montgomery Town citizens rejected merging twice.

At points of contention, a merger could cause Montgomery’s successful educational path to be diverted by towns that have a lessor record in terms of educational outcomes and efficiency.

Rank (of 171)	School	Grades	# Students	Student/Teacher Ratio	Free/Disc Lunch Recipients	Average Standard Score (2017)
11	<a href="#">Montgomery Center School</a>	PK, KG-8	148	15.1	60.9 %	85.5
91	<a href="#">Berkshire Elementary School</a>	PK, KG-8	221	14.7	35.8 %	46.9
52	<a href="#">Bakersfield School</a>	PK, KG-8	156	11.1	39.1 %	64.8

*Data from Vermont Digger School Rankings.  
School Digger .com*

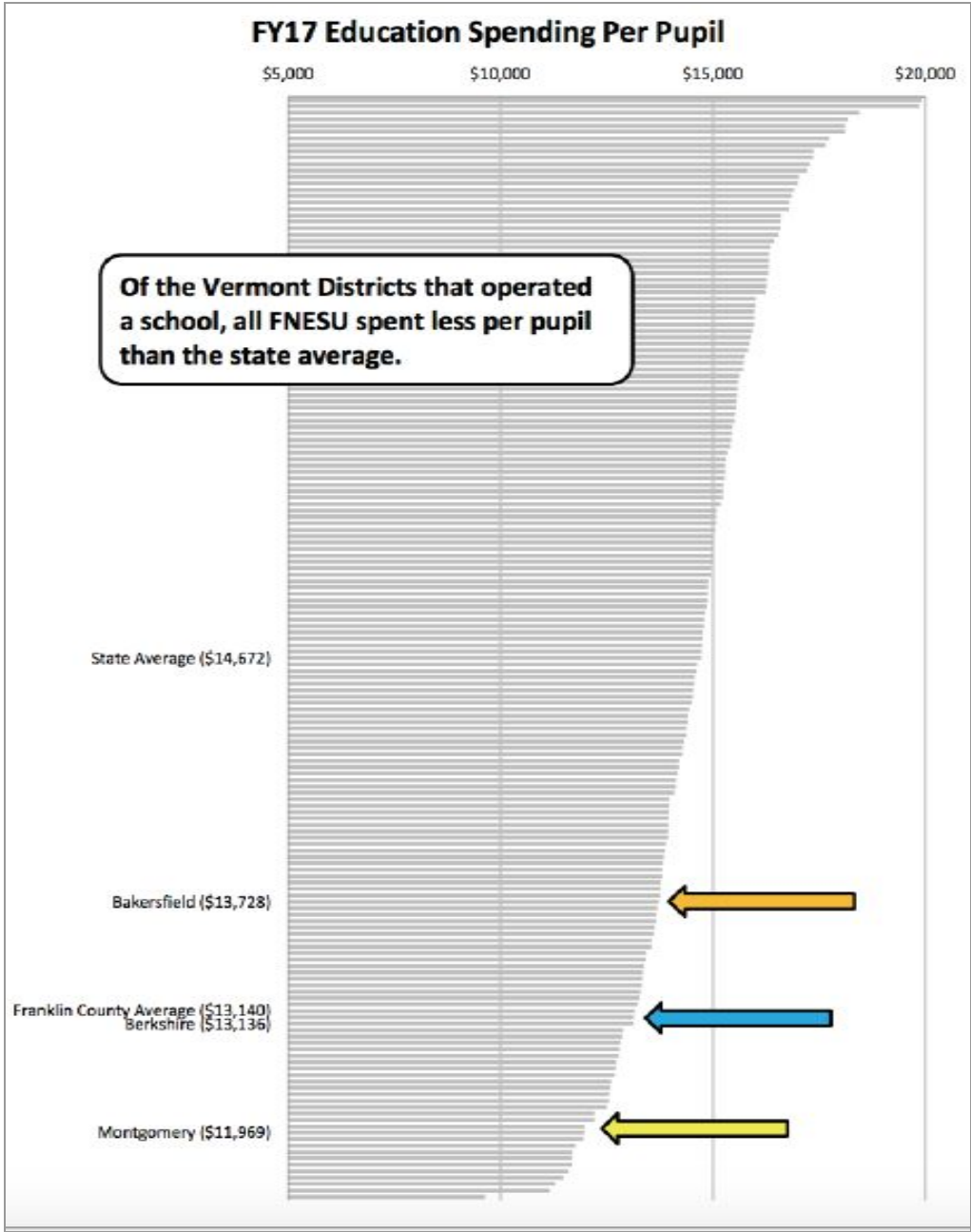
*Montgomery Elementary School has been successful in maintaining some of the highest test scores and lowest cost per pupil in the state. Working closely with other schools in FNESU will allow us to serve as a model for these schools and help them achieve superior results and provide an exceptional educational experience for their students as well.*

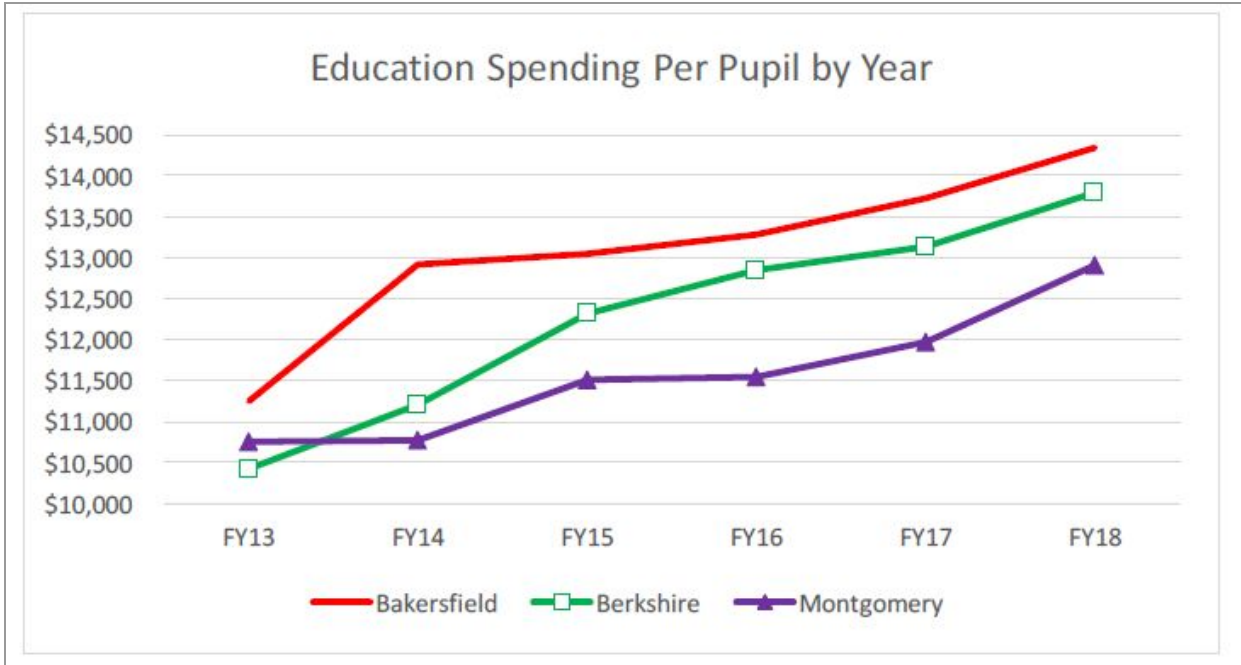
#### **Section 4: Financial Analysis if Granted Existing District Status**

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Montgomery Elementary School historically and continues to operate with a cost per pupil well below the state average. (FY 18 \$12,256 per pupil). If Montgomery Elementary School were to merge with neighboring districts Berkshire and Bakersfield, the equalized cost per pupil would increase to \$14,456 where Montgomery would incur an \$805 increase per pupil over if they remain an existing district. The savings to the taxpayers in Montgomery would total over \$150,000 per year. Money that could be better allocated if needed to insulate the budget for expenses or to drive programs such as a distance learning lab.







**\*\*Montgomery residents would see an INCREASE in property taxes under merger.** This was found to be unacceptable to many residents who attended community and board meetings.

			FY18 Equalized Residential Rate			CLA	FY18 Local Residential Rate		
	Equalized Pupils	Ed Spending	Actual	If Merged	If Merged w/incentives		Actual	If Merged	If Merged w/incentives
BAKE	202.75	\$2,908,285	\$1.4118	\$1.3496	\$1.2696	98.57%	\$1.4323	\$1.3692	\$1.2880
BERK	304.04	\$4,191,227	\$1.3568	\$1.3496	\$1.2696	103.06%	\$1.3165	\$1.3095	\$1.2319
MONT	187.8	\$2,424,602	\$1.2707	\$1.3342	\$1.2542	100.46%	\$1.2649	\$1.3281	\$1.2485

**\*\*Many Montgomery residents rejected taking on the substantial debt of neighboring schools.**

District	Major Projects Pending	Debt Owed	Current Reserve Funds
Bakersfield	None	\$900,000; VMBB Bond due 2032	Capital Reserve: \$147,352 Building Fund: \$47,068
Berkshire	None	\$3,038,750; VMBB Bond due 2033	Building Fund: \$327,218
Montgomery	None	\$585,000; VMBB Bond due 2026	Capital Reserve: \$56,604

**\*\*Many Montgomery residents, having Bonded for an addition to MES in 2005, voiced upset over losing the investment in our school with an insured value of \$2,676,000.00 and Outbuildings/Land \$12,000.00**

1. A review of the most recent school rankings updates having been provided based on Vermont Smarter Balanced test score results for the 2016-17 school year are as follows;

School	Rankings	Student Teacher ratio	Free/Reduced Lunch	
Montgomery	11	13.8	60.9%	
Bakersfield	52	11.1	39.1%	
Berkshire	92	14.7	35.8%	
Enosburgh	53	10.3	76.8%	
Richford	153	13.8	61.8%	

<http://edw.vermont.gov/REPORTSERVER/Pages/ReportViewer.aspx?%2fPublic%2fSchool+Report>

Merger options described in Act 46/49 make it extremely difficult, if not impossible for the Montgomery school district to meet Goals 1, 2, 3, and 5. In light of the financial analysis conducted, and included in this report all FNESU merger proposals to date would have forced the Montgomery School District to incur a prohibitive increase in the school's per pupil cost, resulting in an unmanageable increase in local property taxes.

To the credit of the Montgomery School District the school's most recent rankings place the school at a substantially higher level of achievement, despite high poverty levels being close to double that of the most recent Act 46/49 proposed dance partners, Bakersfield, and Berkshire. Historically consistent, prior to the re-authorization of NCLB by ESSA, (every student succeeds act) Montgomery was never placed in "Required Corrective Action" due to low student achievement. While Berkshire was in year 5 "corrective action", Bakersfield was in year 4 "corrective action" Enosburg in year 5 "corrective action" and Richford in year 4 "corrective action."

Under the circumstances, the committee lacks confidence in, and the viability of any Act 46/49 proposal which requires the Montgomery school district to merge it's governance methodology with schools found to be failing to meet Goals 1, 2, 3, and 5 on multiple levels.

**Suggested Action Steps:**

The Montgomery school district intends to explore new ideas which have never been tried, or even thought of, and intends to exceed the Goals on a continuing basis.

## **1. School Improvement Team**

Montgomery has a history of high student achievement, while taking steps to maintain one of the State's lowest per pupil cost. Although Montgomery has not been identified as a failing school due to low test scores, the study committee recognizes the value in creating a specific school improvement team as described in Title I requirements. This team could consist of the Principal, one English Teacher, one Math Teacher, and one Special Education Teacher. The purpose of this team will be to facilitate ongoing site based student assessments, collate the resulting data to be used to create and monitor a school wide improvement plan. (CIP)

The team will monitor the school's educational proficiency markers to ensure that high quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation, training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement.

Although Montgomery is not experiencing an achievement gap, the team will monitor the needs of low achieving children living in poverty, limited English proficiency, migrant children, children with disabilities, neglected or delinquent children and young children in need of reading assistance. The team will develop strategies to maintain the currently low achievement gap between high and low performing children, especially between minority and non minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. This team will monitor and document the Montgomery school district's efforts to remain in compliance with the requirements of all federal programs.

It is noted that in the past the Montgomery school district accessed Title II funding to provide teacher training/staff development activities. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offers new opportunities for local educational agencies (LEA's) to more effectively attract, select, place, support, and retain excellent educators. Therefore, this team will develop strategies to ensure that teachers have the necessary subject matter knowledge and teaching skills in the academic subjects that the teachers teach. That principals will have the instructional leadership skills to help teachers teach effectively within the classroom. Teacher certification or licensing requirements are aligned with challenging State academic content standards. That teachers have teaching skills which includes subject knowledge, multidisciplinary techniques, and technology literacy. The team will create programs designed to provide teacher mentoring, team teaching, and use of standards or measurements for guiding beginning teachers that are consistent with challenging State student academic achievement standards.

## **2. Educational Resource Team**

This team will be charged with developing a process to facilitate student access to the variety of learning opportunities known to exist throughout the FNESU. The committee recognizes the benefits available to the Montgomery school district by maintaining it's working relationship with the FNESU. Therefore this team will consist of the Principals of each schools as deemed necessary, a Math teacher, an English Teacher, a Special Education teacher, with the support of the Superintendent, Business

Manager, and Curriculum Coordinator. The team will meet prior to the beginning of each school year to assess the learning opportunities known to exist within but not limited to the FNESU. It will evaluate the need to create joint agreements designed to provide joint programs, services, professional, and other staff that are necessary to carry out the desired programs and educational services. It is not the intent to simply provide increased access to learning opportunities, as this team seeks the ability to offer our students substantially more diversified access to educational programs intended to significantly enhance equity on a much larger regional basis. (Goal 1)

The committee believes the Montgomery school district has been 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 implemented by merging Vermont school districts have already been implemented by the FNESU. Some examples include; centralized Special Education Staff, Transportation Contracts, District Wide Union Contract, Curriculum Coordination, Fiscal Service Management, and shared teaching staff. Of particular note for at least the last eight years the Montgomery school district has been extending the type of shared teacher contracts with school districts located outside the FNESU. Example; Montgomery currently shares a Guidance Counselor with the FNWSU Franklin Central School 40% x 60%. This agreement has worked exceptionally well for both school districts and this team is committed to continue, and expand this approach to cost containment. The team will aggressively continue to pursue opportunities to create shared staffing contracts with all interested school districts located within the greater Franklin County Area. (Goals 3 and 5)

### **3. School Choice**

The Montgomery school district offers universal school choice for grades 9-12 and continues as a highly desired feature by the citizens of Montgomery. In fact the preservation of school choice is a major determining factor were Act 46/49 merger options are concerned. The demand for school choice is significantly lower in the PK-8 Montgomery structure due largely to the documented academic success demonstrated year after year. However, the committee recognizes there are on occasion extenuating circumstances which are typically addressed on a case to case basis. The Legislature attempted to provide a measure of school choice flexibility with the passing of Act 129 allowing a limited number of 9-12 grade students the ability to attend out of district schools. It is noted that Act 129 does not allow funding to follow the student, the school district's Average Daily Membership (ADM) remains unaffected, and transportation services are not the responsibility of the home school district. Therefore the committee recommends extending the provisions of Act 129 to Montgomery's lower grades (PK-8) on a limited basis subject to the approval of the local school board.

### **4. Supervisory Union Budget Transparency**

Currently the FNESU charges each school district with a SU assessment which represents the local share of the SU budget based on each school districts demographics. The current governance structure does not allow the voting taxpayers the ability to approve this budget, and has been a continuing source of contention. A simple solution would be to vote on the SU budget separately. However upon careful consideration, the committee reached to conclusion that such a vote would create unnecessary confusion due to the requirement of having an affirmative vote in all five of the FNESU local school

districts. The current method of assessing the local share of the SU budget is not based on the actual amount of services being provided to each individual school district. Noting, that unforeseen circumstances arise occasionally which requires the redirection of SU staff and resources to address issues which results in the need for unanticipated services. However, the SU budget process is largely constructed based on anticipated costs related to each member school district. Therefore the committee has determined that there is a need to research a new method of crafting the SU budget based on a bill back procedure for anticipated services provided by SU staff, specific to each member school district. The committee believes by adopting this approach all local SU expenses will be detailed within each of the local budgets providing the desired clarification and transparency. (Goal 4)

#### **5. Use of Data to Measure Success in Meeting/Exceeding Goals**

The committee has concluded that data is critical to constructing and continually improving our School. To measure our success in meeting the Goals, and for accountability purposes, we will continually review data, and create feedback loops. Using Goals to focus on key educational issues and being able to accurately measure progress. (Goal 4)

#### **6. Create a Tuition Student Marketing Team**

The committee believes that given Montgomery's long history of high student achievement and low per pupil cost, our school district is in an enviable position to offer our documented high quality educational services to schools at a time when school choice options seem to be increasing. Currently the Montgomery school district has first hand experience dealing with school choice options through our 9-12 grade students attending a variety of school systems including such schools as Stanstead College located one half mile beyond the U.S. Quebec Canada border. In particular, Quebec has seen increases in their per pupil costs exceeding 22% while student enrollment dropped by 7%. Quebec's educational spending grew from \$11.5 billion to \$13.0 billion for an increase of over 14%, while student enrollment dropped by 6.5%. The cost associated with providing educational services in some areas are spiraling out of control at an alarming rate. However, the Montgomery school district has managed to keep costs under control, while maintaining high quality instruction. Therefore, the committee recommends the creation of a team charged with conducting research to determine the viability of developing of a plan designed to offer mutually beneficial high quality educational services and financial relief targeting several struggling Quebec school districts.

#### **7. Policy Review**

The Superintendent and the Principal will prioritize the review/amendment of all existing policies, and approve the adoption of new policies designed to support, and sustain the changes identified in the Montgomery's Action Plan. Doing so will embed operational procedures designed to promote and support new and innovative initiatives throughout the schools of the FNESU.

### **CLOSING STATEMENTS**

With increased community support and in-depth evaluation over the past three years, we find the overall Act 46 study experience to be an important and beneficial experience. The effort forced

discussions and decisions on school and community levels that might not have taken place without the requirements of this legislation. We believe this effort has and will greatly improve Montgomery's ability to serve our students and communities in the future. Montgomery has determined maintaining its traditional governance structure -- that of local control -- achieves the Goals better than merger.

Montgomery is a geographically and structurally isolated community with a fiscally efficient and academically thriving school. This proposal for existing district status is strongly supported by our town's rejection of both prior merger proposals. Montgomery is proud of the school it has created and the education it provides to the town's children. This process has demonstrated our town's commitment to maintaining a school we are proud of. This process has also benefited our future by revealing areas in which we can improve. We will continue to work to increase writing instruction time, increase opportunities to learn by pursuing distance learning technology, and decrease cost by coordinating with our SU. We look forward to working together to improve equity, quality, and opportunity for our students and to achieve long-term sustainability for our taxpayers.

Merger must be rejected for two main reasons:

1. **"You can't get there from here."** Berkshire and Bakersfield have merged. We are geographically and structurally isolated from them. Transport costs and risks would outweigh any savings.
2. **"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."** Montgomery is a great school, let us keep it that way. We will work to improve our school even more given the opportunity.

Local Control is key to Montgomery's success meeting and exceeding Act 46 Goals. Please accept Montgomery's proposal to retain its current district structure.

**School Board Members:**

Christina Suarez, Montgomery  
Mary Niles, Montgomery

**Committee Members:**

Jared Jewett, Montgomery  
Karie Quintin, Montgomery  
Sarah Silva, Montgomery

Jonathan Betts, Montgomery  
 Greta Quintin, Montgomery

**Interested citizens:**

Jay Denault

**Appendix A 85 Vehicle Crashes Montgomery and Surrounding Towns 12/20/16-12/20/17**

Crash Date	City/Town	AOT Route	Weather	Time of Day	Impairment
April 23, 2017, 5:53 PM	Berkshire	TOWN ROAD 0015	Unknown	Day	
April 30, 2017, 3:28 PM	Berkshire	VT-118	Cloudy	Day	None
April 6, 2017, 11:56 PM	Richford	S RICHFORD RD	Rain	Night	Alcohol
April 8, 2017, 1:00 PM	Richford	VT-105	Unknown	Day	None
August 12, 2017, 1:10 PM	Enosburg	Unknown	Unknown	Day	
August 14, 2017, 1:40 PM	Berkshire	VT-118	Unknown	Day	
August 17, 2017, 1:45 PM	Richford	VT 139 TH	Cloudy	Day	None
August 21, 2017, 1:06 PM	Westfield	TOWN ROAD 0015	Clear	Day	None
August 27, 2017, 9:33 AM	Westfield	TOWN ROAD 0019	Clear	Day	None
August 8, 2017, 2:55 PM	Richford	VT 139 TH	Cloudy	Day	None
December 26, 2016, 9:46 AM	Bakersfield	VT-108	Clear	Day	None
December 27, 2016, 8:44 AM	Bakersfield	VT-108	Clear	Day	None
December 30, 2016, 7:51 AM	Montgomery	VT-242	Unknown	Day	
December 9, 2017, 9:03 PM	Montgomery		Freezing Precipitation	Night	None
February 15, 2017, 4:23 PM	Berkshire	TOWN ROAD 0045	Unknown	Day	



February 17, 2017, 3:16 PM	Berkshire	VT-105	Clear	Day	None
February 18, 2017, 5:25 PM	Richford	VT-105	Unknown	Night	None
February 20, 2017, 10:39 AM	Berkshire	BERKSHIRE CENTER RD	Unknown	Day	
February 20, 2017, 7:20 AM	Montgomery	VT-118	Clear	Day	None
February 24, 2017, 2:31 PM	Jay	VT-242	Cloudy	Day	None
February 24, 2017, 8:07 AM	Lowell	VT-100	Cloudy	Day	None
February 26, 2017, 8:30 AM	Montgomery	VT-118	Unknown	Day	None
February 3, 2017, 4:15 PM	Montgomery	VT-118	Unknown	Day	
February 6, 2017, 12:12 PM	Montgomery	VT-118	Unknown	Day	
February 9, 2017, 5:33 PM	Lowell	VT-100	Unknown	Night	
February 9, 2017, 9:33 PM	Enosburg	VT-105	Cloudy	Night	None
January 17, 2017, 10:58 PM	Richford	VT-105	Freezing Precipitation	Night	None
January 4, 2017, 10:38 AM	Jay	VT-242	Cloudy	Day	None
January 7, 2017, 4:24 PM	Montgomery	VT-118	Unknown	Day	
July 10, 2017, 12:41 PM	Enosburg	TOWN ROAD 0043	Clear	Day	None
July 12, 2017, 4:52 AM	Enosburg	MinCollector	Cloudy	Night	None
July 19, 2017, 11:29 PM	Enosburg	TOWN ROAD 0005	Clear	Night	None
July 25, 2017, 12:03 PM	Enosburg	VT-105	Cloudy	Day	None
July 29, 2017, 7:07 PM	Lowell	TOWN ROAD 0035	Clear	Night	Alcohol
July 3, 2017, 12:17 PM	Lowell	VT-100	Clear	Day	None

July 31, 2017, 3:37 PM	Lowell	VT-100	Clear	Day	None
June 15, 2017, 9:21 AM	Enosburg	TOWN ROAD 0023	Clear	Day	None
June 19, 2017, 7:57 AM	Lowell	VT-100	Clear	Day	None
June 20, 2017, 9:20 AM	Jay	VT-105	Clear	Day	Alcohol
June 26, 2017, 8:49 PM	Enosburg	VT-105	Clear	Night	Alcohol
June 29, 2017, 6:44 AM	Jay	VT-242	Unknown	Day	None
June 5, 2017, 1:32 PM	Richford	VT-105	Rain	Day	None
June 6, 2017, 10:20 AM	Enosburg	VT-108	Clear	Day	None
June 7, 2017, 4:42 AM	Richford	TOWN ROAD 0029	Cloudy	Night	None
June 9, 2017, 5:27 PM	Enosburg	VT-108	Clear	Day	None
June 9, 2017, 8:27 AM	Berkshire	RICHFORD RD	Rain	Day	None
March 10, 2017, 10:56 AM	Richford	VT 139 TH	Clear	Day	None
March 12, 2017, 10:15 AM	Jay	Unknown	Clear	Day	None
March 12, 2017, 3:30 PM	Lowell	VT-58	Clear	Day	None
March 13, 2017, 12:04 PM	Lowell	VT-100	Clear	Day	Alcohol
March 14, 2017, 4:27 PM	Richford	VT-105	Unknown	Day	
March 15, 2017, 11:44 AM	Enosburg	VT-105	Freezing Precipitation	Day	None
March 17, 2017, 6:12 PM	Richford	VT-105	Clear	Night	Alcohol
March 19, 2017, 1:14 PM	Enosburg	TOWN ROAD 0017	Unknown	Day	
March 28, 2017, 3:00 PM	Enosburg	VT-105	Clear	Day	None
March 4, 2017, 3:25 AM	Bakersfield	VT-108	Clear	Night	None
March 8, 2017, 6:09 PM	Berkshire	VT-105	Unknown	Night	

May 16, 2017, 8:09 AM	Enosburg	VT-108	Clear	Day	None
May 2, 2017, 7:36 AM	Jay	TOWN ROAD 0012	Cloudy	Day	None
May 21, 2017, 1:20 AM	Enosburg	VT-105	Clear	Night	Alcohol
May 21, 2017, 3:56 PM	Berkshire	VT-108	Unknown	Day	
May 25, 2017, 8:12 PM	Enosburg	TOWN ROAD 0008	Clear	Night	None
May 28, 2017, 6:39 AM	Montgomery	VT 58 TH	Unknown	Day	
May 30, 2017, 11:00 AM	Montgomery	VT-118	Clear	Day	None
May 4, 2017, 10:48 AM	Enosburg	TOWN ROAD 0006	Unknown	Day	
May 4, 2017, 2:00 PM	Richford	VT 139 TH	Unknown	Day	
May 9, 2017, 12:20 PM	Enosburg	TOWN ROAD 0008	Clear	Day	None
November 10, 2017, 11:38 AM	Berkshire	RICHFORD RD	Freezing Precipitation	Day	None
November 15, 2017, 9:50 PM	Enosburg	VT-105	Unknown	Night	
November 16, 2017, 11:55 AM	Berkshire	TOWN ROAD 0006	Unknown	Day	
November 2, 2017, 6:31 PM	Bakersfield	VT-108	Unknown	Night	
November 23, 2017, 3:36 PM	Berkshire	VT-118	Unknown	Day	
November 23, 2017, 8:18 AM	Berkshire	VT-118	Unknown	Day	
October 10, 2017, 11:48 AM	Montgomery	VT 58 TH	Clear	Day	None
October 12, 2017, 4:26 PM	Enosburg	MinCollector	Unknown	Day	
October 16, 2017, 2:16 PM	Richford	VT 139 TH	Clear	Day	Alcohol
October 17, 2017, 7:50 AM	Enosburg	DICKINSON AVE	Clear	Day	None

October 21, 2017, 9:05 PM	Lowell	TOWN ROAD 0029	Clear	Night	None
October 22, 2017, 5:35 PM	Richford	VT-105	Clear	Day	None
October 30, 2017, 4:58 AM	Berkshire	WATER TOWER RD	Unknown	Night	
October 9, 2017, 9:14 AM	Montgomery	VT-242	Rain	Day	None
September 15, 2017, 7:40 PM	Lowell	MINES RD	Cloudy	Night	None
September 29, 2017, 11:27 PM	Berkshire	VT-118	Cloudy	Night	Alcohol
September 5, 2017, 2:46 PM	Enosburg	Unknown	Rain	Day	None
September 8, 2017, 10:38 AM	Berkshire	TOWN ROAD 0009	Unknown	Day	