

TESTIMONY ON EDUCATION STRUCTURE

February 17, 2015

Steve Dale, Executive Director
Vermont School Boards Association

One of the key areas being considered this session is the long term equity, quality, and cost of education in Vermont. We have been closely connected to the House bill which has a particular approach to this. We have shared with you the VSA/VSBA proposed approach which seeks to achieve a similar objective, but approaches it somewhat differently.

There is agreement that we need to be able to operate with somewhat great scale and a better ability to manage resources. The House bill, at this time, focuses on specific structures. We have proposed that the focus be on creating "PreK-12 Education Systems" which are accountable for assuring quality, equal education for all students in a region at a reasonable cost. Those entities would be somewhat larger in scale than many current districts. The process of designing and approving these new entities would be focused on their ability to achieve agreed upon outcomes whether through supervisory districts with single boards or through multi-board structures.

As the legislature narrows in on an approach to creating greater size and scope, it is critical that key committees understand the breadth and depth of current realities. The goal of our time today is to help you better understand what it means that "one size can't fit all". I will start by sharing with you some basic information about our current Supervisory Unions. Because of our current complexity, there are relatively few districts that could simply be deemed as Supervisory Districts with one board unless it is your desire to take on mandated changes in choice. Some districts may choose to change choice patterns, but this list is shared to simply demonstrate the challenges. **SHARE LIST.**

A week or so ago, you heard presentations from South Burlington, Chittenden East, Montpelier, and Washington Central. They are excellent school systems, but all are less complex than many places in Vermont. This session is designed to help you understand some of those complexities. The folks I have with me are from: Orange-Windsor/Windsor Northwest, Orange East, Addison Central, and Franklin Central. Three of them have choice and other logistical complexities. One has an SU that is aligned with a Union High School which in theory should make coming together easier. All of their stories will help you have a broader understanding of what needs to be addressed.

Distribute Maps.

I have asked them to respond to the following questions:

1. Describe your SU and its complexities. How many districts? What grades do each cover? What towns have choice?
2. What challenges have you experienced in the past in trying to operate cooperatively or merge in some way? Have you previously discussed coming together in some way? What have been the challenges to progress?
3. As you look to the future, what challenges are there addressing equity, quality, and cost across the full supervisory union?
4. From your personal perspective, what ideas that are being discussed in the legislature might be helpful or pose barriers to making progress on coming together to create somewhat greater scale and greater flexibility to manage costs?
5. How might you react to the charge to create an "Integrated PreK-12 System"? How might that be approached?

Supervisory Districts/Supervisory Unions in Vermont

Supervisory Districts

Blue Mountain
Burlington
Colchester
Essex Town²
Hartford
Milton
Montpelier
Rutland
St. Johnsbury
South Burlington
Springfield
Winooski

Interstate

Rivendell
Dresden

Supervisory Unions formed solely around union high schools

Addison Central
Addison Northeast
Addison Northwest
Addison Rutland
Barre
Chittenden East³
Chittenden South
Lamoille North
Orange Southwest
Orleans Central
Washington Central
Washington West

Supervisory Union with 2 K-12 Districts

Washington Northeast

Supervisory Unions with Choice Complexities

Battenkill
Bennington-Rutland¹
Caledonia Central
Caledonia North
Chittenden Central
Essex-Caledonia
Essex North
Franklin Central
Franklin Northeast
Franklin Northwest
Franklin West
Grand Isle⁴
Lamoille South
North Country SU
Orange East
Orange North
Orange Windsor/Windsor NW
Orleans Southwest
Rutland Central
Rutland Northeast
Rutland South
Rutland Southwest
Southwest Vermont
Two Rivers
Washington South
Windham Northeast
Windham Southeast
Windham Southwest
Windsor Southeast
Windsor Central

¹ Some K-6, K-8, All HS choice

² PreK-8

³ Becomes modified union on 7/1/15

⁴ Some K-6, some K-8 choice in HS

Town and Unified Union School Districts Tuitioning One or more Grades
 Updated 18-Sep-13

"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
SU031	T054	Coventry	Orleans					X		9 - 12
SU006	T056	Danby	Rutland					X		7 - 12
SU006	T059	Dorset	Bennington					X		9 - 12
SU046	T060	Dover	Windham					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		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		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		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		7 - 12
SU020	T128	Montgomery	Franklin					X		9 - 12
SU031	T131	Morgan	Orleans		X	X				K - 6
SU006	T134	Mt Tabor	Rutland					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		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		7 - 12
SU009	T151	Peacham	Caledonia					X		7 - 12
SU050	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		7 - 12
SU006	T172	Rupert	Bennington	3				X		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 Johnsbury	Caledonia					X		9 - 12

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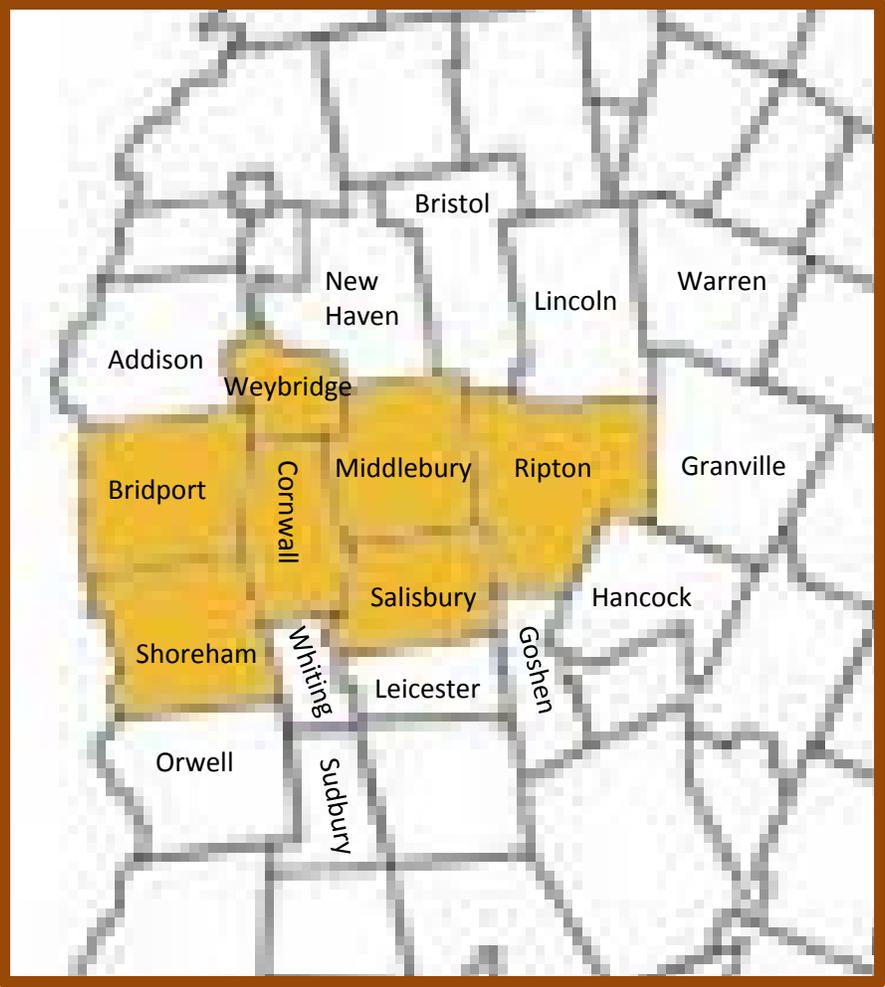
SU	LEA ID	School District	County	Notes	Elementary		Secondary		Designated High School ³	Grades Tuitioned
					K	1 to 6	7 to 8	9 to 12		
SU060	T181	Sandgate	Bennington	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU049	T182	Searsburg	Bennington	2	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU030	T184	Sharon	Windsor				X	X		7 - 12
SU021	T187	Sheldon	Franklin					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	Strafford	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
SU038	T206	Tinmouth	Rutland				X	X		7 - 12
SU030	T210	Tunbridge	Orange					X		9 - 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	5	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU031	T258	Ferdinand	Essex	5	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU005	T259	Glastenbury	Bennington	5	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU049	T261	Somerset	Windham	5	X	X	X	X		K - 12
SU027	U036	Waits River Valley USD #36	Orange	4				X		9 - 12
SU008	U037	Millers Run USD #37	Caledonia	4				X		9 - 12
SU006	U301	Mountain Towns R.E.D. USD #301	Bennington Windham Windsor	4				X		9 - 12
TOTAL				97	31	31	54	86		5
Excluding Gores and Unorganized Towns				93	27	27	50	82		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. 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.
5. Buel's Gore, Ferdinand, Glastenbury, and Somerset are unorganized towns or gores.

97 districts and unorganized towns and gores tuition one or more grades
 minus 4 unorganized towns and gores
 93 school districts tuition one or more grades
 minus 20 school districts that do not operate any grades and tuition all students
 73 school districts that both tuition some grades and operate a school or belong to a union district for other grades.

82 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.
 77 school districts have some measure of choice for high school, grades 9 - 12.

Addison Central SU



My name is Rick Scott, I currently serve as vice chair of the Bridport School Board, I'm the Bridport representative on the UD#3 district board and am a vice chair of the Addison Central Supervisory Union Board. I'm also the parent and grandparent of students in our local schools and I'm a taxpayer. This testimony is my own; I am not representing the positions of any of the boards I serve on.

Addison Central Supervisory Union encompasses the seven towns of Middlebury, Ripton, Salisbury, Cornwall, Weybridge, Bridport and Shoreham. We are seven elementary districts and a single 7-12 district, governed by fifty school directors. The ACSU Board has three representatives from each town. Collectively we serve 1734 students in nine buildings. At the end of the 2014 school year our student to teacher ratio in the elementary schools ranged between 5.8:1 to 13:1.

In the five years that I've served, we have non-renewed a Superintendent, hired an interim Superintendent for one year, conducted three Superintendent searches, the first two of which were unsuccessful, resulting in a second contract for the interim, ultimately were able to find and hire our current Superintendent. We've experienced the turnover of seven Principals, an Associate Superintendent, three business managers and various other key administrators and staff.

It's reasonable to conclude that the lack of stability in the top position has been a contributing factor to not only the other positions, but to forward progress in general. We know through our Superintendent searches that a significant factor in our inability to hire a permanent Superintendent through the first two searches was the current governance structure, and the inherent inefficiency imposed on an administrator responsible to nine boards.

The ACSU is well suited geographically to consolidate. We have centralized many services including special education, curriculum, transportation and physical plant management. We are not challenged with school choice issues, and have an effective 7-12 district in place. Additionally, we have undertaken extensive work in response to Act 153. Even with several factors in our favor, we have been unable at this point to reach consensus in the pursuit of a consolidated governance structure.

In most peoples' minds, governance consolidation is a direct path to school consolidation. The resistance to change is related to the potential loss of the local school. I feel that a contributing factor to this reluctance is the socio-economic disparity from town to town and a reluctance to dilute that until middle school. Loss of local control is also cited as a reason not to consolidate. The phrase has many different interpretations, and I've come to the conclusion through many conversations, that many people consider the facility and it's role as a community center as "local control". Any school consolidation should include a plan for the facility.

In 2010, The Boards of the ACSU established an exploratory committee to determine if it was in our best interests to undertake a comprehensive governance study. The exploratory committee recommended to do so and all boards voted to participate. In the fall of 2010 that work began in earnest – the study committee determined that public engagement would be the key element of our work, and each community hosted a series of study circles to explore the broad topics around the future of education. We explored perceptions of each community and schools’ strengths and opportunities. Most towns had very productive sessions, engaging between 35-65 participants for a series of four 3-hour sessions. The outcomes were wide ranging providing both ideas for local action at each school and direction for the Governance Study Committee to use in reaching a conclusion about pursuing a RED. We employed a consultant to guide our committee through the design process. She helped us recruit and train volunteers, and organize and evaluate the findings. Some of the discussions addressed governance change more directly than others, and while the outcomes were beneficial they did not provide definitive guidance on the public’s appetite or lack thereof, for governance consolidation. It was the Committee’s sense that some communities were supportive of the status quo, while other stakeholders were willing to consider the question but wanted hard data on the potential fate of their school, the likely cost savings and the impact on student experience and outcomes.

Taking all factors into consideration the committee attempted to move towards a vote on forming a RED; however that effort was unsuccessful. Several factors contributed: (a) concern over creating divisiveness within the SU, as it became clear some boards/towns were opposed to changing the structure, (b) timing was a consideration as the culmination of the work coincided with the hiring of our current Superintendent, and (c) there was a feeling that it would be an extraordinary burden to impose on him in his first year. The committee also found itself at an impasse over the specifics of the RED makeup, the design of which was required to bring the proposal forward. While the outcome fell short of recommending governance consolidation, the committee’s final report is a valuable document that is currently informing the actions of the ACSU Board and the Superintendent.

I had the honor of serving as chairperson of the exploratory committee and as the first chair of the Governance Study Committee. As such I offer the following commentary. Our committee members and many of the participating stakeholders felt that the public engagement forums were a rewarding and valuable experience. The educational priorities of the communities were often in alignment, and it was clear that equal opportunity and the quality of the education was much more important than the cost at that time. I do think it’s important to consider the motivation of the participants and recognize that the process was driven by board members and others often personally involved or invested in the schools. It requires considerable effort and outreach, to engage community members who might be more concerned with their tax bill than curriculum. Their opinion shows up in budget votes, and many would say are the impetus for action by the legislature.

The following observations were consistent across all discussions:

- A quality education is of paramount importance.
- Opportunities to share resources to increase efficiency should be pursued regardless of the governance structure.
- School is the center of a community.
- Local control is highly valued.
- Costs are unsustainable.
- There was feeling that governance consolidation would not result in significant cost savings, and a fear that school closures would not be far behind.

I believe these observations apply universally across our State but as I'm sure you are aware, solutions are not particularly universal. I've participated in a number of VSBA events in the past few years, and am always amazed at the different challenges that the individual SU's and Districts face. I find it easy to accept that there are thirteen different governance structures in place currently.

Looking forward, I am excited that the issue of governance in particular has become paramount. I find myself considering every challenge and issue that arises through two lenses, our current governance structure and a consolidated one.

- I believe that the probability of school consolidation should be addressed in any legislation that includes governance. This would include adding clear language that allows flexibility for the district to design a structure that is not conventional, for example transitioning to pre K–2 primary schools, and comingling our 3-6 students. And leaving it to the district to determine if a building is closed by board action or a vote of the electorate.
- Given the complexity, the issues, and the diversity of situations, I encourage the Legislature to craft a bill that allows and incentivizes local boards to make informed decisions that best suit the needs of their students and constituents while fulfilling the universal objectives of equity, quality and sustainability.
- In order to develop community support around a consolidation plan, we must create a structure that will insure that we are addressing equity issues and positively impacting student outcomes. In the ACSU, we have a number of differences from elementary district to elementary district. The length of school day varies by as much as an hour. We have second language instruction in two schools, but not the other five, even though this had been resolved as a priority for all districts over two years ago. The UD#3 district does not offer a second language in the 7th grade, resulting in skill degradation for the students that are receiving instruction in elementary school. We have dedicated science

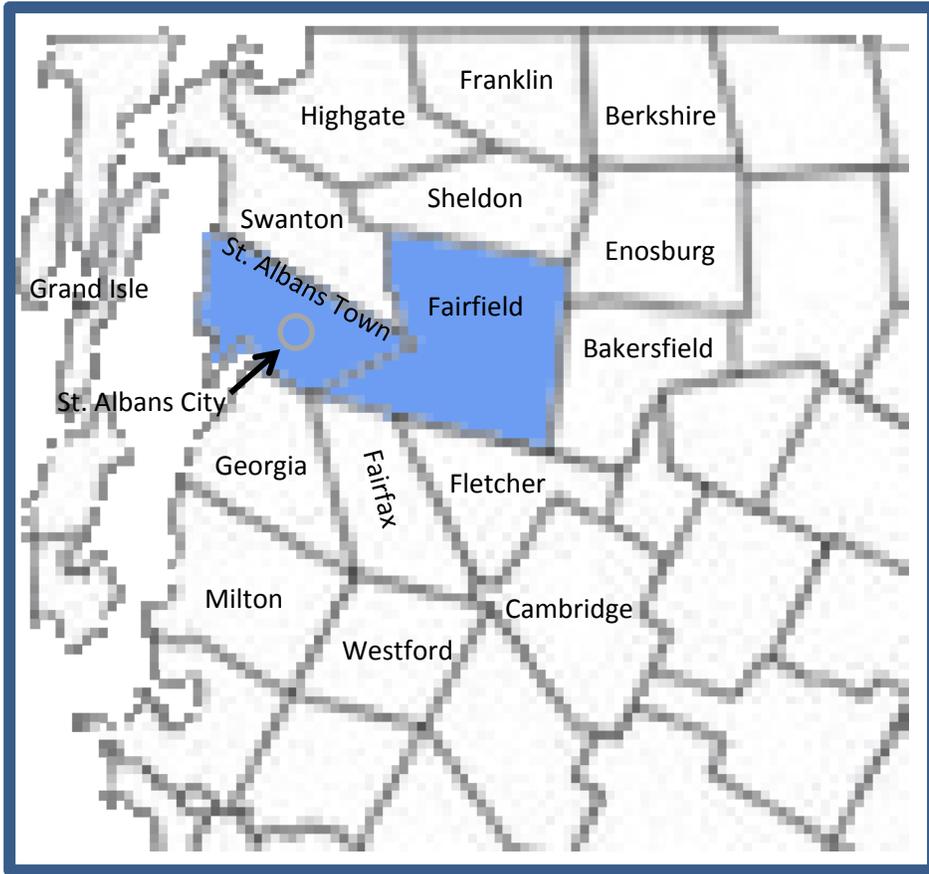
instruction in only two schools; our largest school has an expansive music and art program, unmatched by the smaller schools. Not all of our schools have developed a pre-school program as of yet. The small elementary schools have generally been using the Education Quality Standards to establish the minimum requirements for staffing as a method of cost control, trimming a little every year, impacting student outcomes bit by bit. A single budget gives the Superintendent the latitude required to address programmatic and curricular challenges efficiently and effectively.

- New Legislation should include incentives that resonate with the taxpayers. The incentives should sweeten the tax rate subsidy as offered in Act 153. Construction subsidies for new and expanded buildings will foster school consolidation, which is where we will see tangible cost savings. Additional consideration for re-purposing existing facilities that cease to serve as schools would be very desirable.
- A clear statement of intention regarding the number of Superintendents that the AoE anticipates for the future and how they would be deployed would help inform the decisions districts will be making soon.
- Changes to the taxation methodology should result in an understandable and transparent tax code. Whatever the new model, it needs to be understandable to most.
- The proposed moratorium on unfunded mandates is very welcome.
- All support that the Legislature can give to a plan to transition health care to a more affordable program would have an immediate impact on bottom lines.

I believe that the school directors and administrators of the ACSU are ready to pursue governance consolidation. With appropriate incentives and the promise of a consolidation in our future if we don't act, I'm confident we will pick up the RED conversation and bring it to a vote in short order. It's time to tear down the existing silo's that are our individual districts, and collaborate on providing the best education we possibly can for all students across what we currently know as the ACSU. It's incumbent upon us to re-frame the definitions of "community" and "local control," to once again engage the stakeholders in the conversation and provide the necessary data for an informed decision.

Thank you for allowing me to share my opinions this afternoon, and I look forward to a comprehensive bill that provides an opportunity for our students to take a big leap forward.

Franklin Central SU



My name is Jim Farr and I chair the St. Albans City School Board, and am on the Franklin Central Supervisory Union School Board. First my disclaimer – I have not been authorized by either of these Boards to speak on their behalf so today I am speaking only as an individual.

SU Description

Franklin Central is made up of four school districts, St. Albans City School (700+ students), St. Albans Town Educational Center (700+ students), Fairfield Central School (300+ students), and Bellows Free Academy and Northwest Technical Center (~1000 students). Each of these schools are unique in their own way. The St. Albans City School, the school that I chair, is a PreK-8 school in which a large portion of its students deal with poverty and trauma on a daily basis. It also has a large transient student population. The St Albans Town School, which is our neighbor less than two miles to the south, is another PreK-8 school. This school has a more affluent student population although they are now starting to see an increase in their poverty as well. Our high school, Bellows Free Academy, is located between these two schools. It is jointly owned by the City and the Town of St. Albans. Northwest Technical Center is located on BFA's campus. BFA draws students from Franklin North SU and Franklin West SU as well as from Franklin Central. Finally the last school in our SU is Fairfield Central. This is another PreK-8 school located approximately 8 miles up the hill. Fairfield is a rural community that has high school choice, although most of their high-school students attend BFA.

Complexities

In St. Albans there are three school boards that effectively represent the same community. The City has a board, the town has a board, and the high-school has a separate board. Again these schools are within a 2-mile stretch. In addition the City and Town school boards at times can have very different philosophies. The communities of the City and Town can often be polar opposites as well. There is a lot of history that can stand in the way of working together. A few years back they started a study to consider re-constitution of the Town and City but that never really made it past the initial stages. Finally Fairfield is a different kind of community than St. Albans in that it is mainly a rural, farm community. In recent years they have seen large increase in property taxes which has made it extremely difficult to get a school budget passed.

Future Challenges under Current System

The current governance structure under which we operate has encouraged school districts to work independently which has created silos, concentrating only on what happens within its own walls. This has allowed schools to progress at different rates, allowing some schools to provide opportunities to students that other schools may not. This is fueled by the fact that there is no top-down chain-of-command which can prevent a superintendent from enforcing consistent direction. Some of our schools offer programs and opportunities that others do not. This gives these students a distinct advantage over students in the other schools who do not have these opportunities. Even though all schools put forth a responsible budget, not all communities have been quick to approve these budgets. This creates the situation where some schools can afford to move forward with programs that others may not.

Joint Activities

The schools of the FCSU have had some limited success working together. The three PreK-8 schools have had their teachers on the same salary schedule for almost six years now. These same schools are working on doing the same for their support staff during the current ongoing negotiations. All four schools are working hard at creating more common language in all their contracts with each new negotiations cycle. Many of our common service contracts are managed at the SU Level.

Consolidation Challenges

Like most districts, consolidation would certainly present some challenges. To start, it is unlikely to save us much money. The schools already share many resources whenever possible. There may be some savings, but it's not likely to be significant, certainly not a game-changer. Another challenge is the fact that each school wants to maintain its own identity. These schools can be very different as can their approach to delivering education. Consolidation also can be very stressful to staff who fear they will be bounced from school to school.. There still exists a component of competition between the schools that will need to be overcome as well. Additionally Fairfield is concerned that they will lose some of their representation, and in fact, if mixed in with the St. Albans schools, they probably will. Finally not all boards in the union believe that consolidation will improve education. A preliminary RED study was performed about 5 years ago. The incentives were not substantial enough and the boards felt they would not be able to sell it to their communities.

Current Legislative Ideas

I applaud the legislature for taking this on. This is not an easy task and unfortunately there is no simple solution. This is going to be difficult, complicated, and messy. But we can't just kick the can down the road yet again. Any solution should be focused not only on cost, but also for what's best for children. If consolidation is going to happen, it would make the most sense in our districts to create a PreK-12 district that includes at least the three St. Albans schools. However any legislation must address the desired results, and not the strategy required to obtain them. Districts should be permitted the flexibility to set their own course on how to achieve these results. Districts need to figure out for themselves what works best for them. There should be some concrete objectives that will allow the districts to work on what the best way to come together would look like. Legislation must also provide some direction on how to transition staff salaries. Although our PreK-8 schools are on, or are moving to the same salary schedules, our high school salaries are spinning out of control. If there is a new district formed we could not possibly move all our PreK-8 employees to the high school schedules, and moving the high-school staff to the lower schedules would be problematic as well. The board must be given the ability to set reasonable and fair salaries for the new district employees without the process getting bogged down through the collective bargaining process. That would quickly kill any timely progress. Finally legislation must address school choice as Fairfield presently has school choice.

Moving Forward with an Integrated PreK-12 District

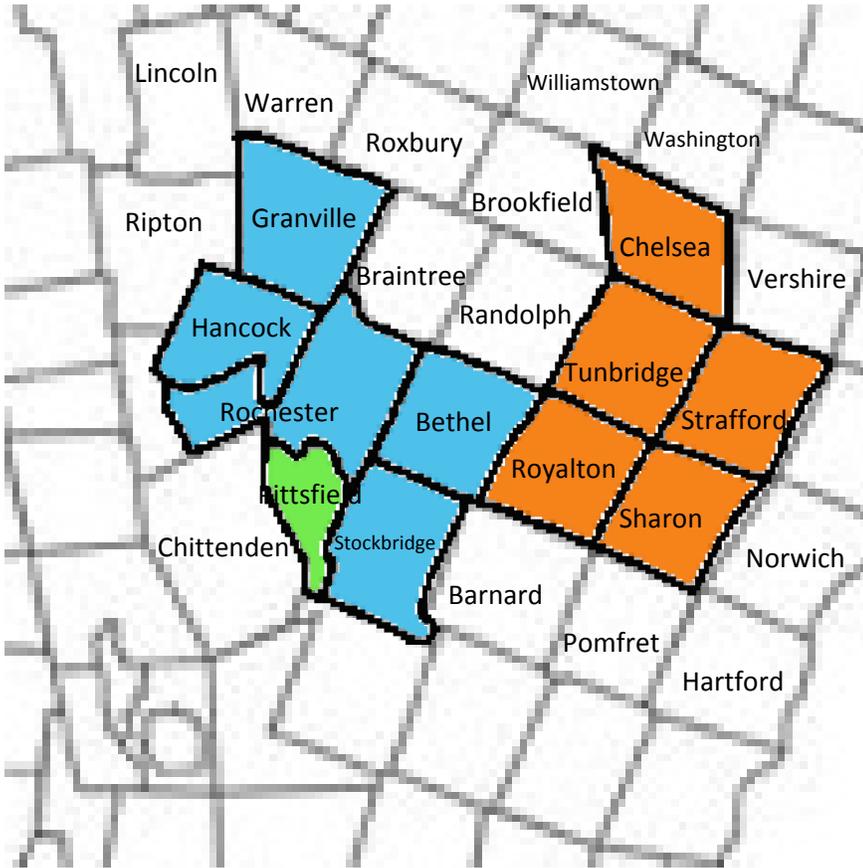
Any kind of consolidation will be a very tough sell in our communities. It will require some very strong incentives for doing so, and some tough penalties for not complying. As mentioned earlier staff contracts will be a significant issue. How will debt be handled? Some schools will bring bond debt with them. Other schools have neglected building maintenance due to financial reasons. These issues will cause the new district to incur new debt in the future. How would budgets get passed. Will votes get co-mingled? If so will the smaller communities be at the mercy of the larger ones? These are all questions that need to be answered early on.

The exciting thing is that a new district that includes all of our local schools would allow us to think about some possible new configurations with the PreK-8 schools. For instance we could consider things like splitting the two schools into a PreK-4 and a 5-8 school, or perhaps an elementary and middle school. Or perhaps splitting the schools into a math/science or STEM school and a Language and Arts school where the children attend both and travel between them. Again they are only two miles apart.

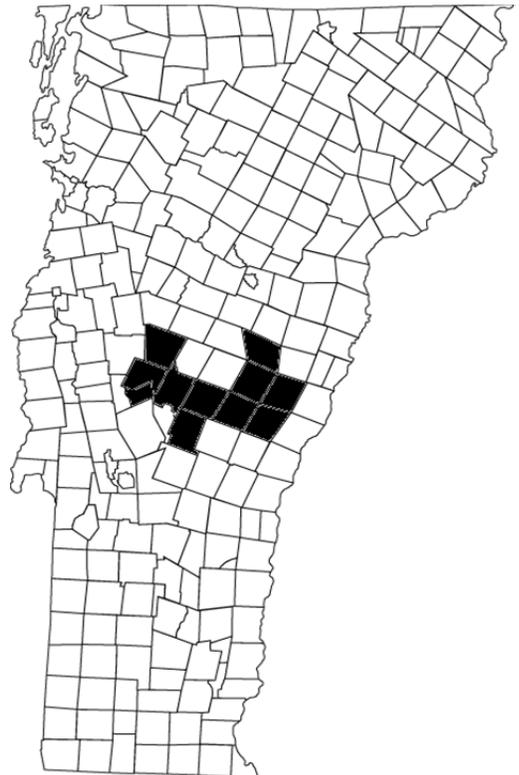
Conclusion

On paper, Franklin Central would look like an easy target for consolidation. Three of its four schools are located within 2 miles and are directed by separate boards. However it will be difficult to show a significant costs savings and many will argue whether there will be any significant advantage in delivering education to our children. Additionally very strong incentives will be required to convince these polarized communities to come together on something as important as educating their children.

Windsor Northwest SU & Orange-Windsor



- Windsor Northwest SU..... FY'16
- Orange Windsor SU FY'16
- Pittsfield (Windsor Central)..... FY'16
- Integrated WNW-OW FY'17



Senate Education Committee 2/17/15

Testimony of Superintendent Bruce Labs and Board member Geo Honigford from Orange Windsor Supervisory Union

OWSU: Royalton K-12, Chelsea K-12, Tunbridge K-8, Sharon K-6, Stafford K-8 has a high school designation of Thetford Academy which is outside the SU, students from the sending towns go to a wide variety of school in and out of the SU

Joining with WNWSU Windsor NorthWest Supervisory Union: Rochester k-12, Bethel K-12, Stockbridge K-6, Hancock no school, Granville no school many sending students go to schools outside the SU

STRENGTHS:

- change in SU structure is a perfect opportunity to lead to change at the school level
- like all Vermont schools, communities care about their schools, most of the schools are fairly high achieving (especially given the high poverty rate)
- shared educational vision
- similar social economic makeup

CHALLENGES:

- education opportunity is lacking in schools because of low student numbers and financial constraints
- some schools are facing very serious funding issues

BARRIERS TO CHANGE:

- people very concerned about keeping a "local" school
- change is always scary
- trust is just developing between the two SU's

HISTORICAL EFFORTS FOR STRUCTURING IN OWSU:

- RED plans had general support among board members, and quickly figured out many issues
- plans halted as towns had problems with choice concerning a selective private high school

CURRENT EFFORTS CONCERNING CHANGE:

-considering hiring Dr. Dagget's educational design team to completely redesign what we teach, how we govern, what outcomes we are trying to achieve

-parallel work will be redesigning all aspects of the new SU

HOW THE LEGISLATURE COULD SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS:

-pass legislation that would move the boards into a closer working relationship

-give the AOE and SBE the funding and power to move to intervene with schools that are not achieving Educational Quality Standards

-allow us to decide what towns best fit together and how we want to govern ourselves

Orange East SU

