



# Chittenden East

*Supervisory Union*

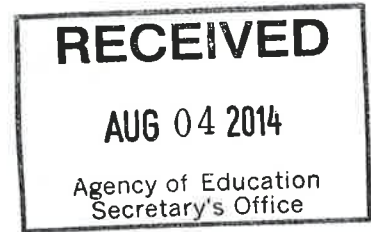
*Bolton      Huntington      Jericho      Richmond      Underhill ID      Underhill      Mt. Mansfield USD #17*

**State Board of Education**  
**August 19, 2014**  
**Item K**

Chittenden East Supervisory Union # 12  
Administrative Offices  
PO Box 282, 211 Bridge Street  
Richmond, Vermont 05477  
(802) 434 – 2128      (802) 434 – 2196 (fax)  
www.cesu.k12.vt.us

July 29, 2014

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



RH  
VA  
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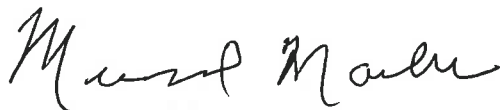
Dear Secretary Holcombe:

Over the past nine months, a representative committee has been studying the advantages and disadvantages of merging the Chittenden East Supervisory Union's eight separate school districts into one unified system. After numerous meetings and significant analysis, discussion and debate, the Chittenden East Voluntary Merger Committee has approved a final draft of a school district unification plan. On behalf of Chittenden East Supervisory Union's member school districts and the Chittenden East Voluntary Merger Committee, I request that the Vermont State Board of Education review and approve the enclosed Modified Unified Union School District Committee Report prepared pursuant to Title 16 Section 706b, Act 153 and Act 156 at the State Board of Education meeting scheduled on August 19, 2014.

Representatives of the Voluntary Merger Committee, Superintendent Alberghini, legal counsel and I plan to attend the August 19<sup>th</sup> State Board of Education meeting to discuss the merger proposal and answer any questions.

If you have questions prior to August 19<sup>th</sup> or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Michael Marks  
Chair of the Chittenden East Voluntary Merger Committee

cc: Vaughn Altemus, Vermont Agency of Education  
John Alberghini, Superintendent, Chittenden East Supervisory Union



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# Chittenden East Supervisory Union #12

## Modified Unified Union Report/Plan

Prepared by:  
CESU #12 Voluntary Merger Committee  
July 28, 2014

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**CESU Voluntary Merger Study**

**MAJORITY REPORT RECOMMENDING ADOPTION**

By law, this Planning Report uses a template mandated by Vermont's statutes and the Agency of Education. This introduction summarizes the views of a majority of the Planning Committee in language that we hope explains to voters why we are recommending a Unified District.

Fifty years ago our towns formed the Mount Mansfield Union School District to improve educational opportunities for our young people in grades 7 through 12. We dissolved town boundaries and committed to equal opportunity for all students. After initial success, we added grades 5 and 6 to create the current MMU school district. By all measures our CESU enjoys good schools but we can and should do better. We believe it is time to add the remaining grades to create a unified pre-kindergarten to grade 12 district.

Throughout our long history together, the towns of Bolton, Huntington, Jericho, Richmond and Underhill, and the Underhill ID School District, have worked in concert through MMU School District to educate all of our children in grades five through twelve, and manage all of the taxpayer dollars for their education. Together, we are a community. But that community maintains a fragmented educational governance structure that affects our ability to serve students and taxpayers, and makes no sense for a community of neighbors that has a long and successful history of working together.

The Chittenden East Supervisory Union has seven autonomous but connected school districts which provide education to children. One school district—the Mount Mansfield Union School District—is responsible for the education of all of the children in these communities in grades five through twelve. Six other school districts—Bolton, Huntington, Jericho, Richmond, Underhill Incorporated District (covering parts of Jericho and Underhill), and Underhill—each operate elementary schools providing kindergarten (and in some cases, pre-kindergarten) through grade four. Each of these seven school districts is part of the Chittenden East Supervisory Union, which also has its own Board, and provides services to all of its member school districts.

Each of the elementary school boards and the Mount Mansfield Board separately hire staff, prepare and adopt budgets, and perform many of the functions of administering their respective schools. Many important and costly functions are administered at Chittenden East Supervisory Union level—including the district superintendent, senior administrators, special education, curriculum, policy, transportation, and negotiations with teacher and support staff unions. Many of these decisions are subject to review, ratification, or modification by the seven school boards.

If one includes the Executive Committee of the Chittenden East Supervisory Union, we govern the schools in our community through eight separate boards and committees, comprised of fifty-six members.

In 2014, as we face the challenges of meeting student needs and controlling costs, this fragmented structure does not work. At best, our governance structure is complicated and time consuming. At worst, it prevents us from meeting our obligations to students and taxpayers. And, it makes no sense for a community of neighbors who have worked together for fifty years to govern most of its schools.

Would dollars be better spent on a high school activity or a pre-kindergarten program? Would students be better served if middle school started in the sixth grade as opposed to fifth? Can we build a twelve-grade curriculum based on universal access to technology in early grades? Should we improve high school technology infrastructure or buy computers for fourth graders? Should we replace windows in our elementary schools or in our high school? Conversations like this which involve all grades and the full educational experience can't even happen with our fragmented governance structure.

Our superintendent and senior staff spend large amounts of their time trying to coordinate decisions among all of our boards instead of providing the educational leadership and financial management that is their core mission. Elementary and middle schools—sometimes located on the same campus—do not share staff or facilities, or do so only on limited basis. Some elementary schools cut programs for students that could be maintained with a sharing of resources. Some maintain class sizes that are too small to be cost effective, but don't have the option of sharing staff to address this problem.

When we created this governance structure, education was simpler and less expensive. In 2014, education is far more complicated, changing rapidly and far more expensive. We need a governance structure for our schools that allows us to address our students' needs from the start of their education through their graduation, and compels us to make hard financial decisions for the entire system.

Students would be better served by a unified system. A unified system could set priorities and allocate resources where needed (regardless of grade), and avoid conflicts or communication breakdowns between different school districts. A unified system would enable staff to focus more on educational quality and less on obtaining or aligning decisions from numerous boards. A unified system would allow us to adapt to the ever changing demands of educating students. Unification would limit exposure to the per pupil excess spending penalty for small schools.

Unification would produce a more efficient and cost effective system. Unification would enable a single budget for all students and tax dollars, rather than the current system in which each of the Boards separately creates budgets. Resources could also be better shared among schools. Staff could work more efficiently in a unified system. Unification provides property tax relief to the communities approving unification. The State will reduce the equalized homestead property tax rate by \$.08 in the first year after unification; \$.06 in the second year; \$.04 in the third year; and \$.02 in the fourth year. (There is a 5 percent cap on adjustments in tax rates.) This assistance would come in a time when taxpayers face rapidly rising property tax rates.

With the current complex governance comprised of multiple boards and committees, no single elected body is responsible for all the decisions leading to a particular program or budget. Citizens are unable to address a single responsible body when they have concerns. Direct accountability is missing. Individual boards have limited responsibility for their budgets with costs for special education, transportation, salaries, administration, and insurance set by other bodies. With a unified district, citizens can hold a single board accountable for all aspects of school governance.

The chief objection that has been voiced to unifying our governance structure is the fear of loss of local control. Whether that fear would be legitimate elsewhere, it should be different in our community. We have already united into a successful community to govern and educate grades five through twelve. We

are not strangers—we are colleagues and neighbors. Would we rather vote separately on our elementary school budgets and board members, despite the cost it imposes on our ability to meet the modern needs of students and taxpayers? Or would we rather commit fully to the community we have already forged?

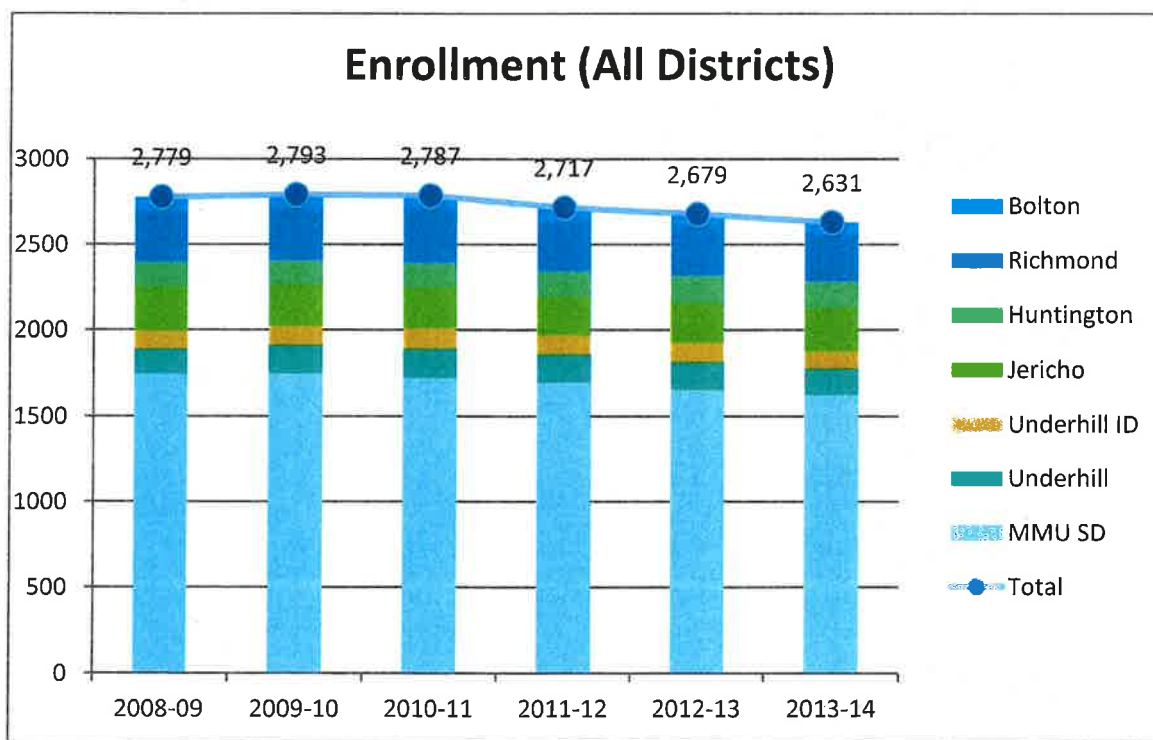
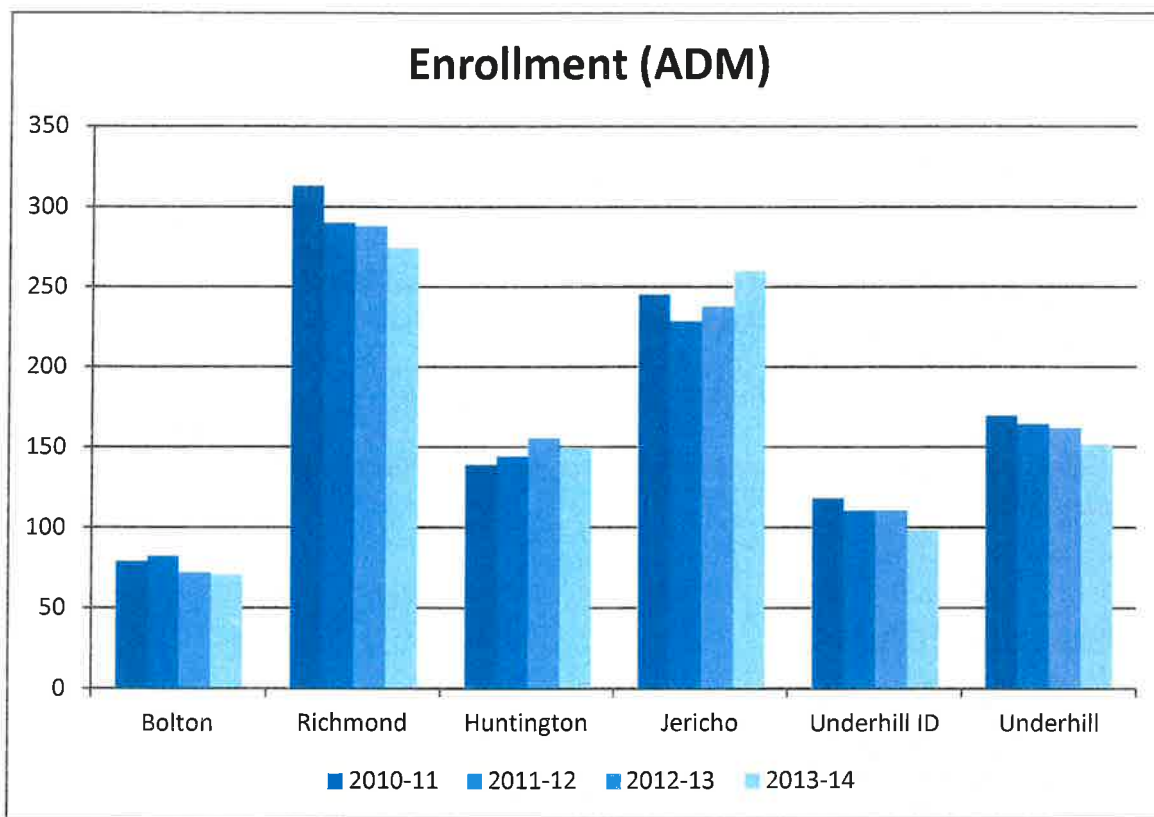
We find the core questions for citizens in our towns to be: Has Mount Mansfield Union School District been a success in demonstrating the benefits of working across together for grades 5 through 12? Can we do a better job at lower cost working together across all grades? After fifty years, do we trust all the towns to care for all the children in a unified pre-K to 12 district? We believe the answer is yes.

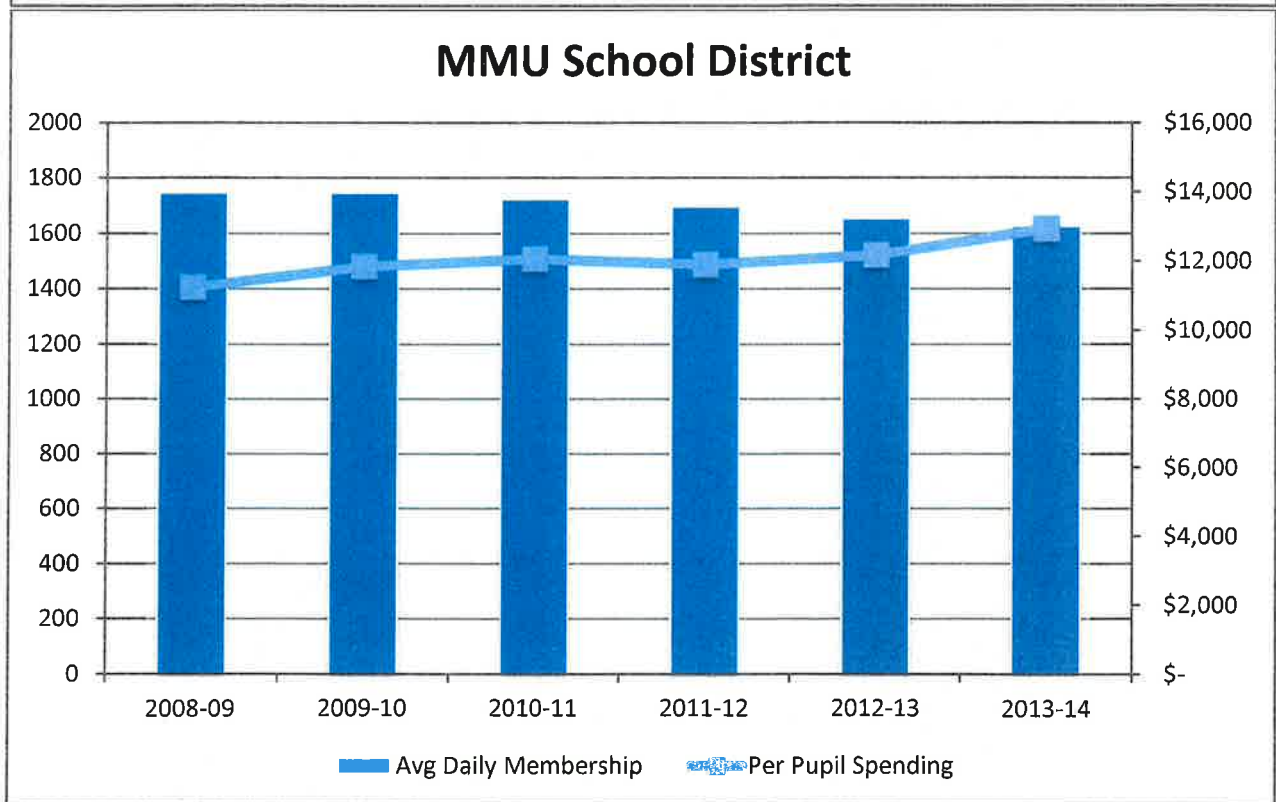
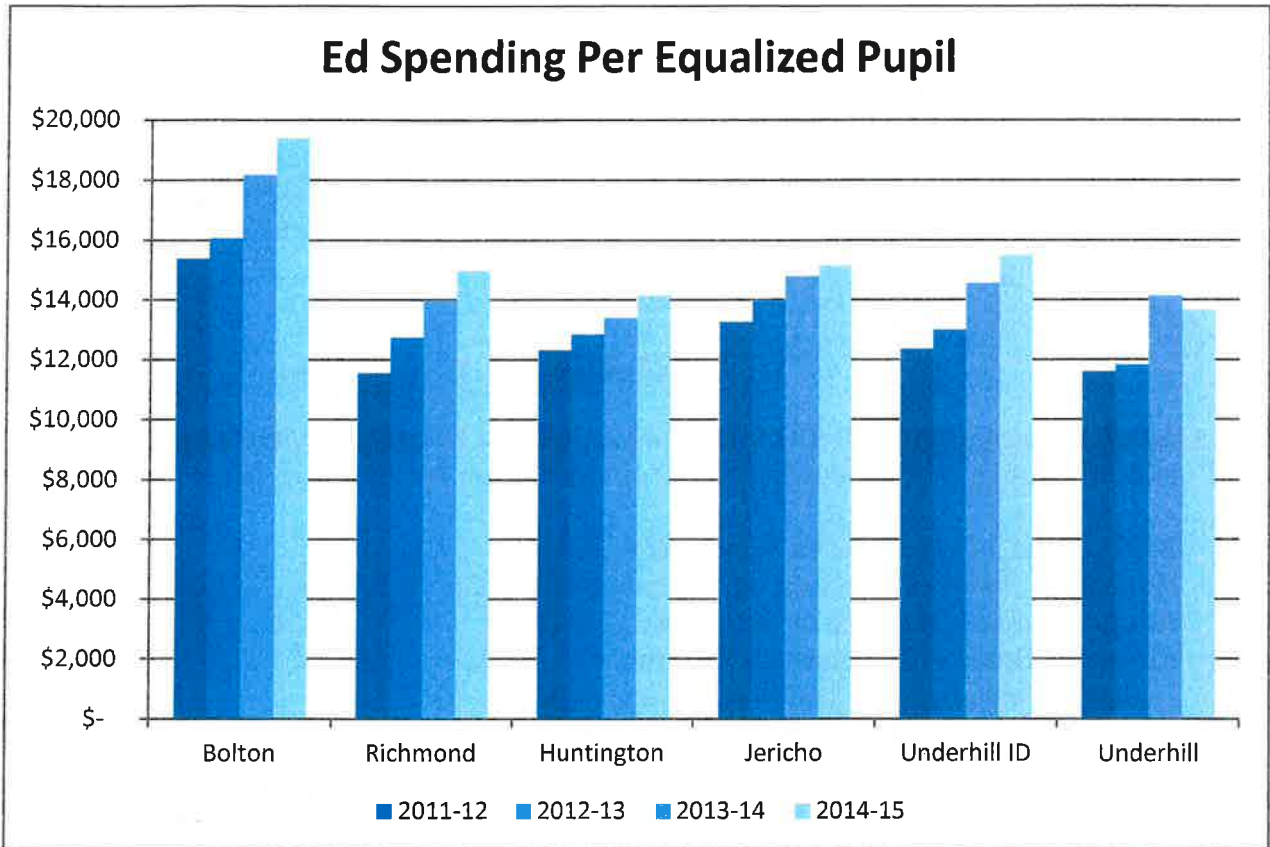
All of our towns share the common goals of educational quality and prudent financial management. All of our towns have united together for decades in the Mount Mansfield community to educate our children in grades five through twelve in a cost effective manner. We should trust each other and become a single community for all of our children and taxpayers.

Signature Page: The undersigned Voluntary Merger Planning Committee members support adoption of the CESU Voluntary Merger Plan.

David H. Monahan  
Craig Noble  
Jon T. Milazzo  
Paula Lewis  
Jason Archibald  
Jeremy Frank  
CPD  
Sandy Dilem (alternate)  
[Signature]  
Rick [Signature]  
R. Breckenridge (alternates)  
Maxwell Martin  
Julio Coffey

School District Data







**Bolton School District; Huntington School District; Jericho School District;  
Richmond School District; Underhill Town School District; Underhill ID School District;  
Mount Mansfield Union School District #17**

Modified Unified Union School District  
Planning Committee Report

**The Plan**

**July 28, 2014**

Authorization to engage in this Unified Union School District Planning Committee process was voted in the affirmative by the following boards of directors on the following dates:

Bolton Board of Directors, on September 4, 2013;  
Huntington Board of Directors, on September 10, 2013;  
Jericho Board of Directors, on September 11, 2013;  
Richmond Board of Directors, on September 25, 2013;  
Underhill Town Board of Directors, on September 10, 2013;  
Underhill ID Board of Directors, on September 24, 2013;

The Secretary of Education was advised of the formation of this Unified Union School District Study Committee, pursuant to Title [16 V.S.A. § 706b](#), by letter dated November 25, 2013, and in that letter, Michael Marks was identified as chairperson of the Planning Committee.

Recommended Articles of Agreement, pursuant to the requirements of [Title 16, Chapter 11, Subchapter 3](#), as are set forth herein below, were agreed upon by the Planning Committee at its duly warned meeting of July 28, 2014.

**Planning Committee Membership**

Michael Marks, Chairperson, Community Member Richmond  
Jean Archibald, Community Member Underhill Town  
Kevin Campbell, Board Member Underhill ID  
Julie Coffey, Community Member Jericho  
Harry Frank, Clerk, Community Member Huntington  
Bill Fulton, Community Member Underhill ID  
Paula Gervia, Board Member Bolton  
Elena Jensen, Community Member Richmond  
Megs Keir, Board Member Huntington  
Diane Kirson-Glitman, Community Member Jericho  
Breck Knauft, Board Member Huntington (non-voting alternate)  
Chuck Lacy, Community Member Jericho  
Jon Milazzo, Board Member Richmond  
Craig Noble, Board Member Jericho  
Andrew Rosacker, Board Member Underhill Town  
David Thomas, Community Member Richmond  
John Alberghini, Superintendent of Schools, Chittenden East SU

**PREAMBLE**

The creation of a new union shall be guided by a vision for our students, teachers, schools, parents and communities. We will take up this call by turning to the Mount Mansfield Union School District #17 Strategic Priorities 2012 – 2015 which states: “All students of the MMUSD shall graduate with the necessary knowledge, skills, work ethic and confidence to fulfill their personal aspirations and contribute meaningfully to their communities as adults.”

Furthermore, we expect that all students and their families as well as staff in our schools will practice tolerance and mutual respect in their interactions. We believe that ethnic, gender, economic and personal diversity all make a strong and safe learning community. Our schools will be safe, nurturing environments where students should feel connected to each other as well as to adults within the school. We expect all students to look out for the welfare of others to ensure that this climate of security and respect is maintained for all. We believe that all students should have access to a relevant common curriculum that challenges learners to reach their fullest potential, and which includes diverse content in the language arts, math, science, history, fine arts and music. Students will pursue excellence in all their endeavors and develop a passion for lifelong learning. We expect our educational leadership and faculty to show agility, flexibility, adaptability and forward thinking to evolve this curriculum to reflect changing local and global needs.

Such a plan is meant to guide board discussions, and to that end we will create regular checkpoints for review of these founding values and beliefs as well as progress on effectively addressing these priorities.

In addition to the many areas of our school plans and priorities that are explicitly addressed in the strategic priorities document, there are many other priorities that follow from our vision for our schools which we feel are already a vital part of our school plans and which we believe should continually be examined:

nurturing the physical and emotional health of our students; increasing community and parental involvement; supporting a commitment to environmentally sustainable communities; stimulating critical thinking and creativity; instilling a lifelong love of learning; and fostering a caring and compassionate school community. In our desire to establish measurable accountability, we cannot lose sight of the immeasurable qualities of courage, determination, vitality and curiosity that all contribute to excellent performance.

**Articles of Agreement**

The Planning Committee recommends that the following Articles of Agreement be approved by the electorate of each of the named school districts in order to create a Unified Union School District or a Modified Union School District, to be named the Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District or the Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District, hereafter referred to as Union District in these articles.

**Article 1**

The School Districts of Bolton, Huntington, Jericho, Richmond, Underhill Town, Underhill ID and Mount Mansfield Union, (hereinafter referred to as the “forming districts”) are advisable for the establishment of the Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District (MMUUSD). If all towns vote to approve the merger, the MMUUSD will be formed July 1, 2015.

In the event that the majority of towns vote YES to approve the merger but one or two towns vote NO, pursuant to Act 56, a Modified Union School District will be formed. In this case, the name of the new district will be the Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District (MMMUSD).

Hereafter, the MMUUSD and the MMMUSD will be referred to as the Union District.

**Article 2**

The Union District shall continue the process already underway among the member school districts of the Chittenden East Supervisory Union to consolidate management and educational services, master employee contracts and to otherwise bring about effective and efficient operating procedures and practices. The formal and informal agreements, management systems and operating procedures that have evolved between and among these member school districts shall act as a foundation for the continued collaboration and efficiencies for the Union District.

**Article 3**

The Union District will provide pre-kindergarten through grade twelve education to all of the students in the Union District. The District is committed to providing its students with equal opportunity.

**Article 4**

The Union District will honor all pre-existing master agreements and individual employment contracts that are in place for the forming school districts on June 30, 2015. These master and individual agreements will continue until their respective specified termination dates.

**Article 5**

The forming districts of the Union District recognize their obligations, pursuant to 16 VSA §261a(1), to establish district-wide curricula, and to otherwise standardize their operations within existing Supervisory Unions boundaries, on or before July 1, 2015.

**Article 6**

Any and all operating deficits and/or surpluses of any of the combining/forming districts shall become the property, and/or the obligation of the Union District, effective on the date of the creation.

**Article 7**

The forming districts will convey to the Union District all of their school-related real and personal property, for One Dollar, and the Union District will assume all capital debt associated therewith, effective on the date of the creation of the Union District.

The Union District recognizes the long term financial investments and community relationships that each town has with its elementary school building. The Union District will encourage appropriate use of the building by the students and community according to the policies and procedures of the Union District as overseen by the building administrator.

In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the Union District determines that any of the real property, including land and buildings, conveyed to it by one or more of the following forming districts: Bolton – Smilie Memorial Elementary School, Huntington – Brewster Pierce Elementary School, Jericho – Jericho Elementary School, Richmond – Richmond Elementary, Underhill – Underhill Central School; is or are unnecessary to the continued operation of the Union District and its educational programs, the Union District shall convey such real property, for the sum of One Dollar, and subject to all encumbrances of record, to the town in which it is located. The conveyance of any of the above school properties shall be conditioned upon the town owning and utilizing the real property for community and public purposes for a minimum of five years. In the event a town elects to sell the real property prior to five years of ownership, the town shall compensate the Union District for all capital improvements and renovations completed after the formation of the Union District and before the sale to the town. In the event a town elects not to acquire ownership of such real property, the Union District shall, pursuant to Vermont statutes, sell the property upon such terms and conditions as established by the Union District Board of School Directors.

In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the Union District determines that any of the real property, including land and building, conveyed to it by the Underhill Incorporated School District, is or are unnecessary to the continued operation of the Union District and its educational programs, the Union District shall sell the real property to the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library for the sum of One Dollar. The conveyance of any of the above school properties shall be conditioned upon the Library owning and utilizing the real property for community and public purposes for a minimum of five years. In the event the Library elects to sell the real property prior to five years of ownership, the Library shall compensate the Union District for all capital improvements and renovations completed after the formation of the Union District and before the sale to the Library. In the event the Library elects not to acquire ownership of such real

property, the Union District shall, pursuant to Vermont statutes, sell the property upon such terms and conditions as established by the Union District Board of School Directors.

In the event that, and at such subsequent time as, the Union District determines that any of the real property, including land and buildings, conveyed to it by the Mount Mansfield Union District is or are unnecessary to the continued operation of the Union District and its educational programs, the Union District shall, pursuant to Vermont statutes, sell the property upon such terms and conditions as established by the Union District Board of School Directors.

The sale of any school properties by the Union District shall be consistent with any applicable provisions of state law.

**Article 8**

A forming town/district’s representation on the Union District Board of School Directors will be closely proportional to the fraction that its population bears to the aggregate population of the Union District, which shall be composed of fifteen members. Initial Union District School Board composition is based upon the most recent Federal Census, and shall be recalculated promptly following the release of each subsequent decennial census. However, at no time will a combining/forming town have less than one board member on the Union District. Subject to the previous sentence, each proportionality calculation shall be rounded to the nearest whole number.

If the Underhill ID district votes to join the new district, the UID Board will ask local legislators to introduce legislation to dissolve the UID at the end of the transition period. After dissolution, upon the expiration of the term of the representatives from the Underhill ID district, the seats will be filled by one representative from Jericho and one from Underhill based on the current calculation of population and proportional representation. If there is a different census at that time, the seat will be filled based on that census.

**Number of School Board Members by Town/District**

<b>Town/District</b>	<b>Board Members (population of town)</b>	
Bolton	1	(1,182)
Huntington	2	(1,938)
Jericho	4	(3,857)
Richmond	4	(4,081)
Underhill	2	(2,413)
Underhill ID	2	(1,755)
Total	15	(15,226)

**Article 9**

Union District Board of School Directors will be elected for three-year terms, except for those initially elected at the time of the formation of the Union District. In the initial Union District board member terms of office will be as follows:

**Distribution of Initial One-Year, Two-Year and Three-Year Terms**

<b>Town/District</b>	<b>1 Year Term</b>	<b>2 Year Term</b>	<b>3 Year Term</b>
Bolton			1
Huntington		1	1
Jericho	2	1	1
Richmond	2	1	1
Underhill	1		1
Underhill ID		2	

**Article 10**

The proposal for forming this Union District will be presented to the voters of each member school district on November 4, 2014. The candidates for the new Union District Board of School Directors will be elected on the same date, as required by law. Nominations for the office of union school director representing any district/town shall be made by filing with the clerk of that school district/town proposed as a member of the union, a statement of nomination signed by at least 30 voters in that district or one percent of the legal voters in the district, whichever is less and accepted in writing by the nominee. A statement shall be filed not less than 30 nor more than 40 days prior to the date of the vote.

**Article 11**

Upon an affirmative vote of the electorates of the school districts, and upon compliance with 16 V.S.A. § 706g, the Union District shall have and exercise all of the authority which is necessary in order for it to prepare for full operation beginning on July 1, 2015. The Union District shall, between the date of the necessary affirmative votes and June 30, 2015, develop school district policies, adopt curriculum, educational programs, assessment measures and reporting procedures in order to fulfill the Education Quality Standards (State Board Rule 2000), prepare for contractual agreements, set the school calendar for Fiscal Year 2016, prepare and present the budget for Fiscal Year 2016, prepare for the 2015 Union District Annual Meeting and transact any other lawful business that comes before the Board, provided, however, that the exercise of such authority by the Union District shall not be construed to limit or alter the authority and/or responsibilities of the Districts of Bolton, Huntington, Jericho, Mount Mansfield Union, Richmond, Underhill and Underhill ID.

The Union District shall commence full educational operations on July 1, 2015.

**Article 12**

The Union School District Board of School Directors shall propose annual budgets in accordance with [16 VSA Chapter 11](#).

The annual budget vote shall be conducted by Australian ballot as per [17 VSA Chapter 55](#).

**Article 13**

The school districts of Bolton, Huntington, Jericho, Richmond, Underhill Town, Underhill ID and Mount Mansfield Union, shall remain in existence after June 30, 2015, for the sole purpose of completing any business not given to the Union District under these articles. Such business shall be completed as soon as practicable, but in no event any later than June 30, 2016. Elementary school districts that do not vote to approve the Union District shall continue to govern their own elementary schools.

**Article 14** Cost Benefit Analysis. *(See Attachment B)*

**Article 15** *(See Attachment C for further information on school choice, school configurations and school enrollment plan)*

The Union District will maintain the current school and grade configurations of the Chittenden East Supervisory Union until such time as the Union District Board of School Directors determines that reorganization is necessary.

**Article 16**

For at least one full school year following voter approval, students will attend elementary school and middle school according to their town/district of residency. After the first year, the Union District Board of School Directors will have the authority to adjust school attendance boundary lines and school configurations within the boundaries of the Union District.

**Article 17**

The Union District school board shall provide opportunity for local input on policy and budget development. Structures to support and encourage public participation within the Union District will be established by the Union District Board of School Directors on or before June 30, 2015. The Union District will sustain the current Mount Mansfield Union School District practice of rotating meeting locations, providing Board access in each town it serves and opportunities for the Board to enjoy the hospitality and uniqueness of each venue.

**Article 18**

If a Modified Union School District is formed pre-K - 4 districts that vote NO will be referred to as Non Member Elementary Districts (NMED). Board representation in the Modified Union School District will be as proportional as represented in the chart under Article 9, including full proportional representation from each NMED. Board members from the NMED will have voting powers for all general Union District actions, but will recuse themselves from votes on any unique Union District pre-K - 4 program or building decisions.

**Article 19**

If all towns vote to approve the merger (or join within one year under Article 20), the Union District shall succeed and assume the functions of the Chittenden East Supervisory Union (“CESU”), and the Union District will function as a supervisory district as per Act 153 and 16 VSA §261(c).

In the event that the majority of towns vote YES to approve the merger but one or two towns vote NO, the CESU shall perform the functions of a supervisory union for both the Modified Union School District and the Non Member Elementary Districts (NMED). The governance of the CESU shall be as follows:

- A. Each elected representative on the Modified Union School District Board shall also serve as a member of the CESU governing Board.
- B. In addition, each NMED school board shall appoint one representative who will serve as a member of the CESU governing Board.
- C. The CESU shall use weighted voting on supervisory union business. The representatives elected and appointed from an NMED to the CESU shall each have a fractional vote so that their combined votes equals the number of representatives from the community on the Modified Union School District Board. (For example, if a NMED has two elected representatives on the Modified Union School Board, one more person would be appointed by that NMED’s school board, and each of these persons would have 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of a vote on supervisory union matters). The representatives from all other communities shall each exercise one vote. In this manner, voting on CESU matters represents the same proportional representation by town as reflected in the composition of the fifteen member Modified Union School District Board.
- D. The Modified Union School District and the CESU shall conduct joint meetings with a single agenda, provided that weighted voting described in this Article is used for all supervisory union matters, and that representatives appointed by the NMED may not vote on Modified Union School District Matters.

When charging or assessing an NMED for services provided by the Union District or CESU, the charge or assessment may be made on the basis of the actual cost incurred by the Union District or CESU for providing the service to the NMED. The calculation of the actual cost of charges or assessments to an entity that is not a member may be based upon any relevant factors, including (but not limited to):

- 1) The cost associated with collecting the underlying data and preparing the separate calculation and assessment for a NMED, which cost would not be needed in the absence of the provision of services to non-members;
- 2) reasonable charge for the embedded cost associated with the standby capacity to provide the service to a NMED;
- 3) the incremental costs of providing specific services to a NMED. Charges or assessments may also be made on the basis of a reasonable allocation proxy. Charges or assessments to a NMED may be made on a different basis from the costs allocated to the Union District. Charges or assessments may be made on the basis of a reasonable estimate, subject to adjustment when actual costs are known. The Union District Board and the



CESU shall determine the standards for determining charges or assessments. Expectations are that the Union District will not subsidize a NMED and that charges will reflect fairness to the CESU, Union District and any NMED. Charges or assessments will comply with state law and applicable accounting standards.

**Article 20**

A district voting to remain independent will have one year to reconsider and join the Union District by voting in favor of joining no later than November 3, 2015, with admission granted in advance by the Union District. For the purpose of compliance with 16 VSA §721, the Union District consents to admission. Thereafter, admission will be determined by state statutes which require favorable votes by both the Non Member Elementary District and voters of Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Attachment A**

**What happens if a school district votes NO?**

Vermont Act 156 Sec. 17 describes the creation of a modified union district. This section allows approval of a merger if a majority but not all towns vote in the affirmative. The Union District will be a PreK – 12 district serving grades 5-12 for all towns and grades PreK – 4 for approving towns. Towns voting NO will continue to operate their own elementary schools as Non-Member Elementary Districts.

If the question passes with 1 or 2 towns voting NO, the following applies:

1. A town voting NO will continue to operate its existing elementary district as a Non-Member Elementary District (NMED). It will continue to elect its own elementary school board, vote on its elementary school budget, and pay its own elementary school expenses.
2. A town voting NO will be members of two school districts, a) their continuing elementary school district serving grades PreK to 4 and b) the Union District for grades 5 to 12.
3. A town voting NO and sending grades 5 to 12 to the Union District will have representation on the Union District school board (as described in Articles 10 and 11) and its voters will vote on the entire PreK-12 Union District budget. Its Board representation, however, will recuse themselves from votes on any unique Union District PreK-4 program or building decisions.
4. A town voting NO and sending only grades 5 to 12 to the Union District will pay a proportional share of the Union District expenses using state approved formulas (CESU currently uses these formulas for apportioning costs of MMU schools to the various CESU towns).
5. The CESU will provide supervisory union services to the NMED such as curriculum, special education, superintendent, transportation, and business office to the NMED according to state law. The CESU will bill the NMED for these services. In addition to its elected representatives on the CESU Board, the elementary school district board for a Town voting NO shall appoint a representative to the CESU Board. There shall be weighted voting so that the NMED community's total number of votes is the same in both the Union District and the CESU. (as described in Article 19).
6. The Union District is designed to facilitate program and resource sharing among schools, larger economies of scale, and school choice possibilities for Union District students. These changes, for better or worse, will not accrue to the NMED.
7. The NMED will not receive the state tax incentives provided to those who form the Union District.
8. A town voting NO may re-consider and decide by vote to join the Union District by November 3, 2015. Thereafter the merger process as currently governed by state law requires affirmative votes first by the NMED to request membership and then by the Union District to accept the new member.

\* "Town" is used here for descriptive expedience only and includes Underhill ID as well as Underhill, Jericho, Huntington, Bolton and Richmond.

## Attachment B

### Cost Benefit Analysis

Efficiencies will be gained through the creation of a Union District in the following areas:

#### **Improved student opportunities and outcomes**

The creation of a Union District would give one board the authority to provide students and families of elementary aged students school choice options. Policies and procedures could be written and revised to respond to exceptional circumstances and the needs of students, schools and communities. Currently, in CESU, tuition is required for students to enroll in elementary schools outside of their town of residence. The flexibility and ability to avail school choice opportunities for students and families has the potential to expand educational options.

Formation of the Union District would allow for flexibility in the use of facilities and resources. A unified board would be empowered to use personnel, facilities and financial resources to institute educational programs such as specialty educational environments to meet the needs and interests of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The agility realized through a Union District would increase the possibility of fashioning educational environments that meet individual students' needs. This has the potential to save money over time and keep these students in their home school district.

Equalized programming opportunities for all students within Chittenden East could be advanced with the formation of a Union District. Currently, resources, offerings, staffing and supplemental support vary across Chittenden East. One Union District would, over time, reduce or eliminate the disparities in support services, staffing and programs that now exist (e.g. some schools have an enrichment program, others do not; instructional support varies between school districts; supplemental support is not equal or allocated based on SU-wide factors; infrastructure funding differs from school district to school district).

#### **Technology**

The use of technology as a teaching and communication tool has expanded exponentially in the later portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Parents, colleges/universities and employers are expecting students to have adequate technology skills and understand its capabilities. Equalized conditions and support of technology are essential in the successful transition of students to work or higher education.

Chittenden East Supervisory Union (CESU) has assembled a centralized team of technology support personnel to maintain systems and services, but the ability to perform these functions in an effective and efficient manner is significantly influenced by the variances in equipment and infrastructure within CESU. There is a notable difference in the investment member school districts have made in technology over the past several years. This has affected some schools' ability to follow and meet the goals of Chittenden East's comprehensive technology plan. A Union District increases the likelihood of resources being distributed evenly and provides flexibility in the allocation of resources based on necessity. The versatility of a Union District could allow schools to upgrade their technology systems to better support students, staff and families.

**Teacher staffing**

Flexibility in staffing assignments empowers a Union District to adjust staffing assignments based on need, current demographic realities and staff expertise. This authority also has the potential to save money and intensify continuity and coordination of personnel. Often, school districts are faced with the choice of reducing staff because of a shift in student population while a neighboring school district is considering adding staff. These decisions are often complicated because from year to year grade-level populations ebb and flow. Administrators and school boards frequently deliberate about reducing, adding or maintaining staffing levels when faced with grade level fluctuations. The ability to move teachers from one school to another has the prospect of saving money because the Union District would have the option of assigning staffing levels based on annual needs. Any staff reassignment will meet the standards and skills required by the receiving schools opening as determined by their administration and any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

An additional benefit in the Union District's ability to assign staff is the district's realization of its investment in training newly hired employees. School-based training and mentoring involves a considerable investment of time and money. Keeping teachers in the system enables the Union District communities to realize the full potential of its financial commitment.

**Non-teacher staffing**

Many of the efficiencies and benefits pertaining to teaching staff also relate to non-teaching staff members. A Union District has the authority to shift and use personnel based on student population, student needs, staff needs, programming changes, building renovations and staff certifications (e.g. Master Electrician License, Master Plumber License, HVAC License, Physical Trainer Certification, Counseling License etc.). This could reduce the need to contract with outside service providers. Furthermore, it is an efficient and cost effective method of aligning personnel to requirements, responsibilities and obligations.

**Student data collection and reporting**

Collecting, reporting and analyzing student data from pre-K - 12 supports coordination, continuity and responsible allocation of resources. In a Union District, a single board would govern a pre-K -12 system and hold schools accountable for student results at every level. Attention and accountability to every grade in the system would become a necessity because staff, administration and the board would be responsible for collective results. Strategic plans and action plans would be written and implemented for all students pre-K - 12 rather than the current fragmented pre-K - 4 and 5 - 12 planning process. Each grade would be a building block to complete a student's experience within the Union District. In most cases, school boards focus on the needs and results of their local school district and not on the entire pre-K - 12 system. Data compilation and analysis as a Union District optimizes the capacity of our curriculum and data management system, creates a user-friendly reporting tool and affords more opportunities for universal and streamlined training of staff.

**Financial, accounting and budgeting (*Central Office Functions*)**

The formation of a single school district could streamline accounting systems by creating a single budget, eliminating assessments to member school districts for costs currently incurred at

the supervisory union level, and eliminating the bill-backs required when employees are shared by more than one school district. Employees would no longer receive multiple checks and W2s from different employers (school districts). Central office would be processing fewer checks. There would be one treasurer for the Union District resulting in reduced services required from town offices. Budgets would be prepared at the school level, but would be encapsulated into one school district budget. One annual report would be prepared and audited (compared to the eight that are now being prepared). The Union District would be required to submit one statistical report and staff census to the state.

Chittenden East has made a sizeable investment in new accounting/human resource software. Our hybrid nature of incurring costs and distributing revenue between the local school district and the SU complicates our accounting. This structure inhibits the efficient functioning of this business software. None of the business software systems investigated in the selection process were designed specifically for our complex system.

As a single district, coordination and implementation of benefits would be more manageable. Determination of benefits (e.g. insurance, seniority, participation in retirement systems) eligibility would be more transparent and clear.

The reductions in duplication and increased efficiencies would allow for reallocation of staffing resources to facilities coordination and human resources. These areas have been identified as in need of additional attention and services. Furthermore, staff savings could be realized in bookkeeping, treasurer expenses, board operations and centralized administration (see Potential Savings in the Formation of the Union District Chart).

MMMUD will provide centralized services to Non Member Elementary Districts (NMED) such as superintendent, business office, special education, curriculum, and transportation. While the Union District board may change the pricing terms in the future, the fees for service, at a minimum, will be based on actual costs of services provided plus the extra cost of tracking and accounting for these services. The budget will be based on projections which will be true-upped at the end of each fiscal year.

### **Improved utilization of buildings and sport facilities**

Addressed in Improved Student Opportunities and Outcomes

### **Centralized contracting**

Chittenden East Supervisory Union presently has a unified employment agreement for both teaching and support staff.

### **Transportation**

Chittenden East currently has centralized transportation services.

### **Food service**

A Union District would permit and encourage staff collaboration and networking for food services across Chittenden East. Schools could take advantage of the talents and skills of current food service staff employed by other districts. Innovations and techniques could be implemented

throughout Union District. This has the potential to improve quality/nutrition of meals, increase revenue, reduce costs, expand partnerships with local farmers, grow composting efforts and broaden purchasing power with suppliers and vendors.

**Potential Cost Reductions in the Formation of the Union District**

Reduction of the complexity and size of local governance will allow some expenses to be decreased or eliminated. Examples of potential reductions are listed below:

One Bookkeeper	47,000
UID Treasurer	22,000
Annual Report Printing	10,000
CESU Annual Meetings	3,600
Town Treasurer Services & Expenses	50,000
8 Audits	22,000
Board Stipends, Dues/Fees & Operating Expenses	40,000
CESU Relocated to School Building (please note that there are one-time costs associated in relocating Central Office – VT transition grant can be used for this purpose)	43,000
Mansfield Academy (Grades 5-12) Relocated to School Building	38,820
Excess spending penalty	28,000
Change Assistant Superintendent to Curriculum Director	19,000
<b>Total Estimated Cost Reductions</b>	<b>323,420</b>

Additional savings in Central Office expenditures are anticipated as a result of creating the Union District.

**Facility Use**

The formation of the union district would present opportunities to consolidate service to students. The new district may elect to use a facility in a different manner than its current status or close one or more school buildings to adjust for changes in student population.

Examples below are potential savings if the union district were to close an elementary school. These estimates are presented as a range due to the difference in size among the six elementary schools. The high side of the range is for a larger school in the district; the low side is a smaller school. These estimates assume the current (FY14) student population at the school would be redistributed to one or more of the remaining elementary schools and that service at the remaining schools would be increased as needed to accommodate the increase in enrollment.

No school closures are planned in the immediate future. As per the language of Act 153 Section 3(d),

no school closures are permitted in the first four years of operation unless the town of residence agrees to a closure.

<b>Net Savings</b>	<b>Larger Elementary School</b>	<b>Smaller Elementary School</b>
Principal	\$136,349	\$98,944
Secretary	98,522	38,141
Teachers & Support Staff	1,046,125	180,173
Library services	118,323	40,804
Food services	81,672	42,683
Nursing services	86,291	5,820
Guidance	91,772	24,635
Bldgs. Maintenance & Custodial	212,643	80,741
Utilities	58,650	27,841
<b>Total Net Savings</b>	<b>\$1,930,347</b>	<b>\$539,782</b>

**Estimated Impact of Local Tax Rates with First Year 8 Cent State Incentives\***

Estimates based on CESU elementary school average salaries/costs.

<u>Equalized Rate (Before CLA)</u>	Smilie Memorial Elementar y (Bolton)	Brewster Pierce Memorial Elementar y (Huntingt on)	Jericho Elementar y (Jericho)	Richmond Elementar y (Richmon d)	Underhill Central School (Underhill Town)	Underhill ID Elementar y (Underhill )	Underhill ID Elementar y (Jericho)
Proposed Local Homestead Tax Rate (FY 15 - Year 1)	1.6782	1.4555	1.4867	1.4862	1.4296	1.5011	1.5011
Estimated Local Homestead Tax Rate (with state incentives subject to 5% cap)	1.5943	1.3827	1.4124	1.4119	1.3758	1.4260	1.4260
Local Tax Rate under MOUNT MANSFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT*				1.3758			

\*The calculations used in this illustration reflect the proposed FY 15 budget totals. The reductions in Local Tax Rates are a result of the 0.08 state incentive in the first year of implementation of the merger.

\*\*It should be noted that the state incentives in years 2-4 decline each year for the term of the incentive program. The incentive percentage starts at 8 cents for the initial year and then declines each year thereafter (6 cents year two, 4 cents year three and 2 cents in year four).



**Attachment C  
School Choice Options**

**Describe the grades which are presently served by combining/forming districts, and their building configurations (before the proposed merger).**

- Elementary students grades Prek-4 from *Bolton* attend *Smilie Memorial School*.
- Elementary students grades Prek-4 from *Huntington* attend *Brewster Pierce Memorial Elementary School*.
- Elementary students grades K-4 from *Jericho* attend *Jericho Elementary School*.
- Elementary students grades Prek-4 from *Richmond* attend *Richmond Elementary School*.
- Elementary students grades K-4 from *Jericho* and *Underhill* in the current *Underhill ID* District attend *Underhill ID Elementary School*.
- Elementary students grades Prek-4 from *Underhill Center* attend *Underhill Central School*.
- Students in grades 5-8 in *Bolton*, *Huntington* and *Richmond* attend *Camels Hump Middle School*.
- Students in grades 5-8 in *Jericho* and *Underhill* attend *Browns River Middle School*.
- Students in grades 9-12 attend *Mount Mansfield Union High School*.

**Describe the grades which will be served by the Union District after its creation, and their building configurations.**

The Union District will serve grades pre-kindergarten – grade 12 by providing for students' education at public schools operated by the Union District.

The Union District Board of School Directors shall determine the operation of pre-kindergarten programs.

Grade level configurations by building are as follows:

- Smilie Memorial Elementary – Pre-kindergarten through Grade 4
- Richmond Elementary – Pre-kindergarten through Grade 4
- Brewster Pierce Memorial School – Pre-kindergarten through Grade 4
- Jericho Elementary – Kindergarten through Grade 4
- Underhill ID Elementary – Pre-kindergarten through Grade 4
- Underhill Center School – Kindergarten through Grade 4
- Camels Hump Middle School – Grade 5 through Grade 8
- Browns River Middle School – Grade 5 through Grade 8
- Mount Mansfield Union High School – Grade 9 through Grade 12

**Describe any expansion or diminishment of school choice options that will result from the creation of the proposed Union District**

School choice is currently available to all high school students in Vermont (Within capacity limits specified in statute and put in place by local public school boards.) No changes are planned at this time.

School choice options may be expanded for students in pre-kindergarten through grade 8. Discussions and decisions regarding school choice will be at the discretion of the Union District Board of School Directors.

**Describe any plans, or any discussions that have occurred, regarding designation one or more public or private schools.**

No plans for designation are in place. This Union District will be a pre-kindergarten - grade 12 system with one high school, two middle schools and up to six elementary schools.

**Describe any plans, or any discussions that have occurred, regarding closure of schools.**

No school closures are planned in the immediate future. As per the language of Act 153 Section 3(d), no school closures are permitted in the first four years of operation unless the town of residence agrees to a closure.

**Attachment D**

The Following Districts Are Deemed Advisable for the Establishment of the Proposed Union District (School District Data)

Bolton School District

2013-14	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	71.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$18,170
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	14.40
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	7.90
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	5.00
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	72.00
2012-13	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	72.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$16,061
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	13.58
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	7.24
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	5.30
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	72.00
2011-12	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	82.30
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$15,387
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'11	15.66
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'11	8.50
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'11	5.30
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'11	83.00
2010-11	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	79.15
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$15,298
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'10	16.92
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'10	8.71
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'10	5.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'10	88.00
2009-10	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	84.65
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,948.76
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'09	14.39
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'09	8.12
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'09	5.70
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'09	82.00
2008-09	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	82.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,145.42
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'08	14.35
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'08	8.78
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	6.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'08	89.00

Huntington School District

2013-14	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	149.85
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,387
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	16.13
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	9.86
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	9.30
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	150.00
2012-13	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	155.35
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,844
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	16.96
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	9.17
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	9.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	156.00
2011-12	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	144.25
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,319
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'11	17.29
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'11	10.13
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'11	8.33
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'11	144.00
2010-11	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	139.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,588
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'10	16.27
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'10	9.06
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'10	8.30
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'10	135.00
2009-10	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	134.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,813.70
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'09	17.28
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'09	9.40
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'09	8.10
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'09	140.00
2008-09	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	138.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,051.53
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'08	16.25
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'08	9.55
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	8.00
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'08	130.00

Jericho School District

2013-14	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	260.32
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$14,786
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	14.27
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	8.90
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	17.80
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	254.00
2012-13	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	237.62
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,993
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	12.92
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	6.83
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	17.80
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	230.00
2011-12	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	228.45
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,256
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'11	12.17
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'11	6.43
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'11	18.00
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'11	219.00
2010-11	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	245.31
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,224
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'10	13.82
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'10	7.09
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'10	17.80
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'10	246.00
2009-10	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	252.03
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,894.41
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'09	14.89
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'09	8.07
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'09	18.80
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'09	280.00
2008-09	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	265.49
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,227.25
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'08	14.79
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'08	7.89
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	18.80
	Student-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	278.00

Richmond School District

2013-14	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	274.65
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,979
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	14.38
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	9.41
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	19.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	276.00
2012-13	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	288.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,746
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	15.00
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	8.29
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	19.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	288.00
2011-12	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	290.30
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,553
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'11	15.10
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'11	8.67
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'11	19.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'11	290.00
2010-11	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	313.23
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,218
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'10	15.83
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'10	9.04
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'10	19.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'10	304.00
2009-10	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	301.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,646.46
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'09	15.78
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'09	9.01
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'09	19.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'09	303.00
2008-09	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	299.70
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,235.82
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'08	15.47
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'08	9.07
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	19.20
	Student-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	297.00

Underhill ID School District

2013-14	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	98.65
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$14,550
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	11.85
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	7.54
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	8.10
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	96.00
2012-13	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	110.75
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,990
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	13.58
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	7.98
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	8.10
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	110.00
2011-12	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	110.60
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,351
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'11	14.47
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'11	8.42
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'11	7.60
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'11	110.00
2010-11	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	118.15
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,769
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'10	13.75
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'10	7.76
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'10	8.00
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'10	110.00
2009-10	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	108.00
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$13,106.05
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'09	14.31
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'09	7.27
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'09	7.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'09	103.00
2008-09	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	103.05
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,265.99
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'08	15.24
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'08	7.48
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	6.30
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'08	96.00

Underhill Town School District

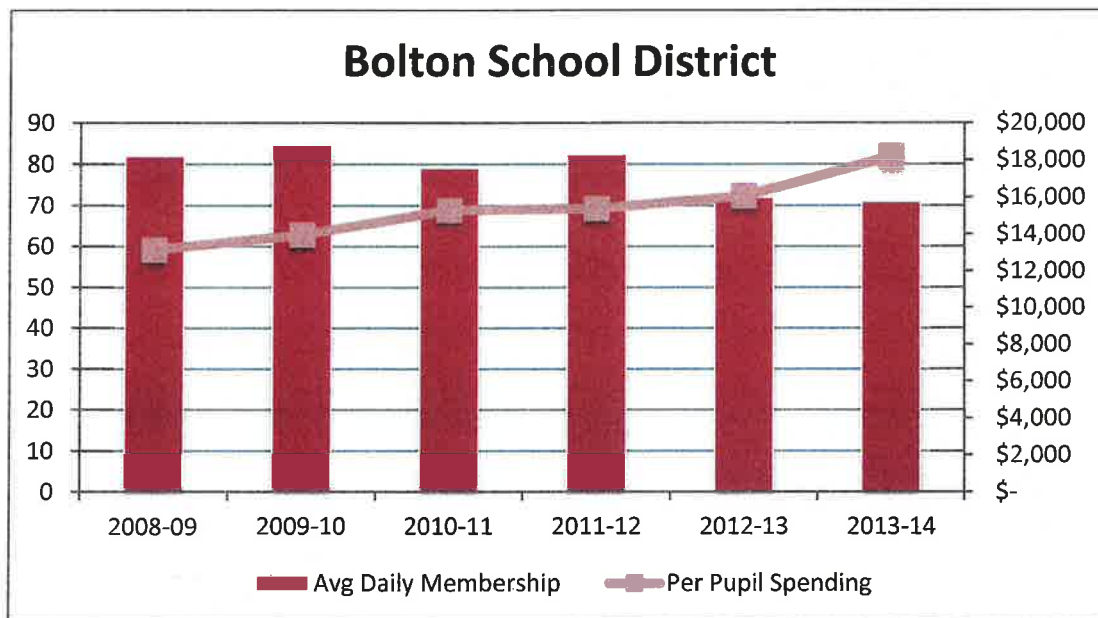
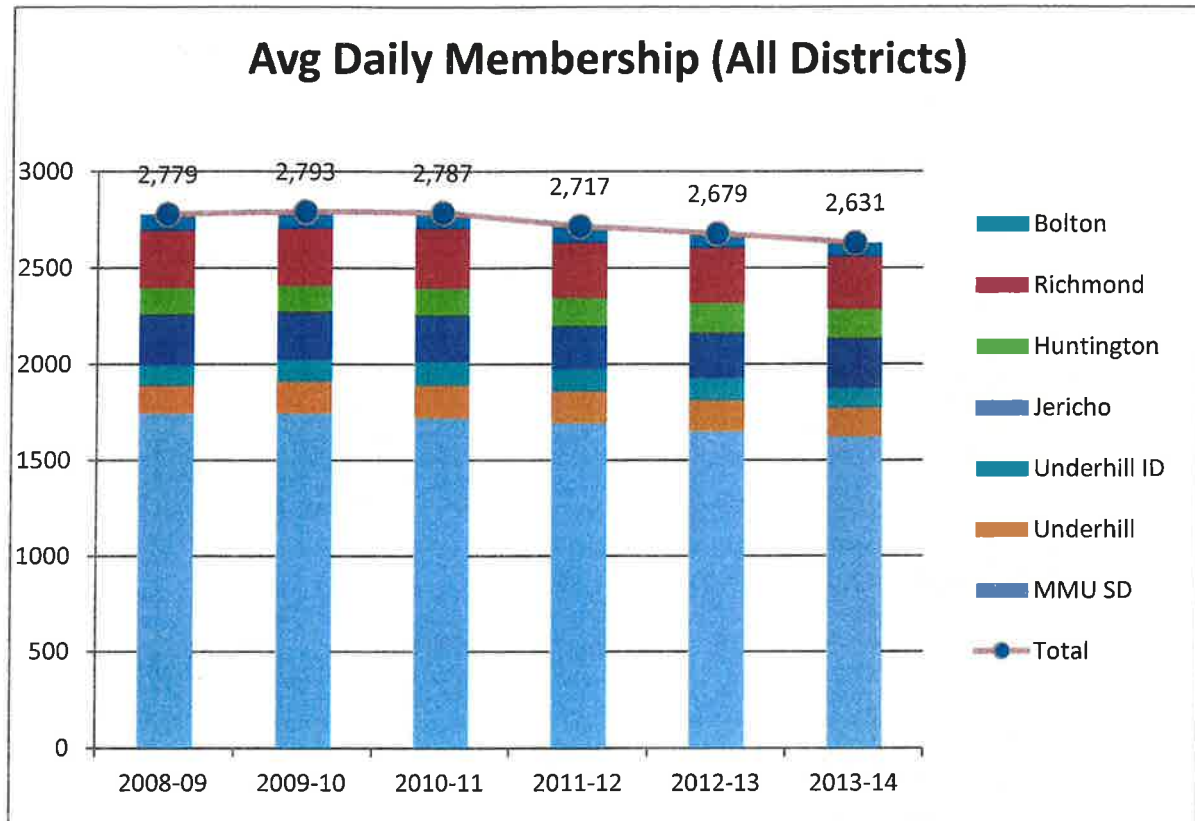
2013-14	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	151.80
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$14,131
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	18.22
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	11.11
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	9.00
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	164.00
2012-13	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	161.60
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,824
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	18.40
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	10.21
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	9.40
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	173.00
2011-12	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	164.23
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,594
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'11	19.57
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'11	10.18
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'11	9.20
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'11	180.00
2010-11	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	169.45
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,751
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'10	21.40
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'10	10.71
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'10	8.60
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'10	184.00
2009-10	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	166.73
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,598.09
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'09	15.22
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'09	7.97
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'09	9.00
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'09	137.00
2008-09	Average Daily Membership (PK-4)	144.80
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,206.01
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'08	14.89
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'08	7.47
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	9.00
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'08	134.00

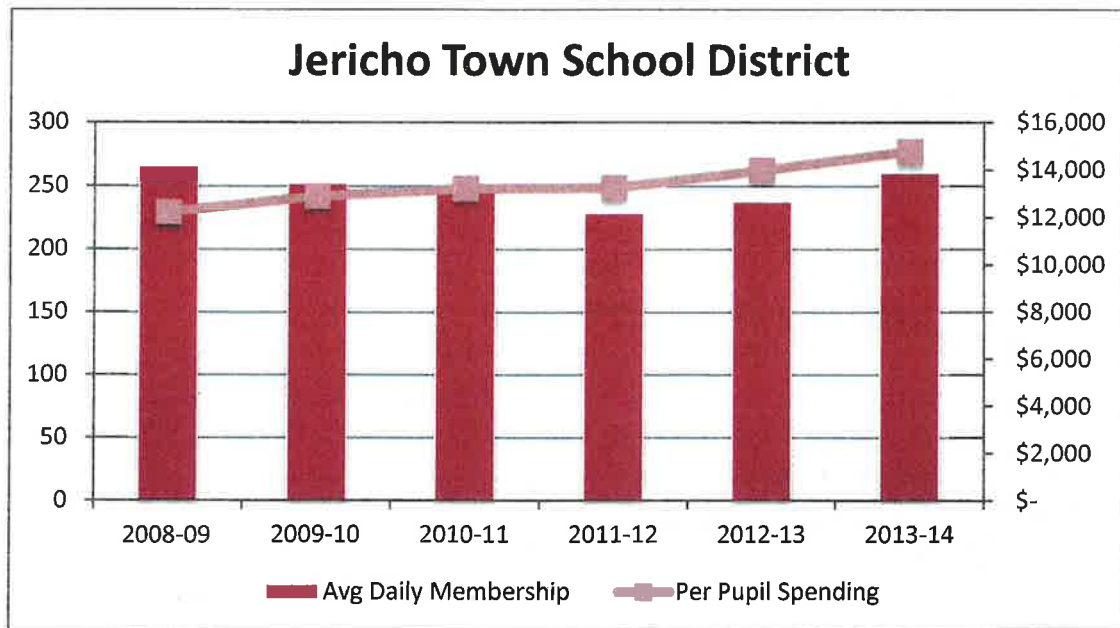
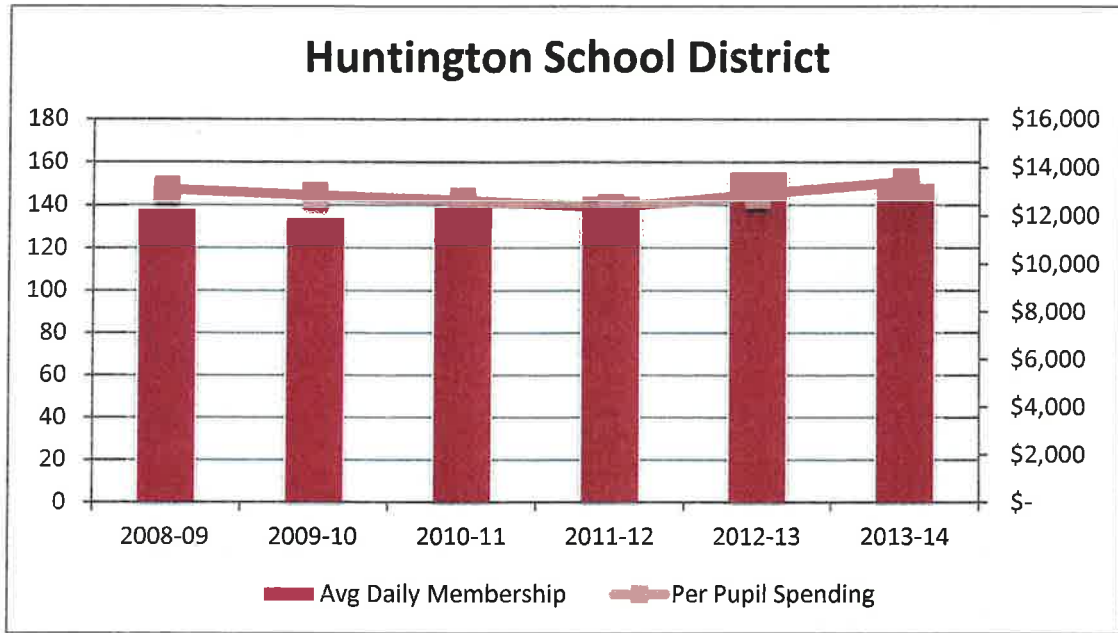


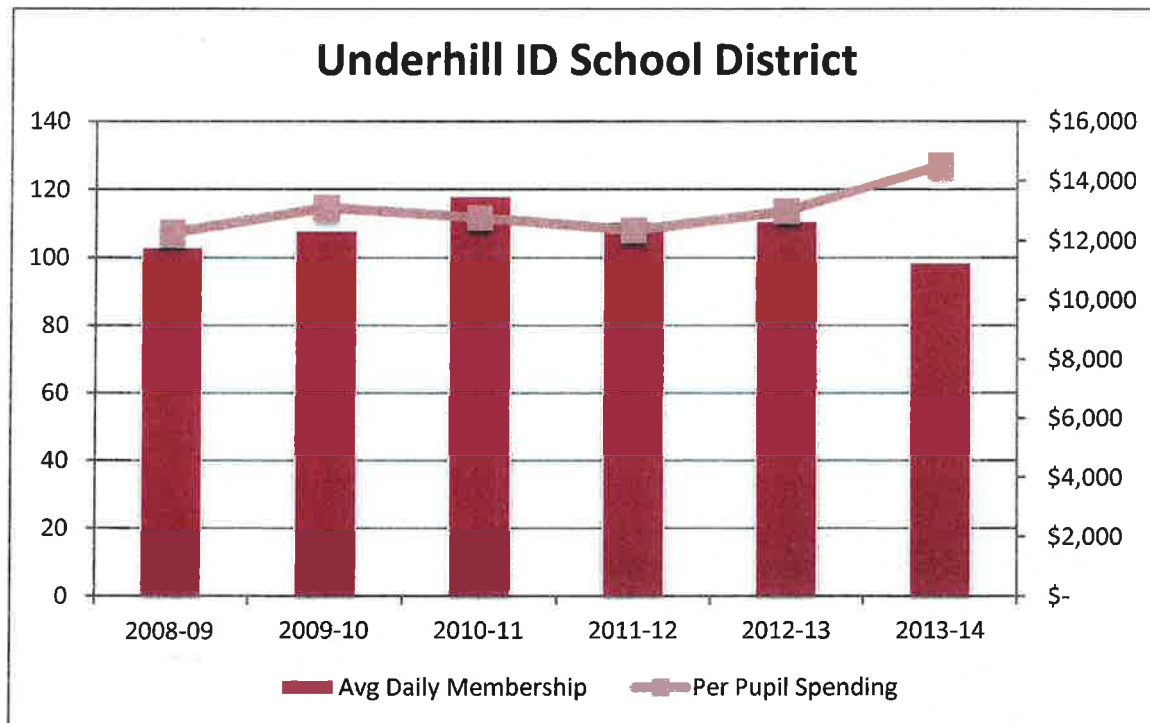
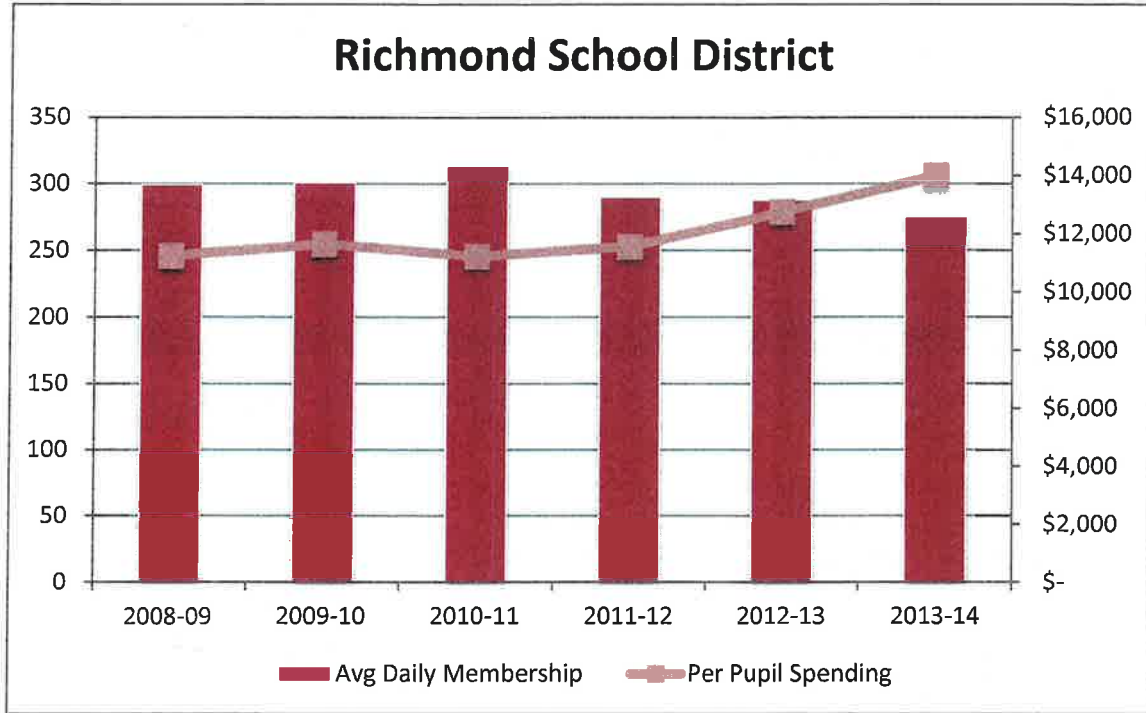
Mt. Mansfield Union School District #17

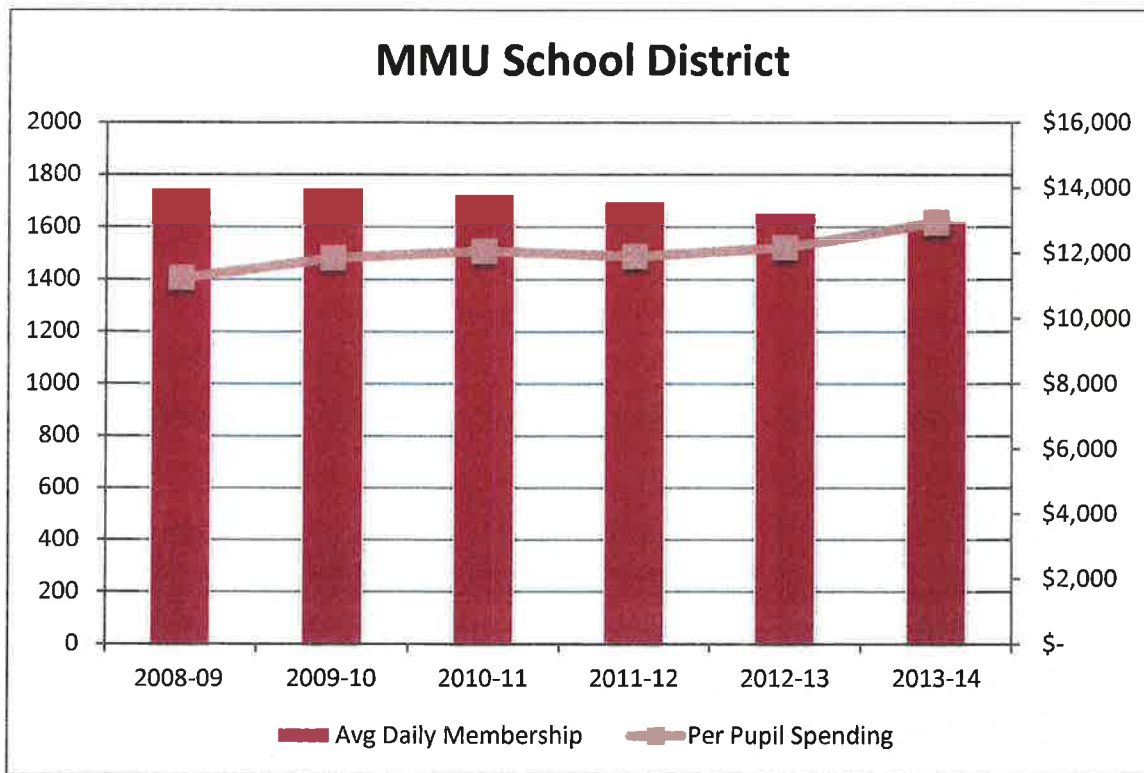
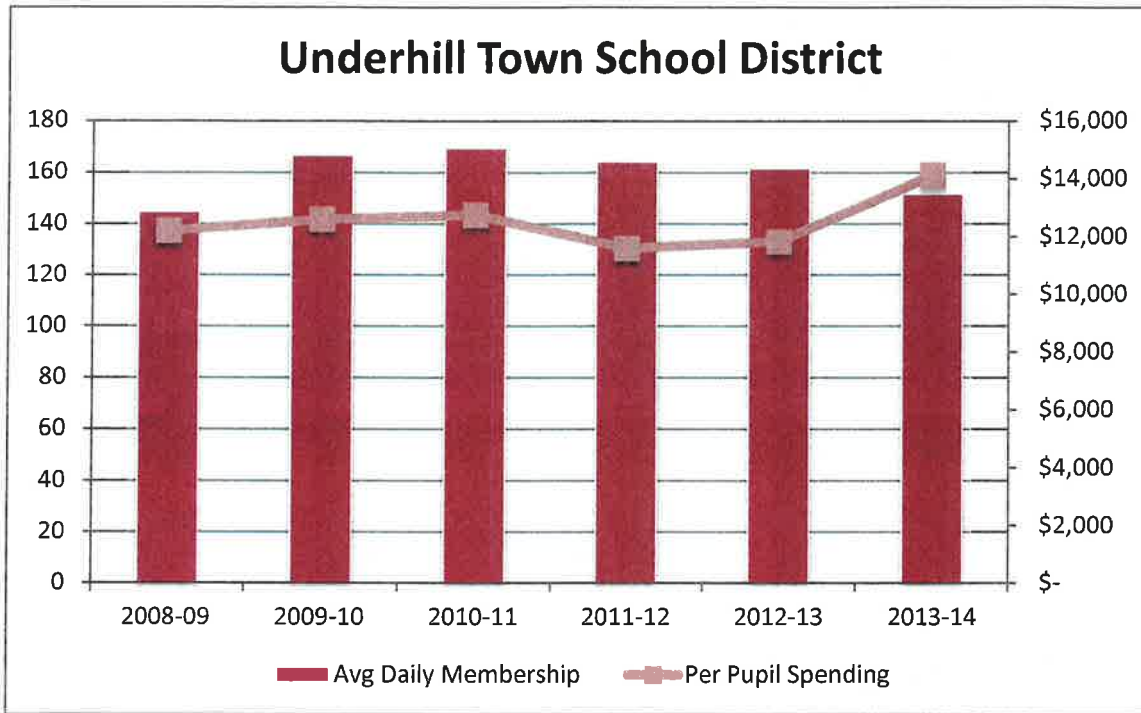
2013-14	Average Daily Membership (Grades 5-12)	1,625.03
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,935
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	14.28
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	11.87
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	16.46
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	235.14
2012-13	Average Daily Membership (Grades 5-12)	1,653.61
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,173
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'12	14.89
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'12	8.83
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'12	16.14
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'12	240.29
2011-12	Average Daily Membership (Grades 5-12)	1,696.49
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,901
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'11	14.59
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'11	8.82
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'11	16.86
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'11	246.00
2010-11	Average Daily Membership (Grades 5-12)	1,722.98
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,065
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'10	14.65
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'10	9.11
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'10	17.33
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'10	253.86
2009-10	Average Daily Membership (Grades 5-12)	1,746.95
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,850.77
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'09	14.58
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'09	9.07
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'09	17.34
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'09	252.86
2008-09	Average Daily Membership (Grades 5-12)	1,746.10
	Ed Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$11,240.57
	Student-to-Teacher Ratio--FY'08	14.93
	Student-to-Adult Student Ratio--FY'08	9.33
	Teacher-to-Administrator Ratio--FY'08	17.46
	Student-to Administrator Ratio--FY'08	260.57

\* Pupil ratios from the VT AOE – Comparative School Data for Cost-Effectiveness Report and/or School Report









**MINORITY REPORT RECOMMENDING AGAINST ADOPTION**

There are many laudable goals outlined in the CESU proposal to implement a Voluntary Merger as allowed under current Vermont statutes, especially as outlined Act 153/156. This Minority Report does not criticize the good intentions that underlie the merger proposal, but instead argues that potential problems exist in the Articles as written, the Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) is inadequate, and the Timeline for implementation is too rushed. Our schools and communities will be better served, and a more successful Union School District can be formed, if more time is allowed for more thorough research and development. Therefore, the Minority recommends against adoption at this time.

It is easy to agree on our shared goals: equality of educational opportunities for all students, regardless of town of residence; more cost-efficient use of resources and improved administrative efficiency; and an excellent 21st century education to meet the needs of all our young people as they enter the world as young adults. It is also easy to agree that we want all this while also reducing the ever-growing cost, as described in higher per pupil spending. It makes sense to start this analysis with what we are doing well, and where we need to improve, both in fiscal efficiencies and in educational outcomes.

**Fiscal Efficiencies**

In recent years, CESU has undertaken to share services where possible, as encouraged by Vermont law. There are many examples of successful coordination of services, overseen by the Superintendent and Central Office. The CBA should discuss what additional sharing could be accomplished under our existing SU structure, then point out what efficiencies would require a new Union District structure. It should demonstrate where we could do better, and provide realistic estimated dollar savings for these suggested efficiencies. Our superintendent coordinates "carousel meetings" a couple times a year for our boards to come together to meet and discuss issues. We could do this more often under our existing SU system, at the superintendent's suggestion, if he expressed a need for more coordinated programming and communication. This would require no governance change. The potential here has not been fully explored.

At the state level, Vermont leaders have been endeavoring to reduce costs of education, or at least slow down the rate of increase. "Montpelier" has chided school boards for failing to curtail increases, even as the state has shifted costs from Montpelier to local budgets. Consolidation of supervisory unions has been suggested as a cost saver, primarily because it would cut per pupil administrative costs. This proposed CESU voluntary merger retains its superintendent, so any administrative cost savings must occur elsewhere. What is projected, and how?

The Cost Benefit Analysis (Attachment B) indicates "potential" savings in administrative areas, totaling \$323,420. Putting all payroll under one single accounting program should be more efficient, but considering that payroll programs simplify recordkeeping and tax filing, what are the actual expected savings? The projected savings show only \$47,000 for reduced bookkeeping. \$40,000 in savings for "reduced board expenses" is unexplained: all our directors are unpaid volunteers. At least one school board chair has advised that budgets for individual schools still be maintained, but there is no indication that this has been included in these projected savings. \*

The relocation of the Central Office and the Mansfield Academy is included in the projected administration savings, but will this require a school closure? More explanation is needed. The cost of making these moves is not included because "they are covered by a Vermont transition grant," ie, paid for by Vermont taxpayers. These transition costs should be part of the analysis, as taxpayers pay for them through other taxes.

The \$323,420 admin savings represents less than 1% of the total budgets for all our CESU schools (approx. \$27.4M for MMUSD and \$16.4 for the elementary districts). It is unclear whether the \$323,420 in reduced costs at Central Office is a "gross" or "net" amount, as new costs from new duties are not included. The report states that staff may be reallocated to facilities coordination and human services. Will other new and different administrative duties be added as a result of the consolidation, requiring the same or more staffing, or new computer programs? Will school board directors request stipends for their additional workloads? Even without those possibilities, the administrative savings will be negligible, at best.

The most notable cost saver in the Cost Benefit Analysis is under "**Potential Net Reduction from School Closing.**" Here the estimated net savings is \$539,782, a savings of a little over 1% of our combined 7-district budgets. The report fails to discuss what criteria would be considered, or the likelihood, for a school closure, only stating "no school closures are planned in the immediate future." With that statement, it is unclear why these school closure savings are presented at all.

A more informative discussion of the financial drivers that may lead to a school closure needs to be included in the merger report, along with which school(s) might be considered, and why. It is understandable that the committee would be reluctant to discuss or identify the need for a school closure in a few years, but the Cost Benefit Analysis is incomplete without more forthright data and ingenuous insights from the administration. People deserve to understand what the likelihood is that one or more of our schools will close, or that their children will be bussed elsewhere. Conversely, the discussion needs to demonstrate how the new governance will be used to keep a struggling school open, and how the merged budget will be affected, especially after the 4-year "incentives" are used up.

The CBA includes a chart demonstrating **Estimated Impact on Local Tax Rates** to demonstrate a "benefit" to local property tax payers. This chart shows the "8 cent incentive", which happens for only 1 year. If a reader looks at the fine print, they see that the "incentive" is actually reduced each year in the 3 subsequent years, but no figures appear in the chart to demonstrate this. Once again, it should be noted that Vermont is only able to pay these "incentive grants" by raising taxes elsewhere, so there is a false sense of savings as this is presented. Vermonters are paying the bill for the tax "incentives."

As we consider undertaking the huge task of creating a new governance structure, and dismantling the one we have, as we consider that Vermont education monies will be spent to pay legal and accounting specialists to assist with this major transition, the Cost Benefit Analysis must provide solid evidence that this money will be well spent. The savings described in The Report are minimal at best, as demonstrated above. Ultimately, this means *better educational outcomes* should be outlined in The Report.

### **Improved student opportunities**

In the area of Improved student opportunities and outcomes, the CBA presents 3 benefits: *school choice for elementary age students*, *the sharing of facilities and resources*, and *equalized programming opportunities*. A few observations, concerns, and questions come to mind.

#### **School Choice**

If one is to accept that a major reason to reorganize our supervisory union is to provide our elementary students with more "**school choice**," then this Report should make a better case.

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Tuition is mentioned as an impediment that prevents children from enrolling in schools outside of their town of residence, but there is no explanation for why some of our youngest students would choose to travel farther for their schooling. If different programming is to be offered in different schools, some discussion of this would be helpful, such as what choices, and how would transportation and "equal access" be assured. Question: Is the benefit of providing school choice to elementary students in our CESU sufficient to warrant a change of governance, or could our CESU schools build on their cooperative structures to provide more choices now? If our high school students can currently access "school choice," we ought to be able to offer school choice within our own network of elementary schools.

To expand elementary choices we need to ask, "Which students are in need of different options?" and "Will the merger attempt to supply better options for those students?" Have we explored options in our SU to identify what "choices" are desirable, and how we might best provide them? This is a topic that could/should be discussed at our "Carousel meetings." Educational staff must be the starting point in this discussion. The Report, at the very least, should discuss examples of "choices" that would be beneficial, their potential costs and viability.

The CBA points to the \$1.18M cost of tuitioning students to the technical schools outside the district, and suggests that a unified district could "fashion educational environments" to meet these students' needs and "save money over time" in doing so. The implication that our students would get their technical training within the Union District raises some concerns. If planners are hoping to build/create a MMUUSD tech center, then a financial plan should be spelled out. Would a MMUUSD tech center be located in one of our existing schools, by reconfiguring the use of the buildings, or would one of our buildings be reconfigured? The vague reference is out-of-place without more explanation. Without more clarity, one can only conjecture. Will the Union District be able to borrow larger sums for bigger projects (such as a tech center)? What fiduciary protections will be established to assure against financial risk\*\*\* when the Union District funds are all in "one pot?" And, if a MMUUSD tech center were to be built, would its programs be comparable to the programs that MMU students currently access, and would MMU students have a choice as to which tech centers they can attend?

Currently our high school students can access some limited school choice, as well as technical choices. Missing in this study was any consideration of whether the system for high school choices could be improved under a new model, such as one that could facilitate more specialized and high-level classes in both technical and academic areas. A well-designed school merger study would consider how to provide better 21st century school choices for our high school students, and not limit school choice to the elementary level.

### **Equalizing Opportunities**

School choice options, whether for elementary or high school students, can certainly be beneficial where high quality choices also provide **equality of opportunity**, another valuable goal. Equality of opportunity can be accomplished by sharing resources, staff and tax revenues, and by operating under a single school board. But there is more to consider.

One challenge to the goal of providing "equalized programming opportunities for all students" will be making the hard choices as to what to keep and what to cut. The CBA should present an outline of where inequalities/differences currently exist and provide a projection of which programming would be expanded to all schools, and which programming would be cut back. Cutting back can mean reduction in supplemental staff for enrichment programs, or fewer classroom teachers (larger class sizes). The CBA should present "potential costs of equalization." It should provide graphs showing the range from



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maximum to minimum, from "leveling up" to "leveling down," to demonstrate what "equalizing programming opportunities" will cost.

Fortunately, we live in neighborhoods that place a high value on education and community participation. Most of our children thrive under the excellent programs and staff in our schools, along with many diverse and dynamic opportunities for growth where we live. Many of our children come from homes where family activities, reading and educational outings are part of daily life. Our classrooms glow with the positive energy that so many of our children bring to school, under the expert guidance of our hardworking staff.

Unfortunately, not all children come to school with the benefits provided to the most fortunate, while other children struggle with disabilities that require unique and dedicated oversight. How will this merger provide more for our most needy students, those who are currently not thriving? Will we see additional enrichment activities, guidance services, and supplemental help in academic areas? A more thorough discussion of this topic is needed to understand how this merger will be beneficial for those students, and what that will cost.

To summarize, the Cost Benefit Analysis is inadequate in its presentation of figures and data to demonstrate how this merger will translate into savings, and how the savings will be converted into equalized educational opportunities for students, and educational benefits for those who are currently struggling. The Analysis needs to outline more thoroughly what costs might be associated with improved educational opportunities and equalized programming, and how they will be paid for, just as any business plan would.

### **The dilemma of a Modified Union District, and other aspects of ACT 153/156**

A significant revision to Act 153/ 156 has created a mechanism for replacing an existing Supervisory Union with a Union School District even where some districts/towns wish to retain their current Supervisory Union set up. In Article 1 of this proposal it is established that, with enough votes, *either* a Unified Union School District *or* a Modified Union School District will be established with sufficient votes. Which outcome depends on whether all, or only a majority, of towns/districts approve of the change.

Here is the problem: Although voters vote YES or NO, they have no say regarding whether their vote is for a Unified Union or a Modified Union. These 2 outcomes (MMUUSD or MMMUSD) are not the same, and not equally desirable. Voters should have an opportunity to approve or disapprove of the option that is indicated in their vote, that is, a separate vote for each option. Voters need clear choices spelled out, and this proposal does not do so.

Discussion. If the CESU is replaced by a new MMMUSD (Modified Union School), some communities become Non-participating districts, this creating a division where none existed before. A voter may support a Unified Union district, but would not approve of a Modified Union District, not wanting to see a division within the 5-town SU. The ballot should provide an opportunity to vote for a MMMUSD and a separate opportunity to vote for a MMUUSD. Voters could vote YES or NO for each option, and the highest vote would of course prevail. This way, if voters want a Unified district, but not a Modified District, that would be reflected in the voting results.

ACT 153/156 created several options for voluntary merger, including a Unified Elementary District. This Voluntary Merger Study Committee only considered a Modified/Unified Union school district. For

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voters who agree that some of our elementary schools should consolidate, but don't agree with changing the workload and responsibilities of the MMU board, the proposed option is unacceptable. Unfortunately, the merger of elementary schools was not considered and CESU voters have had no opportunity to discuss or choose this option.

The Unified Elementary District type of merger could be an appropriate governance change for our schools. A UID would allow for the efficiencies of scale, sharing of personnel, resources, buildings, payroll, and accounting, while allowing our well-functioning MMUSD (high school district) school board to retain its current responsibilities (oversight of our 3 largest buildings, grades 5-12). If we replaced our 6 separate elementary boards with 1 Unified Elementary board, this would allow school choice, which is especially appealing to those districts that are in close proximity. It would allow for the per pupil spending numbers to be based on all the elementary students, providing some "stability" regarding year to year tax consequences that follow year to year population changes. The value of local school board participation would be combined with the value of collaboration and efficiencies of scale. The MMUSD board and the Elementary board would serve as partners overseeing the PreK-12 education of all CESU students. And there would still be the "benefit" of Vermont tax incentives and transition grants.

### **Governance and Local Control**

The Report states that the "chief objection" to the proposal has been fear of loss of local control. This is incorrect, although it correctly points to the successful collaboration of our 5 towns within our Mount Mansfield Union school district. Despite our collaborative success to date, there are valid concerns and differences. While it is true that our high school district successfully built and shares our middle and high schools, providing better facilities in these larger centralized campuses than could be achieved in our small local towns, the unification of our elementary schools is not the same.

Our elementary school buildings are already built, owned by each town, and will continue to be where our elementary students go to school. Instead of being a town asset, with townspeople overseeing the building where their children spend their earliest school years, the buildings will be overseen by a group of directors who are generally unfamiliar with the buildings (at this time, at least). That local connection to the history and maintenance of each school building will be diluted when neighbors no longer have the responsibility. Where citizens have given freely of their time and talents to serve as community overseers, local representation will be curtailed with the change to fewer board members (loss of about 30) and more school buildings (additional 6 buildings). Fewer community members will "have their eyes on" the buildings.

The continued participation of the community in our schools is desirable, and the governance structure should encourage positive engagement with the community. With representation limited to participation on the 15-member board, this will provide only 1 or 2 voices for our smaller communities, at meetings that will be farther away. The smaller outlying towns have proportionally smaller voices, so issues that are unique to these smaller communities are less likely to make it onto the agenda of the unified board. While Article 18 allows that the Union District school board "shall provide opportunity for local input," the Articles make no provision for local school councils that would have a voice, or any legal authority, to facilitate any meaningful participation. This needs further public input and development before approval of the Articles.

A real concern regarding the functioning of a unified PreK-12 school board: Too much work and too broad a scope of expertise for a single board. The same number of directors as the current MMU board

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will be responsible for overseeing 9 (instead of 3) buildings and principals, and working with issues regarding PreK-12 curriculum and policies (not "just" the 5th-12th grades already overseen). The scope of educational activities in the PreK-4 grades is vastly different than that of the 5th-12th grades, so this is an exponential expansion of responsibilities, requiring broader appropriate knowledge. This is not just a merging of budgets.

The Report has not discussed the challenges that will face the new board as it strives not only to "keep up" with its responsibilities, but takes on the loftier goals of providing new choices for elementary students, and adjusts to serving a wider community of parents. Will issues of the 6 elementary schools be allowed sufficient time for consideration? Doesn't the high school board already have a "full plate?" Can we expect directors to continue to volunteer without stipends?

Consideration of different configurations for the unified board members would be helpful. For example, there are questions that could be pursued: Should there be board members whose knowledge and oversight is primarily on the elementary schools, and others who have more background with the older grades? Could the board be structured so that each town had at least one of each? Should each elementary school have a school council, with one elected chairperson, who would also have a voice in school board planning?

The Report needs to more thoroughly analyze and address these questions and concerns, and demonstrate how local participation and elementary issues will be successfully integrated into the already busy schedule of our 5-town unified school high school board.

### **Technology**

The Analysis needs a cost estimate for upgrading infrastructure, equipment and staff training to get all schools on par. We agree that technology is a vital and ubiquitous component of our 21st century communications and education, and that schools must invest in adequate up-to-date equipment and infrastructure, along with knowledgeable staff. We agree that a new Union District, as well as our current SU, should strive to provide equal technology opportunities for all. Where the CBA is inadequate is in outlining what it will cost to get all schools to the same level.

### **Assets and Financing**

Similarly, the Report for the merger of these 6 school districts lacks a spreadsheet outlining assets and liabilities. Each district's real estate, assets, debts and liabilities should be clearly outlined. These, in combination with the MMUSD and the Central Office financial statements, are a basic legal and accounting requirement for consolidation of assets. Just as voters of each town are presented with budgets regarding their own schools when they vote in the annual budget, voters in this case are voting to join assets and liabilities, and should be presented with that information.

The annual fluctuation of school populations is cited as a destabilizer in budget projections from year to year, as state funding is based on per pupil costs. This report has provided population data going back several years, but missing from this analysis is any attempt to project school age populations for the next several years. Part of any financial picture should include projections of revenues and costs, and in this analysis, student population numbers are key to forecasting.

### **Conclusion**

The Minority recommends against this proposal in its current form. A more thorough merger study is required, as the CBA lacks sufficient substance and data, failing to provide pertinent or compelling evidence that the benefits are sufficient enough to warrant the costs. CESU should take more time to do

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this right, and more fully vet the consequences of going ahead with this proposed MMMUSD/MMUUSD.

The Minority recommends that a more thorough process be initiated to outline and address our strengths and deficiencies in the spirit of unity. The Merger study process should be an open-ended process to evaluate how to work more efficiently and collaboratively to provide outstanding and equal educational opportunities for all our students. Despite seeds of good ideas and the potential to realize some efficiency with centralized governance, there are too many significant issues and unknown consequences that need further study and problem solving.

The Analysis should outline areas where we are currently underperforming or deficient. Having identified areas of weakness, the study should consider where current strategies could be improved, and then go on to specify where a Unified District would help, and what strategies would be employed. The study should consider different types of mergers, especially concentrating on options that directly relate to our identified deficiencies and to goals that are currently hard to attain. There should be a balanced discussion of unknowns, and recognition of specific concerns that have been reported to the committee, in the interest of presenting a more balanced view.

The Minority recommends against this proposal in its current form because it allows for the creation of a Modified Union District. The possibility that our union will be split into Members and Non Members is a very real and unfortunate possible outcome if this document is approved.

Recommendation: Establish unbiased 5-town forums and learn what the unresolved issues are. Take the time to understand the problems that led Maine to undo mergers, to understand why several of our nearby SU merger study groups chose not to unify. Give doubters and proponents more opportunities to understand the issues, to reach more common ground.

The proposed Timeline is not sufficient to provide the newly created Union District board of directors adequate time to develop the new unified budget with a full understanding of the many cost drivers, including becoming familiar with unique issues in each school. This is necessary to assure a smooth successful transition. The adjustments will be challenging enough without the added burden of rushing through the complex work that will be required. Clearly we want to avoid mistakes and gaps of knowledge. \*\* This process needs to be more than just combining all the numbers "onto one sheet."

The expanded responsibilities, scope of experience and expertise that will be required, or at least desirable, among the newly elected 15 member school board is a change that will over-burden directors and under-represent issues. Recommendation: more analysis of what the ideal board configuration should be.

The loss of local control is much more than an outdated emotional concern, as it involves relinquishing ownership of real estate and assets, as well as transferring decision-making to a smaller number of people, most of whom are not the neighbors we meet and greet in our daily comings and goings.

Delay the November vote. Our state legislators have realized that school consolidation is much more than a fiscal issue that could be fixed with economies of scale. They instead are gathering knowledgeable professionals to assist them in developing a better understanding of the complex issues and consequences. With the state launching this study, it would make sense for our merger committee to allow time to benefit from their findings. We have much to learn.

The Minority recommends against acceptance of the CESU merger at the time.

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Cautionary footnotes:

*\*We have been advised that a centralized single budget will mean fewer audits, albeit a more complex budget if it includes how funds are spent in each school. On that note: at least one school board chair (who supports the merger) recommends that we still maintain school-by-school budgets.*

*\*\* The Burlington school district, with its centralized school board, experienced a very serious fiscal problem involving several years of mistakes that no one noticed. What systemic failure allowed these errors to be worked into the budget process year after year? We need to ask this question, and understand its import, before committing to a new unified budget process.*

*\*\*\* A single budget and a single school board also mean fewer eyes on the figures. What are our checks and balances? We need to create a very transparent and duplicative system to assure that in the years ahead we have 1. Accuracy 2. Knowledge of accounting rules 3. Security of accounts*

Signature Page: The undersigned Voluntary Merger Planning Committee members do not support adoption of the CESU Voluntary Merger Plan.

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### COMMITTEE RESPONSE TO MINORITY REPORT

The Minority Report Recommending Against Adoption was delivered to the CESU Voluntary Merger Committee at our final drafting meeting on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2014. With no time to review the report for accuracy, the committee included it as a companion document to the majority report. Unfortunately, the minority report contains serious factual errors making it an unreliable source document for voters. Furthermore, the minority report misrepresents the charge given to the committee by the elected CESU school boards as affirmed and conveyed by the CESU Executive Committee.

Examples of the factual errors include:

1. The minority report implies a school would be closed if the Mansfield Academy or the Central Office is moved to an existing school building. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** The Mansfield Academy and the Central Office could be added to a number of existing operating CESU schools. The problem is not space availability but current governance and some statutory complications of serving students from multiple districts in a school owned by one district. A Union District resolves this problem thus clearing the way to better space utilization and annual rent savings.
2. The minority report claims costs for new administrative duties resulting from the merger are not included in the report. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** The Superintendent gave testimony to the committee on expected reduced administrative costs for the Central Office. He was clear these were “net” savings. All committee members had opportunities to ask questions.
3. The minority report claims “we ought to be able to offer school choice within our own network of elementary schools”. **THIS IS NOT TRUE** and should not be presented to citizens as an option. There is no funding provision in state law to support elementary school choice between different school districts. CESU elementary schools are currently in different districts. However, elementary school choice among CESU elementary schools is readily possible with the proposed merger to create a Union District (with actual school choice options for students, if any, to be determined by the future Union District School Board).
4. The minority report implies the merger committee is contemplating construction of a tech center. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** The merger report states that a more flexible Union District may be able to meet the needs of more students and keep more students in their home district. This would save tuition money paid to tech centers. There was no mention at any meeting or in any report of building a tech center.
5. The minority report calls for a voting process and ballot questions that conflict with state law. The committee reviewed voting procedures thoroughly with legal counsel. The author of the minority report had ample opportunity to ask questions of legal counsel on this point.
6. The minority report claims the Merger Committee did not consider a merger of elementary schools. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** At the request of a committee member, the committee considered such a merger concept and rejected it. The concept was then taken to the CESU Executive Committee with a motion to expand the charge of the committee to include consideration of a Unified Elementary School District. After considerable debate, the motion failed in a unanimous vote by the Executive Committee representing elected board members from all CESU schools.
7. The minority report claims a merger of CESU elementary schools is eligible for comparable state tax credits and incentive grants. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** The

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Superintendent made this point repeatedly to the merger committee and to the writer of the minority report. The Agency of Education agrees and responded directly to the minority report saying: “the critique is wrong that a PK-4 union would get the full set of incentives”. In the best case scenario, a merger of our elementary schools could possibly generate about a third of the tax incentives of the proposed PreK to 12 merger.

In addition to factual errors, the minority report misrepresents the purpose of the Voluntary Merger Planning Committee.

The Voluntary Merger Planning Committee was created by the CESU Executive Committee after review and support from all elected CESU school boards. The resolution, passed unanimously, reads as follows:

“To best meet the needs of students and communities in CESU, the CESU Executive Committee makes a motion to form a Voluntary Merger Planning Committee with the express charge of evaluating and forming a Modified Unified Union School District and completing the statutory steps to bring a merger vote to the electorate by November 2014.”

Therefore, the Voluntary Merger Planning Committee was charged with evaluating a specific proposed governance structure to reform the way we organize the district and the way we make decisions. The committee was not tasked with advance problem solving the major issues facing a future Union District School Board.

Instead, the minority report calls for an “open ended” process of “further study and problem solving” and offers a long list of issues to be addressed in advance of forming a governance process.

The majority reflecting both its charge and its best judgment does not usurp the future responsibilities of an elected Union District school board. For example, readers of our proposal will not find the definitive plans for school choice demanded in the minority report. Instead, our proposal removes the obstacles to establishing school choice. The majority believes the citizens and their elected Union District school board should determine the future of school choice. We will have done our work if they have that option. Conversely, we will have hurt our community if we make decisions in advance that constrain the options of future school boards.

Paradoxically, the minority report expresses hunger for CESU wide deliberations on important education issues when the proposed governance structure will finally provide a school board charged and capable of doing just that.