
REPORT
TO THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION AND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM THE BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
TOWN OF STRAFFORD

PROPOSAL FOR
“ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURE”
UNDER ACT 46, Section 9

STRAFFORD SCHOOL BOARD

JANUARY 2017

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

The Strafford School District, with the support of the White River Valley Supervisory Union (WRVSU), proposes to the Secretary of Education and the State Board of Education to be considered an “Alternative Structure” under Act 46 within and as a continuing member of the WRVSU.

The Strafford School District supports the local, independent Creative Pre-School for pre-K students, operates the Newton Elementary School for grades K-8, and designates Thetford Academy as its high school. As such, the Strafford School District is unique in its operating structure, being the only district in the state with this combination (operating K-8 with a designated high school – see Appendix 1: “Town and Unified Union School Districts Tuitioning One or more Grades”).

Because of this unique structure and given the protections of Section 4 of Act 46, there are no direct merger possibilities for the Strafford School District.

However, this essential fact has not prevented The Strafford School District from meeting the requirements for “self-evaluation, meetings, and proposal” of Act 46. In addition to the completion of this report, The District has worked extensively

- with its townspeople to determine the educational and governmental goals of the town,
- with and within the WRVSU both in regard to its initial formation and internal re-alignment vis a vis Act 46,
- with the towns of Sharon, Stockbridge, and Tunbridge in a 706b study committee,
- and with several towns both within the WRVSU and beyond in an attempt to determine creative, new alignments with which to meet the goals of Act 46.

Furthermore, The Strafford School District is in a strong position to meet the goals of equity, quality, efficiency, and transparency which are the foundation of Act 46. As an active and participating member of the WRVSU along with its several newly-forming districts, The Strafford School District is committed to meeting these goals and working together for the education of all its students.

Remaining a freestanding district within the WRVSU provides Strafford with the best opportunity and means to sustain and improve its performance while at the same time meeting the additional goals of Act 46.

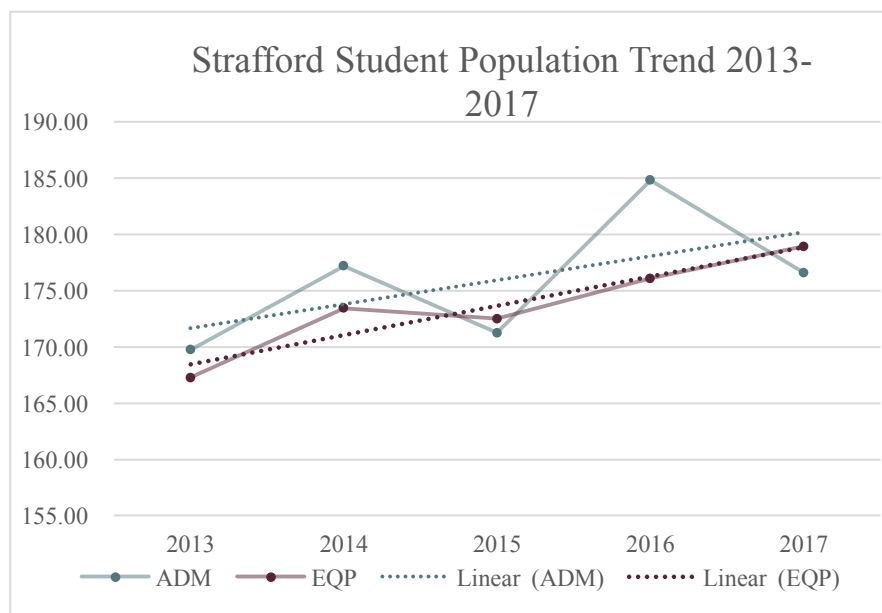
INTRODUCTION TO THE STRAFFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Strafford is a small, rural town, population of just over 1000, made up of the two villages of South Strafford and Strafford. It is contiguous to Thetford, Vershire, Tunbridge, and Sharon with the majority of economic and social engagement either local or to the east in the direction of Thetford and the Upper Valley area of Hartford, Norwich, Hanover, and Lebanon. There is also, to a lesser degree, traffic to the south toward Sharon and to the west and the Royalton, Randolph corridor.

Traffic to and from Strafford is primarily via Rte. 132 running south to Sharon and south-east to Norwich. Travel in other directions is via smaller roads and often geographically difficult. The average commute time for Strafford residents is twenty-six minutes, slightly higher than the Vermont average of twenty-three minutes¹.

Strafford is, on the whole, socio-economically stronger than the Vermont average with a median and average household income well above state averages². However, almost 50% of its students are eligible for Free and Reduced Price School Meals³.

Strafford's student population has had a slight growth trend over the past five years, with an Equalized Pupil increase from 167.2 to 178.93 (+7%) and an ADM increase from 169.75 to 176.60 (+4%) over the same time⁴.



¹ <http://www.towncharts.com/Vermont/Economy/Strafford-town-VT-Economy-data.html>

² Ibid.

³ <http://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-nutrition-free-and-reduced-eligibility-report-2017.pdf>

⁴ AOE Act 46 Background Data Set 2016

Strafford was one of five towns which made up the Orange Windsor Supervisory Union (OWSU) for many years. When the state directed OWSU to combine with the Windsor North-West Supervisory Union and its five towns forming the WRVSU, members of the Strafford School Board were strong participants in the creation of that merged SU, serving on the Leadership and Governance Committee, among others, throughout the process. Leadership at the SU level has been consistent with Superintendent Bruce Labs currently in his fourth year and a single, long-term superintendent prior to Mr. Lab's tenure, and has resulted in a supervisory-wide Strategic Plan to direct the SU's future direction (See Appendix 2: WRVSU Strategic Plan).

Strafford operates the Newton School, providing K-8 education to its students. Enrollment at the Newton school for 2016-17 was 120 students. Principal Greg Bagnato is now in his fifth year, providing capable leadership and stability. The principal has worked closely and collaboratively with neighboring schools in areas of staffing, program development, staff development, and general planning, always with the goal of the best solution for all involved.

Strafford tuitions its 9-12th grade students, designating The Thetford Academy (TA) as its high school. Even with this designation, some parents choose to pursue a Tuition Waiver as specified in 16 V.S.A §827(c), and Strafford currently tuitions high school students to the independent Sharon Academy (TSA), and Hanover High School as well as TA.

MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF ACT 46, SECTION 9

SELF-EVALUATION

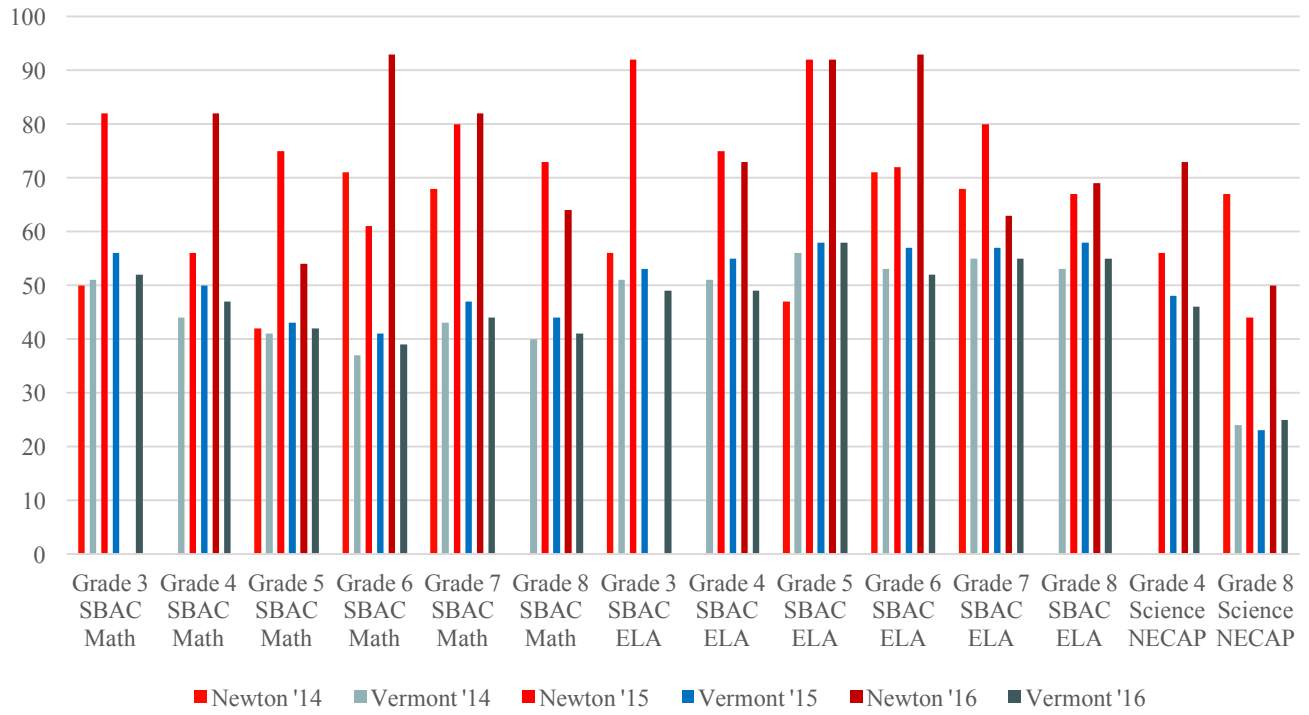
Throughout the entire process of trying to find a viable solution under Act 46 for the town of Strafford, The Board has continually evaluated its ability to meet the goals of equity, quality, efficiency, and transparency.

Quality

Operation of the Newton School as a K-8 school is and remains a priority of both the board and the town. The Newton School is regularly a top performer on assessments of all kinds at all levels. Its students are engaged, well prepared for future endeavors, and part of an essential, small community that is fundamental to their development and well-being.

The Newton School is a small school, with small cohorts, but testing data available from the AOE and internally shows the effectiveness of our program.

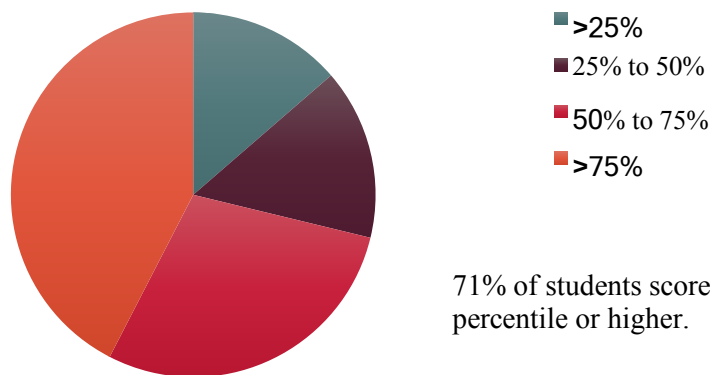
% Students Proficient or Above The Newton School vs State Average State Standardized Tests 2014-17



NB: Any missing Newton School data is due to sample sizes too small to calculate.

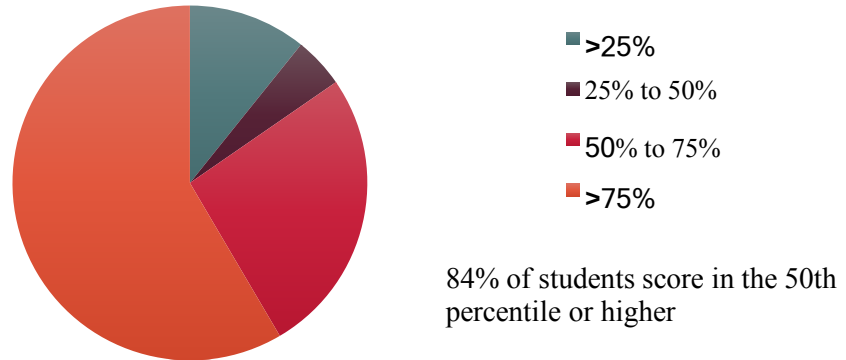
Local assessments using nationally normed tests – Star 360 is used in the WRVSU - also demonstrate the proficiency of The Newton School’s students both in terms of national percentiles and grade level achievement.

2017 Star 360 Reading Test 3-8 Graders according to National Percentile Rank

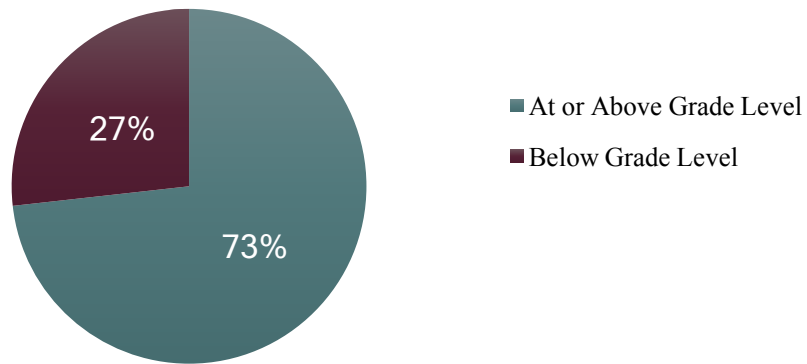


71% of students score in the 50th percentile or higher.

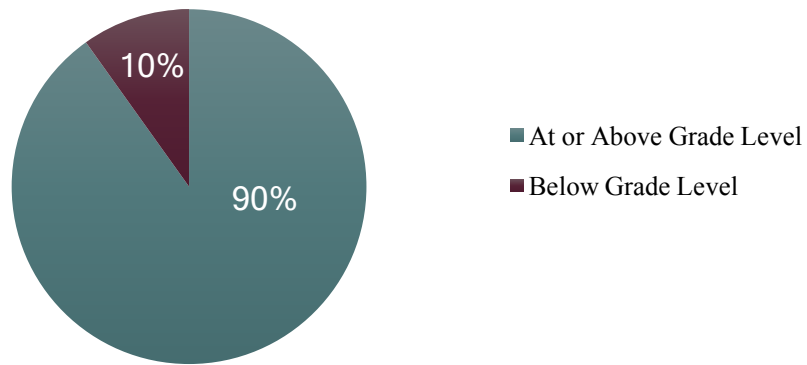
2017 Star 360 Math Test
3-8 Graders according to National Percentile Rank



2017 Star 360 Reading
% of Students At or Above Grade Level



2017 Star 360 Math
% of Students At or Above Grade Level



Beyond its core academics, The Newton School offers a wide variety of enrichment programs to help its students learn and grow to their full potential.

Academic Enrichment Programs:

- The Newton School participates in Math Counts for Grades 6-8.
- The Newton School participates in Spelling Bees for grades 5/6 and 7/8.
- The Newton School has an active outdoor program by contracting with Vermont Institute of Natural Science to provide teachers with the structure to conduct outdoor lessons and a middle school science symposium. The Outdoor program also encompasses our active Farm to School program (K-8) and Forest Day (1/2 day outdoor program for Kindergarten students each week).
- The Newton School provides overnight field trips (grades 6-8) to New York City and Montreal that are aligned with our curriculum.
- The Newton School provides academic electives in advanced math (using Vermont Virtual Learning Collaborative) and Spanish.
- 8th Grade students at Newton School lead three school-wide assemblies a year (Veteran's Day, Martin Luther King Day, and Memorial Day).

Encore Enrichment Programs:

- Students in Grades 7/8 choose electives for each trimester in Art, Music, Fitness, and Technology.
- The Newton School participates in Jump Rope for Heart and Bike to School for students in K-8.
- The Newton School sends students to the Vermont State Middle School Fitness Competition in Northfield every spring.
- The Newton School promotes fine and performing arts by having music concerts and an art show every year.
- The Newton School faculty put on four plays per year for students in K-2, 3/4, 5, and 6-8.
- The Newton School and Parent Teacher association work together to provide a week-long artist in residence program every December.
- The Newton School and Parent Teacher association work together to provide two performance art field trips per grade each year.
- The Newton School and Parent Teacher association work together to provide students in grades 3-5 the year-long Images and Art Start programs at the Hood Museum at Dartmouth College.

Community Building Programs:

- The Newton School organizes three K-8 triads –a group composed of a lower, middle, and upper grade student - a year (Hike for Hunger, Literacy, and Pi Day) to build community and emphasize working together.
- The Newton School participates in the international Operation Days Work program for 7th and 8th graders.
- The Newton School 8th graders learn about leadership and team building by attending a Hulbert Outdoor Program each fall for three days.

After School Programs:

- Newton School's after-school program offers outdoor, art, team building, and field trips for students in grades 6-8.
- Newton School's after-school program offers MS Clubs such as drama and cross-country skiing to students in grades 6-8.
- Newton School's after-school program offers tutoring sessions for students in grades K-8.

Athletic Programs:

- The Newton School offers Coed Soccer for grades K-8 and Gender split Basketball for grades 3-8. These sports are coordinated by a volunteer and the school principal.
- The Newton School coordinates with local organizations (i.e. Lion's Club) to provide Cross Country Skiing, Downhill Skiing, and Baseball for students in K-8.
- The Newton School collaborates with Thetford Academy to provide Track and Field for students in grades 5-8.
- The Newton School's afterschool program (One Planet) offers running programs (Girls on the Run and Finding your Stride) for students in grades 3-8.

Special Education services are delivered through the WRVSU. Although the number of students identified for special education is slightly higher than the statewide average (17.48% in WRVSU compared to 15.91% in Vermont as a whole), the amount spent on special education per capita in the SU is less than the statewide average (\$3,418.07 in WRVSU compared to \$3,562.58 state-wide).

Overall, The Newton School offers its students an exceptional small school program and learning environment.

Equity and Transparency

The Strafford School District played an essential role in the formation of the White River Valley Supervisory Union and remains a fully participatory member. The WRVSU spent a great deal of time and effort developing its Strategic Plan, adopted in the summer of 2016. Through that plan, each member of the SU, Strafford included, has agreed to work collaboratively for the good of all of its students. Specific goals, objectives, and actions have been laid out for the SU as a whole to ensure a quality education throughout the SU (See Appendix 2: WRVSU Strategic Plan).

Further, future consolidation of the districts in the WRVSU via mergers accomplished under Act 46, will reduce the number of meetings, budgets, and points of contact for Superintendent Labs and his staff. This will provide increased access, transparency, and accountability for the residents of all member towns.

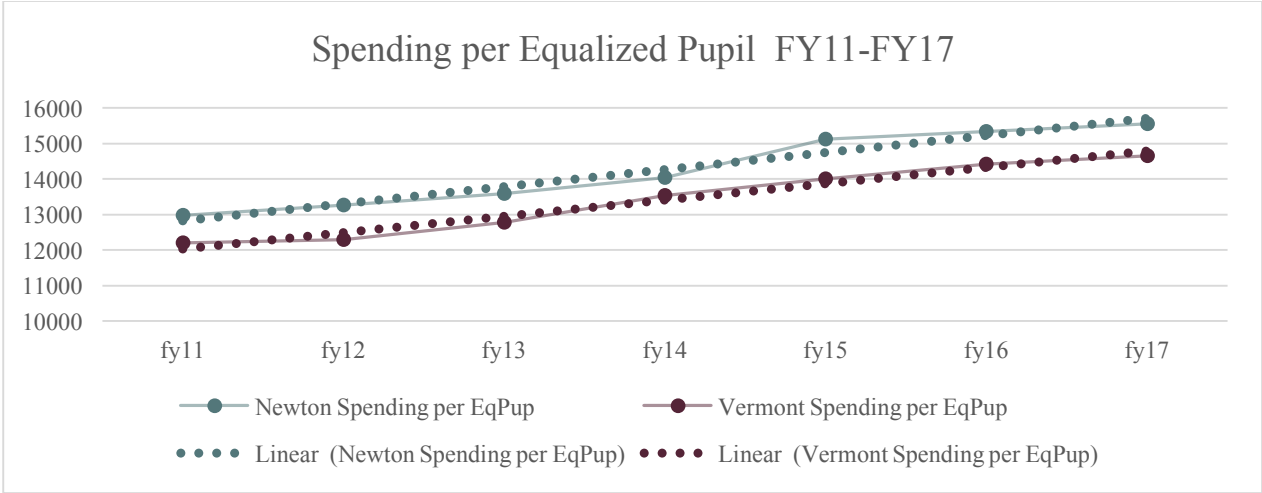
Centralization of key services, such as Special Education, transportation, grant acquisition, and financial services has already been implemented SU-wide.

Additionally, an SU-wide contract with the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative has provided further opportunities for students to take distance learning classes not typically offered in their building. The Newton School is proud to have one of its teachers on the faculty of VTVLC helping to provide those classes to other member schools.

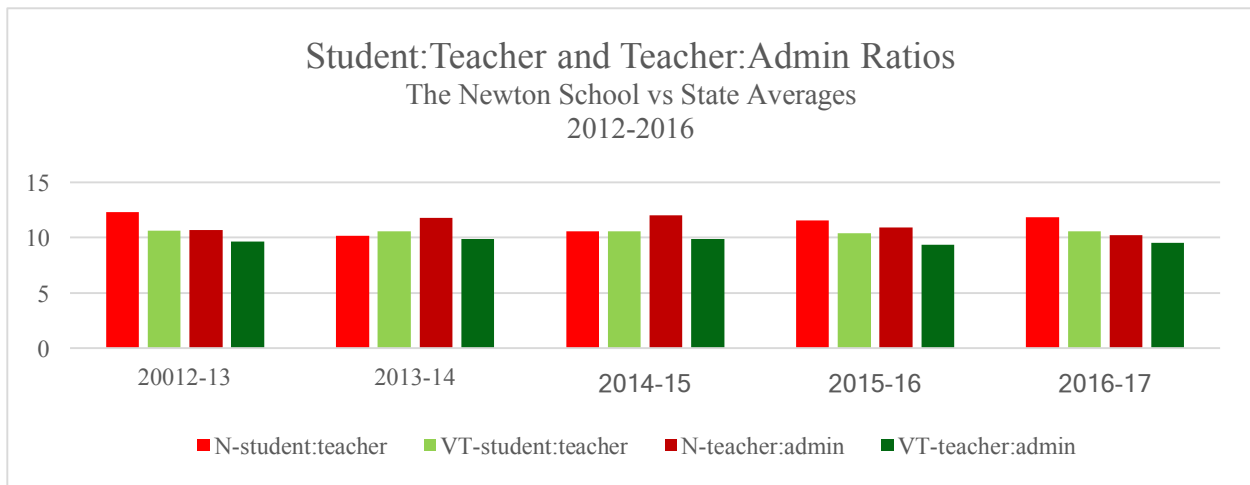
Another innovative approach to equity comes in the form of the WRVSVU’s Restorative Classroom program developed by the Special Education leadership to address students in need throughout the SU (See Appendix 3: WRVSVU Restorative Classroom).

Efficiency

The Strafford School District has historically spent more per pupil than the state average. However, the rate of increase, while trending with the state average, is often driven by changes in the size of tuition classes rather than spending at The Newton School, itself. A large class entering high school, as happened in FY2015, can cause abnormalities in annual data. Further, because of careful fiscal management and despite a small decrease in enrollment, per pupil spending for FY2018 is projected to be lower than that of FY2017.



In addition to decreasing per pupil spending, The Newton School has been increasing its student to teacher ratio which has been higher than the state average for the past several years.



MEETINGS

The process of determining the best option for The Strafford School District has been long and arduous, starting even before the passage of Act 46. Throughout that time, The Board has done more than its due diligence in seeking input, gathering information, and working with other Districts to fully explore all possibilities and options.

FORMATION OF THE WHITE RIVER VALLEY SUPERVISORY UNION

Historically, the school districts of this region had been assigned by the State Board of Education to two different supervisory unions—the Orange-Windsor Supervisory Union and the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union. In 2014, at the prompting of the State Board of Education, those two groups came together and conducted a process to merge into a single supervisory union, both to find operating efficiencies, but also to create a foundation from which to create a world-class education program for students.

The ten involved towns came together and created a vision for the new supervisory union as follows:

We envision an education system in the White River Valley where students are engaged in vibrant educational experiences that prepare them for college, career, and life in a democratic society. From experiences within and beyond the walls of our school buildings, students emerge from our education system with academic proficiencies and transferable skills, including clear and effective communication, self-direction, creative and practical problem-solving, responsible and involved citizenship, and informed and integrated thinking. The cost of education is sustainable and strongly supported by our communities. Families seek to reside in the region both because of our strong, healthy communities and our exceptional education system.

Further, the defining document made clear that *the creation of the new supervisory union is not simply about merging business functions or the changing of boundaries; rather it is building a foundational structure that will:*

- *Allow for the creation of an exceptional education experience for all children in the White River Valley.*
- *Ensure strong leadership to support the education program throughout the region.*
- *Achieve immediate efficiencies and create the potential for greater cost-effectiveness over time.*

The State Board approved the merger of the two SUs in January, 2015, and it became a reality on July 1, 2016.

Development of a Five Year Plan

Soon after the State Board order, the WRVSU moved into an in-depth strategic planning process to map out a detailed plan for the creation of a radically different education program within the region. The process included large meetings with staff, students, and the community. With the help of the International Center for Leadership in Education the new supervisory union mapped out a future centered on the following mission and vision.

WRVSU Vision

In the White River Valley Supervisory union, a world-class education is built upon strong relationships between and among students, teachers, families, and communities. All students are supported, challenged, and engaged with a personalized education. Learning is rigorous and relevant to student interests while preparing every child for college, career, and active citizenship.

WRVSU Mission

The White River Valley Supervisory Union serves our educational community with special emphasis on optimizing quality, opportunity, equity and efficiency. Our school system promotes cognitive, personal and social excellence as students flourish in a dynamic learning environment. We seek to empower each student to become a passionate, lifelong learner and an informed contributor to a rapidly changing society.

The plan calls for the creation of a unified high school program for operating towns, strong middle school opportunities for all students, and strengthened, more equitable experiences for elementary students. The strategic plan was adopted by the supervisory union in the summer of 2016 and is currently guiding educational improvements across the region. The full body of the strategic plan is attached to this document as Appendix 2.

PUBLIC FORUM AND SURVEY

In order to gather input and direction from the townspeople of Strafford, the Board held a public forum in Barrett Hall in downtown South Strafford on the evening of Tuesday, March 29, 2016. This forum was attended by 124 people and a robust discussion of possible merger options and town priorities ensued (See Appendix 4: Strafford Act 46 Forum Minutes).

At the conclusion of the forum - and via the town listserv and other paper and electronic means - links to a follow-up survey were distributed. In total, 226 responses were tallied. (See Appendix 5: Strafford Survey Results).

The survey results combined with the discussion feedback and results of a straw poll from the public forum, gave a clear direction to the board regarding the wishes of the town:

- Maintain local governance and control of The Newton School.
- Maintain the current operating and designation structure of the school.

SECTION 706B STUDY COMMITTEE

After the passage of Act 46, the districts that now make up the WRVSU met repeatedly to figure out the direction the SU would take. It was eventually decided that the towns would pursue three 706b Study Committees to develop plans for those districts which 1) then operated K-12 schools (Bethel, Chelsea, Rochester, and Royalton), 2) did not currently operate any schools (Granville and Hancock), and 3) operate an elementary school, either K-6 or K-8 and tuition students after that (Sharon, Stockbridge, Strafford, and Tunbridge). The Strafford School District voted to join the third study committee.

Committee Membership and Charge

This study committee was created by Sharon, Stockbridge, Strafford, and Tunbridge “to analyze the advisability of forming a union school district under Act 46.” The committee was created through votes on the following dates and the following weighted membership was agreed upon:

District	Date	Eq.Pupils	%	Proposed Votes	Representation
Sharon	5/5/16	245.69	35%	4	3 Reps each with 1.33 votes
Stockbridge	8/23/16	104.55	15%	2	3 Reps each with .67 votes
Strafford	5/10/16	176.08	25%	3	3 Reps each with 1 vote
Tunbridge	5/16/16	179.54	25%	3	3 Reps each with 1 vote

Members included:

Sharon: Steve Gagliardone, Don Shaw, Karen Henderson

Stockbridge: Carl Groppe

Strafford: Hillary Linehan, Glen Wylie

Tunbridge: Kathy Galluzzo (Chair), Maryann Caron, Anissa Morrison, Maureen Moriarty (alt.)

Eliza Minnucci (alt.), Liz York (alt.)

In addition, the Chelsea, Rochester, and Waits River Districts asked to be part of the committee as informal members, and the committee agreed to their informal participation.

The Committee was supported by: Bruce Labs (Superintendent), Scott Farnsworth (Tunbridge Principal), Mark Blount (Chelsea Principal), Donna Benoit (Business Manager) and Steve Dale (Consultant).

Results and Outcomes

1. Strafford representatives and their board determined that given their “east-facing” location and their high school designation with Thetford Academy, they did not see themselves as part of this new district. They continued to monitor the committee’s effort, but chose not to be included in the analyses related to the final report and did not take the report to their voters. Their decision was supported by the study committee.

2. Stockbridge and Sharon spent considerable time exploring the advisability of becoming a union district that operates PK-6 and tuitions beyond. They decided for a number of reasons not to pursue creating a unified district. They are not contiguous. Distances are too great for much collaboration. And if the Stockbridge School were to close at some point in the future, the Sharon School would need to serve all elementary students and is 20 miles away. That distance is unacceptable for young elementary students. They, therefore, did not take a unification report before their voters.

3. Chelsea chose not to pursue a PK-12 operating district involving other districts and instead chose to pursue a unified PK-8 operating district together with Tunbridge. Those two districts are of approximately equal size and have a long history of cooperative educational ventures. Neither of those districts desired to eliminate their middle school.

The result of these group discussions was that the Committee supported the creation of the First Branch Unified School District, comprised of Tunbridge and Chelsea.

ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURE OPTIONS

At the same time as it was examining options within the WRVSU, the Strafford School District also thoroughly examined options that potentially existed outside its SU.

After a meeting with Secretary of Education Rebecca Holcombe, a series of meetings was held between the geographically connected towns of Norwich, Sharon, Strafford, and Thetford with the express intent of looking at the formation of a new “Alternative Structure” or supervisory union serving those towns. Unfortunately, Norwich withdrew from the idea when its protected status as part of an interstate district was clarified. The three remaining towns lacked the requisite number of students needed to make this arrangement plausible, and the committee was disbanded.

However, the idea continued in a different form, when the town of Tunbridge was included in the discussion with the remaining three towns. Several meetings of this new committee were held, but

when a financial analysis of creating a new SU was completed, the dramatic increase in cost led to the conclusion that this was, also, not a viable option.

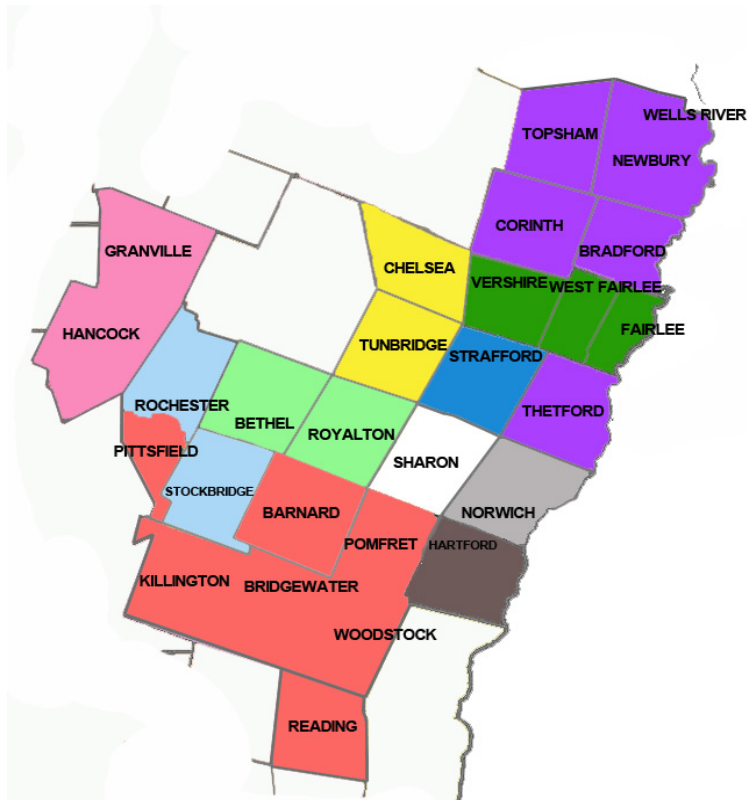
POTENTIAL OPTIONS

Act 46 states the following:

If it is not possible or practicable to develop a proposal that realigns some districts, where necessary, into an Education District in a manner that adheres to the protections of Sec. 4 of this act (protection for tuition-paying and operating districts) or that otherwise meets all aspects of Sec. 5(b), then the proposal may also include alternative governance structures as necessary such as a supervisory union with member districts . . .

Strafford is a school district that values its current model of operating a school for grades K-8, with designation to Thetford Academy thereafter. Act 46 is strong in its protection of that right. Strafford has devoted considerable time and energy to analyzing the options that would protect that structure and improve its ability to achieve the goals of Act 46. During these past two years, a number of mergers have occurred which clarify the status of possible partners for Strafford, leading to the conclusion that an “alternative structure” is necessary. Strafford is geographically isolated from any possible partners.

Below is a map of the region:



What it shows is the following:

✓ *The following districts have been created within the WRV/SU, none of which are viable for Strafford—*

- *White River Unified School District (Bethel-Royalton) PK-12 Operating*

This district has been approved and certified to be effective 7/1/18.

This district has a structure different from that of Strafford.

- *First Branch Unified School District (Chelsea-Tunbridge) PK-8 Operating, 9-12 Choice*

This district was approved by voters on 11/7/17, for implementation on 7/1/18, but a petition was submitted for a reconsideration vote. A follow-up vote occurred in January, and the vote was upheld.

Strafford has a structure that differs from that of the proposed new district and that of the current districts.

- *Granville-Hancock Unified School District Non-Operating*

This district has been approved and certified, to be effective 7/1/18.

This district has a structure different from that of Strafford.

- *Rochester-Stockbridge Unified District* *PK-6 Operating, 7-12 Choice*

This district was approved by voters on 11/28/17 and will come into being on 7/1/18.

This district has a structure different from that of Strafford.

- ✓ *Sharon* *PK-6 Operating Grades 9-12 Choice*

Sharon is also seeking status as an alternative structure. It has a structure different from that of Strafford.

- ✓ *Rivendell Interstate District* *PK-12 Operating*

Rivendell is an interstate district which covers the towns of Vershire, Fairlee, and Orford, New Hampshire. Not only does it operate schools for grades PK-12, but as an interstate district, it cannot be required to accept a new member. It is not an option for Strafford.

- ✓ *Thetford* *Operates PK-6 Grades 7-12 Designation to Thetford Academy*

Thetford has a unique structure that is deeply rooted in the history of education in that town. Thetford Academy is a quasi-public private academy, which is the designated secondary school for all Thetford residents. Strafford enjoys a close relationship with Thetford Academy, which is Strafford's designated high school, but Strafford and Thetford Elementary School have different operating structures.

- ✓ *Norwich* *Part of the Interstate SAU #70 PK-12 Operating*

Norwich is part of an interstate school district, involving Hanover, New Hampshire. As such, it is exempt from the state plan. Through its connection with Hanover and the Dresden School District, it operates PK-12 programs which is a different structure from that of Strafford. As such, this is not an option for Strafford.

- ✓ *Barnard and Pomfret* *Parts of the Windsor Central MUUD PK-12 Operating*

Barnard and Pomfret are both part of the Windsor Central Modified Unified Union School District. High School students in both districts attend Woodstock Union High School. Pomfret is a full member of the new unified school district. Barnard has not, thus far, joined its elementary school to the unified district. Because the structures of these districts do not match that of Strafford, there is no possibility of a merger for Strafford.

Strafford is thus geographically and structurally isolated from possible merger partners. An "Alternative Structure" with Strafford remaining an independent district within the WRVSU is the most logical plan going forward.

CONCLUSION

The Strafford School Board asks the Secretary of Education and the State Board of Education to approve an “Alternative Structure” that would allow Strafford to remain an existing district within the WRVSU in order to continue to operate the Newton School K-8 and to tuition grades 9-12 to our designated high school, The Thetford Academy.

We have a unique operating structure in the state that is protected by Section 4 of the Act, and it is the express desire of the townspeople to maintain this structure. Therefore, there are no merger partners available to us. Still, we explored every option available to us throughout the SU and beyond both in terms of possible merger or other administrative structure. The Newton School is a fine institution, one that does an excellent job of educating its students at a reasonable cost to its taxpayers. Finally, we currently and will continue to work with the towns within the White River Supervisory Union to meet the goals of Act 46.

APPENDIX 1: TOWN AND UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICTS TUITIONING ONE OR MORE GRADES

Vermont Agency of Education

Town and Unified Union School Districts Tuitioning One or more Grades

Updated 11-Feb-16

"X" denotes the grades for which a school district tuitions its students.

Green denotes school districts that do not operate a school nor are members of a union school and tuition grades K-12.

Yellow denotes unorganized towns and gores with students.

For grades K-6, the school board may determine the public school(s) to which a district pays tuition (16 V.S.A. § 821). For grades 7-12, the parents or guardians may choose a public or an approved independent high school (16 V.S.A. § 822) unless the district has designated another school as its public high school (16 V.S.A. § 827).

SU	LEA ID	School District	County	Notes	Elementary		Secondary		Designated High School ³	Grades Tuitioned
					K	1 to 6	7 to 8	9 to 12		
SU024	T003	Alburgh	Grand Isle					X		9 - 12
SU047	T006	Athens	Windham				X			7 - 8
SU020	T007	Bakersfield	Franklin					X		9 - 12
SU063	T008	Baltimore	Windsor	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU009	T010	Barnet	Caledonia					X		9 - 12
SU025	T014	Belvidere	Lamoille		X	X				K - 6
SU020	T018	Berkshire	Franklin					X		9 - 12
SU019	T021	Bloomfield	Essex	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU019	T035	Brunswick	Essex	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU008	T036	Burke	Caledonia					X		9 - 12
SU036	T048	Chittenden	Rutland					X		9 - 12
SU018	T051	Concord	Essex					X		9 - 12
SU031	T054	Coventry	Orleans					X		9 - 12
SU006	T056	Danby	Rutland				X	X		7 - 12
SU006	T059	Dorset	Bennington					X		9 - 12
SU046	T060	Dover	Windham				X	X		7 - 12
SU008	T064	East Haven	Essex	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU026	T067	Elmore	Lamoille	1	X	X	X	X		4 - 12
SU023	T072	Fairfield	Franklin					X		9 - 12
SU022	T077	Fletcher	Franklin				X	X		7 - 12
SU022	T079	Georgia	Franklin					X		9 - 12
SU036	T081	Goshen	Addison		X	X				K - 6
SU047	T082	Grafton	Windham				X			7 - 8
SU018	T083	Granby	Essex	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU024	T084	Grand Isle	Grand Isle					X		9 - 12
SU050	T085	Granville	Addison	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU018	T088	Guildhall	Essex				X	X		7 - 12
SU049	T090	Halifax	Windham					X		9 - 12
SU050	T091	Hancock	Addison	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU052	T094	Hartland	Windsor					X		9 - 12
SU004	T098	Hubbardton	Rutland					X		9 - 12
SU038	T101	Ira	Rutland	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU024	T103	Isle La Motte	Grand Isle				X	X		7 - 12
SU018	T108	Kirby	Caledonia	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU019	T111	Lemington	Essex	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU018	T116	Lunenburg	Essex					X		9 - 12
SU008	T117	Lyndon	Caledonia					X		9 - 12
SU018	T118	Maidstone	Essex	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU006	T119	Manchester	Bennington					X		9 - 12
SU046	T120	Marlboro	Windham					X		9 - 12
SU036	T122	Mendon	Rutland					X		9 - 12
SU038	T125	Middletown Springs	Rutland				X	X		7 - 12
SU020	T128	Montgomery	Franklin					X		9 - 12
SU031	T131	Morgan	Orleans		X	X				K - 6
SU006	T134	Mt Tabor	Rutland				X	X		7 - 12
SU008	T135	Newark	Caledonia					X		9 - 12
SU031	T140	Newport Town	Orleans				X			7 - 8
SU005	T141	North Bennington ID	Bennington		X	X				K - 6
SU024	T143	North Hero	Grand Isle				X	X		7 - 12
SU019	T144	Norton	Essex	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU029	T146	Orange	Orange					X		9 - 12
SU006	T150	Pawlet	Rutland	3			X	X	Granville NY Jr/Sr H. S.	7 - 12
SU009	T151	Peacham	Caledonia				X	X		7 - 12
SU051	T153	Pittsfield	Rutland	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU063	T156	Plymouth	Windsor	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU049	T164	Readsboro	Bennington					X		9 - 12
SU043	T170	Roxbury	Washington				X	X		7 - 12
SU006	T172	Rupert	Bennington	3			X	X	Salem NY Jr/Sr H. S.	7 - 12
SU037	T174	Rutland Town	Rutland					X		9 - 12
SU014	T178	St George	Chittenden	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU011	T179	St Johnsbur	Caledonia					X		9 - 12

Town and Unified School Districts Tuitioning One or More Grades

Town and Unified Union School Districts Tuitioning One or more Grades
 Updated 11-Feb-16

"X" denotes the grades for which a school district tuitions its students.

For grades K-6, the school board may determine the public school(s) to which a district pays tuition (16 V.S.A. § 821). For grades 7-12, the parents or guardians may choose a public or an approved independent high school (16 V.S.A. § 822) unless the district has designated another school as its public high school (16 V.S.A. § 827).

Green denotes school districts that do not operate a school nor are members of a union school and tuition grades K-12.

Yellow denotes unorganized towns and gores with students.

SU	LEA ID	School District	County	Notes	Elementary		Secondary		Designated High School ³	Grades Tuitioned	
					K	1 to 6	7 to 8	9 to 12			
SU060	T181	Sandgate	Bennington	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU049	T182	Searsburg	Bennington	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU030	T184	Sharon	Windsor				X	X		7 - 12	
SU021	T187	Sheldon	Franklin					X		9 - 12	
SU024	T192	South Hero	Grand Isle					X		9 - 12	
SU049	T194	Stamford	Bennington					X		9 - 12	
SU035	T195	Stannard	Caledonia				X	X		7 - 12	
SU050	T197	Stockbridge	Windsor				X	X		7 - 12	
SU030	T199	Stratford	Orange	3				X	Thetford Academy	9 - 12	
SU046	T200	Stratton	Windham	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU006	T202	Sunderland	Bennington				X	X		7 - 12	
SU008	T203	Sutton	Caledonia					X		9 - 12	
SU027	T205	Thetford	Orange	3			X	X	Thetford Academy	7 - 12	
SU033	T206	Tinmouth	Rutland				X	X		7 - 12	
SU030	T210	Tunbridge	Orange					X		9 - 12	
SU048	T214	Vernon	Windham	4			X	X		7 - 12	
SU018	T216	Victory	Essex	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU009	T218	Walden	Caledonia					X		9 - 12	
SU046	T221	Wardsboro	Windham				X	X		7 - 12	
SU029	T223	Washington	Orange					X		9 - 12	
SU018	T225	Waterford	Caledonia					X		9 - 12	
SU052	T227	Weathersfield	Windsor					X		9 - 12	
SU038	T228	Wells	Rutland	3			X	X	Granville NY Jr/Sr H.S.	7 - 12	
SU031	T231	Westfield	Orleans					X		7 - 8	
SU013	T232	Westford	Chittenden					X		9 - 12	
SU004	T233	West Haven	Rutland		X	X	X			K - 8	
SU047	T234	Westminster	Windham					X		7 - 8	
SU034	T235	Westmore	Orleans		X	X	X			K - 8	
SU052	T238	West Windsor	Windsor				X	X		7 - 12	
SU006	T248	Winhall	Bennington	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU035	T250	Wolcott	Lamoille				X	X		7 - 12	
SU012	T255	Buel's Gore	Chittenden	6	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU031	T258	Ferdinand	Essex	6	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU005	T259	Glastenbury	Bennington	6	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU049	T261	Somerset	Windham	6	X	X	X	X		K - 12	
SU027	U036	Waits River Valley USD #36	Orange	5				X		9 - 12	
SU008	U037	Millers Run USD #37	Caledonia	5				X		9 - 12	
SU006	U301	Mountain Towns R.E.D. USD #301	Bennington Windham Windsor	5				X		9 - 12	
				TOTAL	99		31	31	55	88	5
				Excluding Gores and Unorganized Towns	95		27	27	51	84	5

1. Elmore operates only grades 1-3.
2. No school operated. There are 20 organized town K-12 school districts that do not operate a school.
3. A designated high school has a formal arrangement with a school district to provide education for the district's students. A designated high school acts as a public high school for the school district.
4. Vernon has special dispensation to tuition 7-12 graders upon parental request (2006, No.182, sec. 28).
5. Waits River, USD #36 (Corinth & Topsham), Millers Run, USD #37 (Sheffield & Wheelock) and the Mountain Towns R.E.D., USD #301 (Landgrove, Londonderry, Peru, & Weston) are unified union districts, grades K-12.
6. Buel's Gore, Ferdinand, Glastenbury, and Somerset are unorganized towns or gores.

99 districts and unorganized towns and gores tuition one or more grades (Vernon is excluded)
 minus 4 unorganized towns and gores
 95 school districts tuition one or more grades
 minus 20 school districts that do not operate any grades and tuition all students
 75 school districts that both tuition some grades and operate a school or belong to a union district for other grades.

84 districts do not operate a high school, grades 9-12, and are not members of a union high school, grades 9-12.
 minus 5 districts must tuition high school students to the designated high school.
 79 school districts have some measure of choice for high school, grades 9 - 12.

White River Valley Supervisory Union

461 Waterman Road

Royalton, VT 05068

White River Valley Strategic Plan 2016-2021

Goal 1 Quality The WRVSU will offer a world class education to every student.

- Objective 1.1** Require excellence in instruction; support it through use of best practices, robust evaluation systems, and a dynamic professional development program.
- Action 1.1.1** Identify and index evidence based teaching practices at all schools in the SU.
 - Action 1.1.2** Provide instructional best practice support for teachers and administrators.
 - Action 1.1.3** Develop SU wide mentoring program.
 - Action 1.1.4** Emphasize instructional leadership and allocate resources to support effective instructional practices for all students.
 - Action 1.1.5** Develop a SU wide teacher recruitment process.
 - Action 1.1.6** Create and implement teacher and administrator professional development and retention program to ensure that all Goals and Objectives of the Strategic Plan are met.
 - Action 1.1.7** Develop a culture of regular teacher collaboration.
- Objective 1.2** Use rigorous and evidence based curricula throughout the SU.
- Action 1.2.1** Develop SU and school based curriculum teams to research, analyze and develop, relevant, rigorous, and evidence based curriculum.
 - Action 1.2.2** Provide resources and technical support for curriculum implementation.
 - Action 1.2.3** Align and map curricula with State and National standards across all grade levels.
 - Action 1.2.4** Implement Professional Learning Communities.
- Objective 1.3** Offer relevant, engaging, collaborative, hands on, and real world learning experiences to every student.
- Action 1.3.1** Provide experiential learning opportunities for all students, across the curriculum.
 - Action 1.3.2** Develop a structure for planning, budgeting, and evaluating learning experiences.
- Objective 1.4** Embed technology in every aspect of students' school experience to broaden and

deepen learning.

Action 1.4.1 Institute an SU level Digital Learning Committee

Action 1.4.2 Develop and implement a Digital Learning Plan to support instruction.

Objective 1.5 Develop an evidence based multi-tiered system that will support positive behavior at every school in the WRVSU.

Action 1.5.1 Provide social, emotional, and behavior supports and resources across all grade levels.

Action 1.5.2 Institute a SU wide behavioral assessment team.

Action 1.5.3 Identify specific behavior data points to track across schools.

Action 1.5.4 Identify and implement best practices and environment to support students with a variety of behavioral needs.

Objective 1.6 Develop and use standardized data points to track, monitor improvement of school performance, and student outcomes across a variety of domains.

Action 1.6.1 Develop efficiencies in utilizing student information systems.

Action 1.6.2 Implement SU Improvement Team to monitor strategic plan progress.

Action 1.6.3 Develop and implement school based school improvement teams.

Action 1.6.4 Identify assessment practices that support PLP's, PBGR, and EQS.

Action 1.6.5 Research quality data best practices and develop SU wide data points which can be measured each year to monitor progress over time.

Goal 2 Opportunity The White River Valley Supervisory Union will offer students at every grade level a broad array of challenging, engaging learning experiences, both in the classroom and after school.

Objective 2.1 Develop Personal Learning Plans with every student and family to assure that each child can achieve high levels of learning, in different learning modalities and while aligned with his or her interests.

Action 2.1.1 Structure systems to ensure access to all aspects of PLPs.

Action 2.1.2 Develop individual mechanisms to ensure access to all aspects of PLP

Action 2.1.3 Develop classrooms and practical environmental curricula.

Action 2.1.4 Develop and implement Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements.

Action 2.1.5 Provide access to more grade level classmates, courses, visual and performing arts, athletics, internships, co-curricular activities, career preparation, advanced coursework, early college experiences, and after school and summer school opportunities.

Action 2.1.6 Develop SU wide college visitation program for 100% of student population, by the end of tenth grade.

Action 2.1.7 Eliminate the constraints of a 4 year graduation timeline.

Objective 2.2 Structure and support elementary schools to ensure that all students' performance targets are met.

- Action 2.2.1** Emphasize focused instruction on literacy and numeracy to ensure all students read and calculate at grade level by the end of third grade.
- Action 2.2.2** Develop robust Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) program to grow caring communities and support the whole child and positive student dispositions.
- Action 2.2.3** Provide early intervention training in MTSS for all PK6 teachers and staff.

Objective 2.3 Redesign middle school to create a developmentally appropriate learning environment that challenges and nurtures students while affording all learners significant opportunities to take risks and explore individual interests.

- Action 2.3.1** Research Best Practices Advantages of Grouping Adolescent Learners 789 (expand level options until the decision is made.)
- Action 2.3.2** Investigate delivery models and staffing levels that support learning at the MS level.
- Action 2.3.3** Ensure broader curriculum access tailored to early adolescence without the maturity requirements for social/emotional transition with older adolescents.
- Action 2.3.4** Expand options for student leadership inside and outside the classroom
- Action 2.3.5** Reduce the current failure rates for 9th graders.

Objective 2.4 Expand course offerings and extracurricular options at the high school level so that all students are prepared for college, career, and community engagement.

- Action 2.4.1** Design and develop systems to include students' and parents' voices in the improvement of programs, course offerings, independent study, community based learning opportunities and co-curricular possibilities.
- Action 2.4.2** Implement and align high school schedules that maximize students' opportunity to participate in a broad range of educational programming.
- Action 2.4.3** Create Academic Advisory Council (including school counselors, administration, teachers, parents, students, and community members) to identify needs and direction in implementing PLP's, PBGR's and EQS.
- Action 2.4.4** Catalogue, organize and list all current course offerings.
- Action 2.4.5** Partner with the Vermont State College System to offer college courses within our buildings.
- Action 2.4.6** Pilot academic support models to replace study halls.
- Action 2.4.7** Hire teachers with advanced degrees to teach dual enrollment classes and alternative experiential school programs.

Objective 2.5 Create an environment where students, families, and community members are encouraged to volunteer, participate in decision making groups, and serve in leadership roles within the school.

- Action 2.5.1** Research and identify evidence based family/community engagement strategies.

- Action 2.5.2** Increase family involvement and volunteerism by establishing a SU wide committee or parent liaison to advise and oversee the development and implementation these strategies.
- Action 2.5.3** Provide materials and trainings for parents to work with their children to improve academic achievement.
- Action 2.5.4** Provide regular and effective dissemination of information about the benefits of parent involvement in child's education.

Goal 3 Equity Students throughout the White River Valley Supervisory Union will receive and education that is substantially equal within and between each school and is on par with excellent schools in Vermont and across the country.

Objective 3.1 Employ multi-tiered systems of support in every classroom to ensure growth and learning for all students.

- Action 3.1.1** Implement recommendations of the AOE MTSS consultants.
- Action 3.1.2** Use assessment data to determine student progress and target interventions for improvement.
- Action 3.1.3** Facilitate Whole Child wraparound services so that all students come to school ready to learn.

Objective 3.2 Offer all students opportunities for differentiation and enrichment at every grade level.

- Action 3.2.1** SU schools will communicate available enrichment offerings between and across schools as well as additional opportunities regionally and statewide.
- Action 3.2.2** Develop an inventory of available SU academic and co-curricular activities to increase and improve enrichment opportunities for all students.
- Action 3.2.3** Develop an inventory of faculty enrichment knowledge and skillsets.
- Action 3.2.4** Develop and design an SU wide enrichment exhibition for elementary (K4), middle (58), and high school levels (912).
- Action 3.2.5** Provide educational and informational opportunities for parents regarding differentiation and enrichment opportunities for all students.

Objective 3.3 Address the "digital divide" within and between schools through a comprehensive, synchronized digital learning plan consonant with pedagogical objectives and community communication requirements.

- Action 3.3.1** Asses teachers' current technology integration competencies across the SU.
- Action 3.3.2** Support teachers to consistently advance effective instructional integration of technologies.
- Action 3.3.3** Employ technologies that effectively increase student engagement and promote problem solving, critical thinking and research skills.
- Action 3.3.4** Ensure all SU schools have equitable IT infrastructure to effectively facilitate learning.
- Action 3.3.5** Identify and implement technologies that enhance communication, learning opportunities, and efficiencies between and across SU schools.

Objective 3.4 Provide high quality afterschool and summer programming.

Action 3.4.1 Align afterschool/summer program goals with SU and school goals.

Action 3.4.2 Develop tools and provide professional development of staff to identify student needs, promote safety, and increase student engagement.

Action 3.4.3 Develop communication protocols and collaboration between afterschool/summer staff and Special Education.

Action 3.4.4 Establish an advisory committee composed of representative communities and partners.

Action 3.4.5 Develop and implement strategies to ensure quality and sustainability in Site Coordinator positions.

Objective 3.5 Cultivate partnerships with parents, business and community organizations to provide a sustainable system of support and care for each student.

Action 3.5.1 Create a multi stakeholder Advisory Board from Industry, Business and Post Secondary Institutions.

Action 3.5.2 Collaborate across high schools to ensure that all students have access to high quality Work based learning opportunities.

Action 3.5.3 Engage and partner with area businesses to support work based and personalized learning plan development.

Goal 4 Efficiency White River Valley Supervisory Union resources will be allocated responsibly and sustainably to optimize student benefit.

Objective 4.1 Realign governance structures and educational delivery systems to ensure that boards and administration devote the majority of their time focusing on and promoting student learning.

Action 4.1.1 Balance budget percentages spent on instruction per district so that the percentage is consistent across the SU.

Action 4.1.2 Develop a method of routinely reporting school quality metrics to all district boards.

Action 4.1.3 Create board meeting structures which focus agendas on supporting teaching and learning for the majority of their meetings each month.

Action 4.1.4 Add nonvoting student representatives to all K12 boards

Action 4.1.5 Ensure that there are student presentations and teacher presentations on every board agenda.

Objective 4.2 Commit to meet the objectives and goals of Act 46 and adopt Act 46compliant school structures, including alternative structures, to achieve greater operational efficiencies within and between districts.

Action 4.2.1 Review demographic data as part of the Act 46 study committee process.

Action 4.2.2 Conduct financial analyses to inform the Act 46 study committee process.

Action 4.2.3 Study the range of educational structural options to fulfill WRVSU Mission and Vision.

Objective 4.3 Consolidate contracts and services wherever possible to allow resources to be directed toward students.

Action 4.3.1 Align all SU staff contracts with unified language, develop a plan for consolidated salary schedules, and offer responsible benefits packages that are competitive.

Action 4.3.2 Create process to solicit input from everyone within the educational community to find efficiencies.

Action 4.3.3 Direct staff to use the competitive bid process to hold down cost.

Action 4.3.4 Implement bulk buying and consolidate service contracts wherever feasible.

Objective 4.4 Optimize data gathering and designing efficient processes and systems to monitor and report performance and accountability.

Action 4.4.1 Use the local and state assessment data to look for trends and specific target interventions for students.

Action 4.4.2 Ensure Renaissance Star 360 data is collected at least three times per year, supported by a common calendar, to inform resource allocation.

Action 4.4.3 Create a culture of using research to inform our decisions and improve academic achievement for all students.

Action 4.4.4 Develop efficient communication plan to share school effectiveness and opportunity information with all stakeholders.

APPENDIX 3: WRVSU RESTORATIVE PROGRAM

The Restorative Classroom

The Restorative Classroom is a therapeutic program operated by the White River Valley Supervisory Union that provides children who struggle with emotional and behavioral difficulties with the necessary supports to become available for learning. The primary goal of The Restorative Classroom is to address social, emotional, and behavioral concerns. The program is grounded on the premise that for some children, emotional difficulties are the chief obstacle for their learning, and that these children require different approaches than other children do. It is the aim of the program to bolster students' self-esteem, as well as emotional and behavioral regulation, to enable them to return to participate in a regular classroom setting

Program Goals:

The Restorative Classroom addresses students' emotional needs by inviting children to recognize:

- their behaviors have meaning for themselves and others
- behaviors have both negative and positive consequences
- they are responsible for their actions

These goals will be met using a combination of relational approaches, de-escalation techniques, and specifically tailored interventions aimed at increasing personal responsibility and understanding of the importance of school community and citizenship. The overall goal of The Restorative Classroom is to teach students the skills necessary to navigate a typical classroom setting.

Treatment Approach:

The Restorative Classroom relies on three interwoven treatment approaches: group process, self-esteem development, and de-escalation. The following outline each of the three components. The foundation of The Restorative Classroom is group therapy. Students will be provided open-ended process group opportunities each day. Secondly, staff members will provide students with the relational components required for the development and maintenance of self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as a psychological core which enables children to withstand frustration and regulate their emotions and behaviors. Please see, *Healing the Self: A Relational Approach to Increasing Self-Esteem and Reducing Anger* for an outline of The Restorative Classroom's approach to building

self-esteem. Third, The Restorative Classroom emphasizes de-escalation when students become too emotionally charged for learning.

We use a team approach. Students complete work, eat meals, engage in recess and group activities with Restorative Classroom peers and staff. Students are highly supervised and within staff's line of sight at all times except at individual bathroom breaks. Due to the level of supervision and the team building activities, students in the program do not socialize with peers in other classes.

Location and Staffing:

The Restorative Classroom Program is located at the South Royalton School. The classroom is newly renovated with a private entrance. It is equipped with: full wall of windows, fully functional kitchen (cabinets, stove, oven, refrigerator, sink, dish washer), two time-out rooms with large windows, private office, and wireless/smart board technology.

The classroom is staffed full time with:

- A Special Educator with specialty in Behavioral Issues
- A master-level Social Worker/Psychotherapist
- A Classroom Counselor
- A para-educator with training in Behavioral Issues.

A Licensed Psychologist provides continual onsite consultation and ongoing program development and training.

Students:

The program is designed for up to seven students, whose primary difficulties are emotional regulation. To be considered for enrollment students must have not responded to less intensive behavioral approaches, including but limited to:

- Counseling
- Para-professional support
- General Classroom based behavioral interventions.

All placement decisions are made through a 504 or IEP team process. Parents are welcome and important members of these teams. A Restorative Classroom clinical staff member observes the student in his or her classroom prior to the 504/IEP meeting in order to consider whether a Restorative Classroom placement would benefit the student. Those findings are reported to the Team for consideration, along with all academic and behavioral data and a psychological evaluation, in making the placement decision.

Daily Schedule:

7:30 - 8:30: Staff Meeting

8:30 Student Arrival

8:30 - 11:30: Academics

11:30 - 12:30: Recess/Lunch/story time and/or art

12:30 - 2:00 Group Time/Team Building

2:15 Goodbyes

2:30: Student Dismissal

2:30 - 3:30 Staff Meeting

Progress Monitoring/Evaluation:

The Restorative Classroom team meetings track behavioral and academic progress. We use STAR 360 to assess academic progress and clinical notes for recording social/emotional progress. Parents are called weekly with progress reports, and progress meetings are held when requested by parents or other team member(s).

At least annually, each child's 504/IEP team considers and makes decisions regarding the child's readiness for integration back to the general education environment (or other placement options), based upon the evaluative data described above. When evaluative materials (progress reports and data) show that a student may be ready to re-integrate into the general education environment before the next annual meeting, the team will meet to review progress reports and data to decide whether the student is ready to return to a general classroom placement. Parents and/or staff may request such a meeting.

APPENDIX 4: STRAFFORD ACT 46 FORUM MINUTES

Act 46 Forum

March 29, 2016 @ Barrett Hall

MINUTES

In Attendance: Erik Goodling, Erik Reimanis, Jeff Solsaa, Hilary Linehan, Glenn Wylie, Principal: Greg Bagnato, Superintendent: Bruce Labs, Representatives: Jim Masland, Tim Briglin,

Community Members: Susan Hodges, Brent Cadwell, June Solsaa, Bob Bushway, Erin Masteller, Ross Gortner, Alan Donohue, Amy Donohue, Victoria Traudt, Curt Albee, Gretchen Graner, Jessica Tidman, Tori Lloyd, Randi Merchand, Sue Coburn, Melvin Coburn, Allan Wylie, Kate Linehan, Siobhan Lopez, Laura Lewis, Sean Lewis, Todd Binzen, Janet Cavanagh, Bob Bauer, Sylvia Smith, Sperry Wilson, Rebecca Seibel, Heather Waterbury, Denise Cote, Sarah North, Nicole Kendall, Ellen Bagnato, Keith Lewandoski, Kiersten Harlow, Christina Jamieson, Roz Finn, Kate Cassidy, Jennifer Brown, Emily Girdwood, Craig Allen, Stephen Marx, Jason Loomis, Eric Becker, Brooke Wilkinson, Shannon Varley, Margaret Albee, John Freitag, Barrie North, Andrew Lane, Jennifer Mullins, Brett Tofel, Hanchett, Beverly Bilsky, Eric Walker, John Echeverria, Art Hanchett, Rebecca Daniels, John Daniels, Elizabeth Ruml, Kevin Petrone, Rebecca Emery, Beth Preston, Lauren Phelps, Mary Thompson, Tom Essex, Pat Kelly, Laura Ogden, Kate Reimanis, Patricia Younce, Greg Pulaski, Elysabeth Ray, Kathy Robinson, Genevieve Gibson, Roberta Martin, Ann Kynor, Lisa Durstin, Leslie Berger, Kay Plunkett, Kevin Plunkett, Jane Prescott, Lauri Berkenkamp, Nellie Pennington, Kate Owen, Kate Root, Calvin Benjamin, Paul Perkins, Jim Schley, Therese Linehan, Bob Bauer, Tracy Onega, Gretchen Hewes, Dani Sweet, Jolin Eastman, Carl Yirka, Maggie Hooker, Christine Bailey-Kellogg, Doc Bagley, Heather Bagley, Chip Lewis, Linka Lewis, Christine Bartlett, Don Bartlett, Stuart Saunders Smith, Amanda Higgins, Shane Race, R. Byron Breese, Martha Walke, Joey Hawkins, Dwight Richeimer, Mike Scanlan, Becky Proulx (recording secretary), Charlie Buttrey (Thetford), Stephen Taylor (guest),

A count of the assembly indicated that there were 124 people present.

Hilary called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and gave an overview of the evening.

Hilary presented an overview of the challenges facing Vermont's schools that play into Act 46. (Presentation available at <http://newton.owsu.org/strafford-school-board/>) She reviewed the specific goals of Act 46: equity, to meet or exceed Education Quality Standards, maximize operational efficiencies, and promote transparency and accountability. Hilary then reviewed some common Act 46 terminology. The preferred structure is one district that governs at least 900 students. It would include one of the following structures: operates all grades preK-12 OR operates preK-8 and tuitions 9-12, OR operates preK-6 and tuitions 7-12 OR tuition preK-12. Disincentives include the loss of small schools grants, and the State placing a town that does nothing into a supervisory union (SU) that it (the State) chooses.

The alternative governance structure would be to create a new SU that serves at least 1,100 students. The new SU must serve preK-12 collectively, maximize efficiencies, and have the smallest number of districts practicable. This structure needs to be approved just like any other merger.

Strafford is looking at two different study committees. Strafford needs to decide if it wants to join the WRVSU study committee to look at a preK-6 district with 7-12 choice. The Board has also been attending a study committee with Sharon, Norwich (no longer participating), Thetford, and Strafford. Board members have been attending meetings with Rivendell, not as an official member of a study committee, just as an attendee. The task of the study committee is to create articles of agreement and all the SU business. The complete plan formulated by the study committee then needs to be approved.

Strafford currently needs to make a decision whether they want to enter the WRVSU study committee by April 25. Charlotte Faccio asked about the possibility of an exemption that was mentioned at a previous School Board meeting. The Board has not yet written a letter regarding exemption. They wanted to get public input before inquiring.

Hilary overviewed the difference between designation and choice. Currently Strafford designates Thetford Academy and uses a waiver process for students who wish to attend another high school.

Choice allows a student to attend a public or approved independent school of their choice. Full tuition is paid. Susan Hodges asked what if a student is not accepted at any school. Hilary said that that would be the responsibility of the parents. Discussion about the cost of tuition for the choice option. The Board will post the current information about tuition to the list serv. Hilary outlined some of the pros and cons of designation and choice.

Designation Pros: Collaboration between Newton and the designated school, all students accepted.
Cons: Parents are responsible for additional tuition, Paperwork

Choice Pros: Lots of options, families can complete enrollment without the school board
Cons: No collaboration, no obligation to accept students, budget of high school not determined by Strafford

Hilary reviewed Act 46 Definitions:

Red- Regional Education District – 4 or more districts who operate in the same fashion

Side by side- 2 or more districts merge with another district of which one district operates a preK-12 district

The purpose of the forum is to look at what is important to the town. Ross Gortner asked about designation. Yes, it is possible to designate 3 schools. Christine Bailey Kellogg asked if we would need to decide which schools would be designated with other towns in the district. Yes, that would be a decision of the study committee. Charlotte Faccio asked about assistance for students and their families who receive special education services. Bruce responded that at the SU level there is help for parents when finding a secondary school. Rebecca Seibel asked if districts in the

area have a problem enrolling students who use special education services. Hilary responded that not to her knowledge unless it was a severe special education case.

Erik Goodling outlined the 6 options (a handout outlining these options was distributed and is available here <http://newton.owsu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Act-46-Options-Presentation-whole-final.pdf>) : Options 2-6 involve mergers

1. Alternative Structure: Keep everything: preK-8, designation with TA, Strafford, Thetford, Sharon, Tunbridge, all 4 towns would keep their current structure. This not eligible for tax incentives, possibly small school grants would be maintained (though we have heard that small schools grants may be phased out sometime in the next 5 years anyway). The statute recommends 1,100 students, currently in the mix are 1,050 students. The tax implications would be in starting a new SU. Erik G said that they are still calculating the costs of this model. He theorized that costs might go up but not much.
2. Side by side merger Strafford and Tunbridge within WRVSU: keep preK-8 and adopt choice, best board representation of the merger options, lose TA designation, no local board or budget (both the board and the budget would be merged with Tunbridge).
3. Side by side merger Strafford and Thetford within WRVSU: preK-6 with designation, 7-12 would attend TA, within WRVSU, with waiver, lose 7-8 program, may restrict waiver process, no local board or budget (both the board and the budget would be merged with Thetford).
4. Side by side merger Strafford, Thetford within Blue Mountain SU: preK-6 with designation, 7-12 would attend TA, with waiver, better percentage at the board level than option 3.
5. RED merger Sharon, Strafford, Tunbridge, Thetford: preK-6, choice 7-12, possible economies of scale in the preK-6 realm, geographically large district
6. Side by side Sharon, Stockbridge, Strafford, Tunbridge within WRVSU: preK-6, choice for middle and high school, lose TA designation and our 7-8 program.

A question was asked about how this affects attendance at Technical Schools. Students attend the tech school that is affiliated with the high school they attend unless the school does not offer the program they want.

A question was asked about what would happen if we did nothing. Strafford placement would be in the hands of the state: the State would assign Strafford to a new district.

John Frietag thanked the School Board and the administration for the time they have dedicated to Act 46. He impressed upon those in attendance the importance of every child being looked after at Newton. He stated that we have an exceptional school and dedicated people willing to serve on the School Board. He is pleased that the School Board has found an option that will help Strafford maintain what is great (that is, the Alternative Structure [option 1 above]).

Lys Ray asked what the current state of the Alternative structure is. Erik G said that we have been given support from the head of the House Education committee, verbal agreement from the Secretary of Education, and a letter from Brad James.

Discussion about the alternative structure. Erik G clarified that any structure would need to be approved by the required districts of the study committee.

Paul Perkins asked if the Alternative structure was the only plan that would maintain the tuition options for Hanover. Erik G said that yes that would be true.

Allan Wylie asked if the Board was considering making Newton an independent school. Erik G said that the Board is not considering this. There are some indications that this would be illegal.

Lys Ray asked the group in attendance to keep in mind that the costs of choice are not yet clear. Erik G said that at the middle school tuitioning would be more expensive. After having done the calculations, it is clear that all the middle schools are more expensive than the cost per student at Newton. The costs at the HS level are not determined. Susan Hodges spoke to the increased time middle school students would need to spend on buses. She recommended that we keep 7-8 in town. Byron Breese spoke about the quality of education that currently exists in Strafford, pointing out that it was of the highest standard. Sarah North spoke for the parents who do see problems in the 7-8 program. She believes that students need more opportunity and a bigger cohort. Kate Reimanis stated that she has faith that Greg and consistency of leadership that he brings will help to improve the middle school. Jim Schley said that only the Alternative Structure involves the community in governance. Greg Bagnato recognized the large and diverse crowd of parents and community members. He is hopeful that people will find an option that they can stand behind and let a board member know. Art Hanchett spoke about the history of school consolidation that Strafford had experienced in the past – from one room school houses to the present Newton School. Andy Behrens clarified that option 1 was the only one that maintained the school board. Betsy Ruml asked if any of the options would significantly reduce the costs. Jessica Tidman spoke about the uniqueness of the town and the possibilities that exist for families. She believes that having to designate might create a waiver process that is not as malleable as the current system. She believes that if the choice option is taken away many families may not choose to move to Strafford. Erik G, speaking as a community member, said that option 1 was the only one that allows for many different choices.

Rebecca Seibel asked about the tax incentives. Erik G said that the tax incentives would not go to people who have an income sensitive property tax bill.

Charlotte Faccio asked if the Board was all in support of option 1. Erik R, Glenn, and Jeff Solsaa, speaking as community members, were in favor of option 1. John Echeverria said that if so many people in state government believe that option 1 is a good idea then shouldn't it also be open to fiscal incentives.

Tori Lloyd asked about local representation. Each operating district receives 3 seats and non-operating districts 1 seat. Erik G outlined all the options, the sizes of the respective boards, and Strafford's representation on each. Representation is based on population.

Andrew Lane spoke about option 1. Charlie Buttrey spoke to the fact that option 1 was the most popular in Thetford. Second was a merger with Strafford. Erik G asked if the liberal waiver process would be possible. Charlie said that it would all be part of negotiations. Paul Perkins clarified that Thetford would have no say over the waiver policy in option 1.

Hilary explained the straw poll. There is also a survey online that the Board would like community members to take before April 8. It is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/strafford>. The

Board's preference is that the survey be taken electronically, if possible. Paper versions will need to be hand entered. The meeting concluded with attendees filling out and submitting their straw poll paperwork.

APPENDIX 5: STRAFFORD TOWN FORUM SURVEY RESULTS

Strafford School District Act 46 Survey

Friday, April 15, 2016

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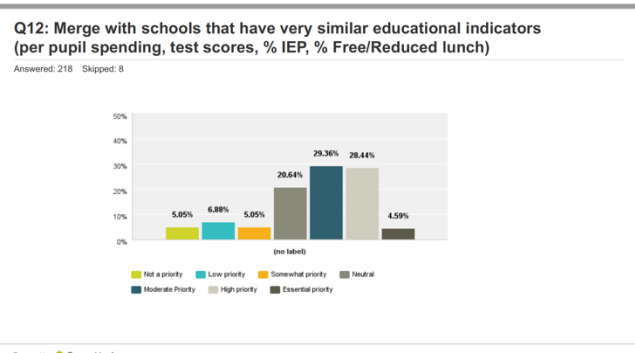
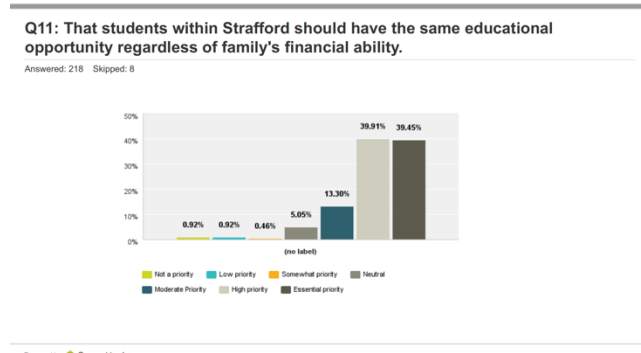
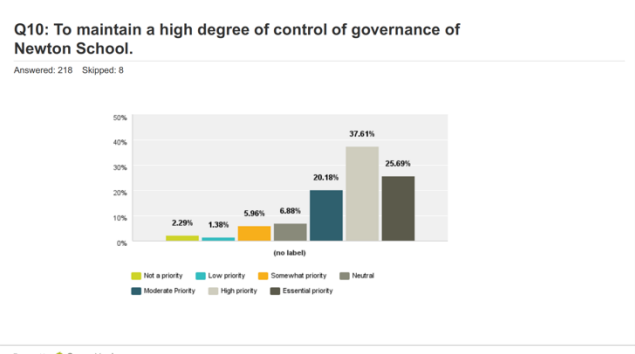
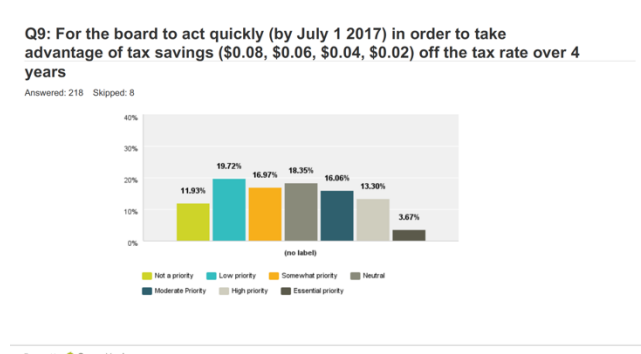
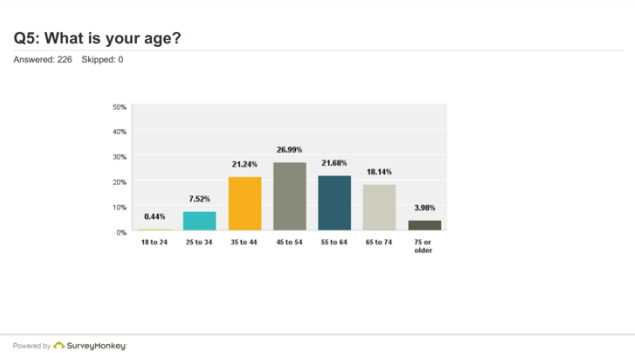
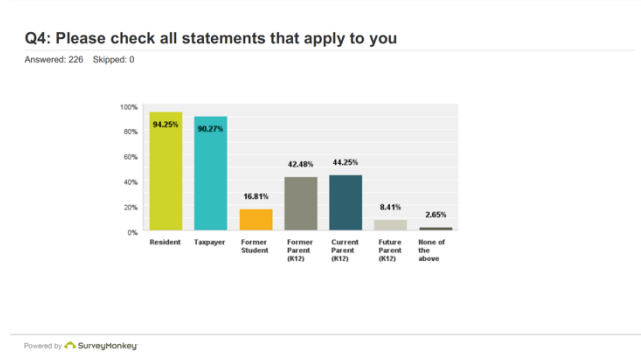
226

Total Responses

Date Created: Sunday, March 27, 2016

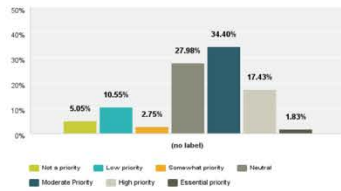
Complete Responses: 201

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Q13: Merge with towns that have very similar demographics (income, level of education, school spending, size).

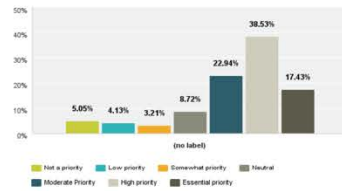
Answered: 218 Skipped: 8



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Q14: Minimize (<30-45 minutes) travel time students spend to go to a designated school.

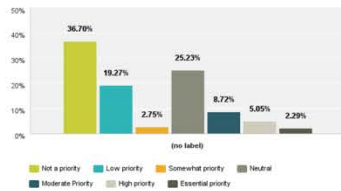
Answered: 218 Skipped: 8



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Q15: For the board to do nothing about Act 46, to keep everything the same as it is now, regardless of consequences

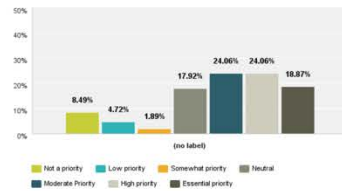
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Q16: We should continue to designate Thetford Academy for high school using our current waiver process

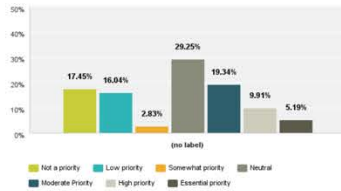
Answered: 212 Skipped: 14



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Q17: We should continue to designate Thetford Academy for high school using a different and/or normal waiver process

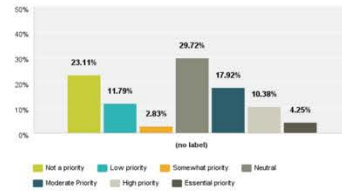
Answered: 212 Skipped: 14



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Q18: We should designate up to three high schools (please list the schools in the comment box below)

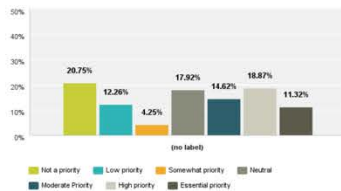
Answered: 212 Skipped: 14



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Q19: We should have full choice for high school

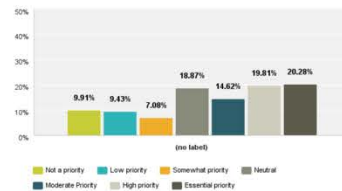
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Q20: We should continue to operate our 7th and 8th grade middle school at The Newton School

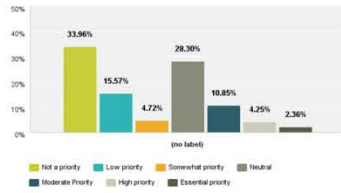
Answered: 212 Skipped: 14



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Q21: We should designate Thetford Academy for middle school

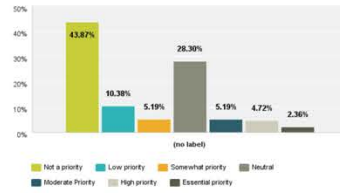
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Q22: We should designate up to three middle schools (please list the schools in the comment box below)

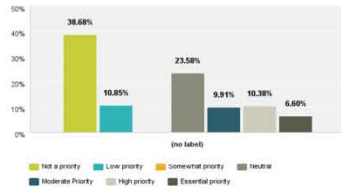
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Powered by SurveyMonkey

Q23: We should have full choice for middle school

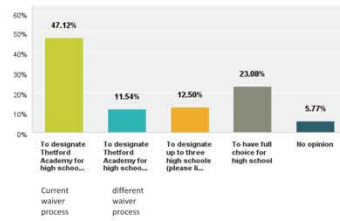
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Q24: Regarding high school grades (9th-12th), I would prefer

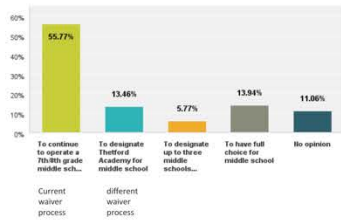
Answered: 208 Skipped: 18



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Q25: Regarding middle school grades (7th/8th), I would prefer

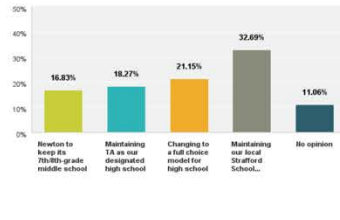
Answered: 208 Skipped: 18



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Q26: The most important educational aspect of this decision for me, even at the cost of potentially losing the others, is:

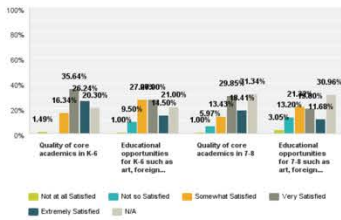
Answered: 208 Skipped: 18



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Q27: How satisfied are you with the aspects of the Newton School described below

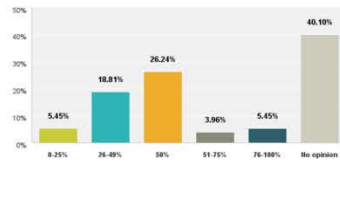
Answered: 202 Skipped: 24



Powered by SurveyMonkey

Q28: If we were to merge with other school board(s), what percentage of "seats" on the new board do you think Strafford town should have?

Answered: 202 Skipped: 24



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