

February 10, 2010

Dear Pittsfield Resident,

At long last, we present the report on school governance options for the Pittsfield school district. As you may recall, at Town Meeting in 2008 the voters authorized the School Board to form a committee and obtain a professional report on the available school governance and choice options for Pittsfield's schoolchildren, along with the costs and benefits associated with each option. The report enclosed was obtained through the hard work of a dedicated group of Pittsfield residents who worked for almost two years in collaboration with a consultant from the Vermont School Boards Association. Thank you to the governance committee: Nancy Blessing, Sean Lee, Angelique Lee, Jason Hayden, Joyce Stevens, Kris Sperber, and Ray Rice.

Please read through the report and note down any questions or ideas you have about it. Bring them to a public meeting on Thursday, February 25, at 6:30 PM in the basement of the Town Hall to discuss them with committee members, school board members, and your neighbors. A PDF of the report is available on the town website (www.pittsfieldvt.org); additional hard copies are available at the town clerk's office.

If you have any questions, please contact Kris Sperber (746-8487; kristin.sperber@myfairpoint.net) or Ray Rice (746-8592).

Sincerely,

The Pittsfield School Board

Ray Rice

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Executive Summary

With passage of the new public high school designation law (16 VSA §827), towns like Pittsfield, that do not operate a school(s), can avoid the Act 68 excess spending threshold and Act 82 two-vote cost containment measures imposed by these state laws. The Pittsfield School Board and voters now have increased flexibility when addressing school budget increases. The new law does not lower property tax bills; it prevents higher tax bills for residents if per pupil expenses exceed 125% of the statewide average cost per pupil. The new law also removes the complexity of asking voters to authorize the budget in two parts when school spending increases beyond the annual rate of inflation plus 1%. The legislative intent is to not penalize school districts that do not operate schools, and do not have voting representatives serving on the school boards where students are enrolled.

The above law changes reduce some of the state-level pressure and sanctions that encourage school leaders and voters to consider exploring different school governance options. However, it doesn't alter Pittsfield voter concerns about the increasing costs to educate students.

First things first, it is important to note that only resident property tax bills are impacted by local school spending decisions. Non-resident and business owner property tax bills are not linked to the costs to educate Pittsfield students.

Second, the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) generally causes greater tax increases than the school budget does. The School Board has no control over the CLA and the continual appreciation of property values that is a key driver of tax increases.

Regarding the cost savings research conducted in this governance study, Pittsfield voters could realize the greatest budget reduction by selecting the Rutland Elementary School and designating the Rutland High School for all Pittsfield students, K-12, to attend. If voters supported this finding, the tuition cost savings could accrue to \$ 104,972 . However, these cost savings depend on additional issues such as transportation, the potential grandfathering of students and the ability of parents to petition the school board for their child to attend a different school.

If voters chose to designate Rutland High School, and the Rutland School Board accepted the high school designation, students may be able to attend other schools, but parents would have to pay the difference between Rutland High School tuition and the additional amount charged by other school districts. Parents would have to petition the School Board for permission to do so. The elementary school tuition law has some additional requirements and options not included in the secondary designation law

Voters could select Sherburne Elementary, the next least expensive school in the district where the majority of Pittsfield students now attend. Savings would only be \$2,074, total.

The other option with some promise to reduce costs is to create a unified union with a district like Rochester or Bethel. In phase II a deeper look into current class sizes in these schools and related expenses would need to be undertaken to ascertain if genuine cost savings could be realized.

All other governance options demonstrated minimal cost savings and, in many cases reduced school quality and program opportunities now enjoyed by parents and students.

Governance Study Mission

It is the mission of the Vermont School Boards Association governance study to research the possible benefits and challenges for discontinuing K-12 school choice for Pittsfield students and to explore the creation of a formal governance relationship with another school district or districts. The governance study explored options for improving student learning opportunities, and containing education costs for the Pittsfield School District.

To pursue cost control measures and maintain quality education opportunities for students, at a reasonable cost to tax payers, the Pittsfield School Board commissioned this governance study to research current and future options for the delivery of education services. School boards from “choice” districts like Pittsfield have to balance three main interests, but without board representation at the schools where students attend:

- Ensure laws are followed that provide education services to all students, regardless of disabilities;
- Support parents who manage school quality through their ability to choose schools that meet their children’s learning needs;
- Develop reasonable school budgets that are affordable to taxpayers.

Given the pressure on school boards to reduce per pupil spending, while demonstrating increased levels of student achievement, it is imperative that boards take a proactive planning approach. This phase I governance study provides an examination of the key issues that will need further exploration in phase II to determine if there is interest in eliminating school choice and creating a formal governance relationship with one or more area schools.

Introduction

The demographic, economic, and political landscapes for Vermont's schools have experienced substantial changes over the past decade. There has been an increase in the overall population in Vermont but a substantial decline in the number of students in most schools. In addition, both state and federal departments of education have imposed numerous policy requirements, standards, and accountability measures beyond what has ever been experienced in the history of education. The work of school leaders is increasingly complex. Future trends for the United States and world are calling for new content and strategies to educate students of all ages. These factors have resulted in the need for local school boards to look carefully at how they deliver education services. What are the options? How viable are they? What are the benefits and challenges and how will they impact education cost, quality, and efficiency.

Before embarking on a school governance study it makes sense to explain what the term means. Education governance, as defined by the Vermont School Boards Association is:

“In the context of the relationship between school district voters, school boards, school administrators, and the legislative and executive branches of state government, it means the assignment of roles and responsibilities to each of those entities, and the organizational structures created to allow each entity to carry out its responsibilities.”

Interpreted in this context, governance means the relationship shared between the Pittsfield School Board and voters, school boards and administrators within and/or outside the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union, as well as the State Board and Commissioner of Education.

The Pittsfield School Board contracted with the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA) to explore options for creating a formal governance system with elementary, middle, and/or high schools in the region. The Board charged the VSBA to research and analyze governance options that include selection of an elementary or designation of a secondary school, and creating a joint contract school, union, and/or unified union school district, and to compare the cost, quality, and efficiency of operations to the existing school choice options now exercised by Pittsfield families.

The goal of this phase I study is to provide base-line data that will assist the Pittsfield School Board to engage in framing public policy and developing governance options for the future of the School District. To this end, the study generated data on enrollment trends, area school capacity to accept Pittsfield students, school budgets, costs per pupil, quality of programs, and applicable state laws regarding education governance.

If the Pittsfield School Board, after studying the phase I report, decides to form a union or a unified union school district, a comprehensive study would have to be initiated and completed in accordance with state law 16 VSA § 706. Voters would have the final say.

The second option, creation of a joint contract school is less complex, but still requires in-depth analysis and a structured legal approach outlined in 16 VSA §571. Again, voters make the final decision.

A third governance change, selection of an elementary and/or designation of a secondary public school, alters the current Pittsfield school choice system, and would require a community vote. The process for school selection or designation is guided by state law 16 VSA § 821-828.

The contents of this phase I report will serve to assist and inform the subsequent study of these options, if pursued. More information about a phase II study can be found in Appendix 2.

In summary, we congratulate Pittsfield voters and the School Board for taking proactive steps to prepare for the future needs of students and the School District. The data collected reveals that this work is very timely and necessary. If a decision is made to move forward with a governance change, the work ahead in phases II, III, and IV will require future-focused, courageous leadership by the School Board.

We are most appreciative of the ready assistance and cooperation extended to us by the Study Committee, Administrators, and School Board members from Pittsfield and area school districts. All of these people were instrumental in enabling us to conduct the necessary research for a thorough study. We thank you for the opportunity of engaging in the work important to this phase I governance study.

Recent Pittsfield Education History

Pittsfield voted to discontinue providing education at the local school in 1968; the school closed in 1969. Over the next two decades, Pittsfield operated a joint contract elementary school with Stockbridge. In 1985, Pittsfield seceded from the Stockbridge joint contract and began offering school choice for all students, K-12. This meant that families were able to send their children to any public school in Vermont or beyond, at taxpayer expense. The School Board pays the receiving school's tuition charge (does not include special education and transportation), based on net costs, and regulated by the Vermont Department of Education. Students may attend public schools in Vermont and the School Board pays the full cost per pupil, or approved independent/private schools, in or out of state, at the Vermont average union elementary or secondary school cost per pupil. For students attending approved independent/private schools, parents pay the difference if the tuition fee exceeds the state average. There are unique differences in law between elementary and secondary school tuition options. In both cases, tuition is not paid to parochial schools. The Pittsfield School Board does not provide transportation to any receiving school. Limited transportation services are provided by some of the receiving districts.

Pittsfield has not operated a public school for many years. Families continue to select schools in the region that, in their opinion, best meet each child's preferred learning style, program needs, and family transportation capabilities. Parents state that school quality is controlled through their option to choose different schools. Currently, Pittsfield elementary students attend Stockbridge, Sherburne, Rochester, Barstow, and Rutland Northeast and Intermediate Schools. Middle level students travel to Rochester, Whitcomb, Woodstock, Barstow Schools, and The Sharon Academy. High school students are educated in many of the same districts; four students are currently enrolled at Rutland High School.

Pittsfield is a member district with Stockbridge, Bethel, Rochester, Granville, and Hancock in the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union. However, Pittsfield students are educated in schools that are members of many other supervisory unions/districts throughout the region. The WNSU provides administrative services, special education, and general education support for the five member towns. One Pittsfield School Board member represents the District on the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union Board.

The Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union is a member of the Green Mountain Forest Collaborative (GMFC), a business management organization comprised of five supervisory unions. The mission of GMFC is to increase the economy of scale for delivery of management services by jointly planning and contracting for professional development, special education, and related services that maximize resource utilization.

The Evolution of Supervisory Unions in Vermont

The Vermont Constitution identifies the role and speaks to the importance of education in each community throughout the state:

“A school or schools shall be established in each town, by the Legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth, with such salaries to the masters, paid by each town, making proper use of the school lands in each town, thereby to enable them to instruct youth at low prices. One grammar school in each county and one university in this state ought to be established by direction of the General Assembly.”

The people of Vermont obviously understood the importance of education, even in the early days of the republic, 14 years before Vermont became a state. As indicated by the reference to “low prices,” Vermonters were as concerned about the efficiency of the education system in 1777 as they are today.

The system of multiple school districts within towns persisted for over a century. In 1870, the Legislature passed a law enabling, but not mandating, town school districts. Legislation passed in 1892 making the town system mandatory. This reduced the number of school districts from more than 2,500 to less than 300, a number similar to what we have today. In 1896, State Superintendent Mason Stone advocated “for skilled supervision and the establishment of supervisory unions,”¹ an entity which still exists in Vermont but only in rare instances elsewhere in the nation. Stone argued that, “Local supervision is the supreme weakness of our entire [education] system... There is no phase of school work that skilled supervision does not reach, tone, strengthen and elevate.” In 1896, the Legislature adopted enabling legislation that allowed towns to join together for better supervision of their schools. Hence, the supervisory union concept was born.²

Currently, there are 46 supervisory unions in Vermont with staff and a supervisory union board that provide management services and administrative oversight to small rural districts like those associated with the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union. Supervisory union boards employ and supervise a superintendent of schools who acts as the CEO for each local district and the supervisory union.

Larger municipalities like Hartford, Springfield, and Burlington are not members of a supervisory union. These districts are large enough to support the employment of their own superintendent of schools. In this supervisory district structure, the superintendent answers to a single school board, unlike the multiple board responsibility associated with a supervisory union.

¹ Vermont Department of Education - The Governance of Education in Vermont – 1777 to 2006

² Ibid,

Research Assumptions

1. Pittsfield voters have directed the School Board to study alternative governance options for delivering education services.
2. The Pittsfield School Governance Study Committee and the School Board will analyze the education cost and quality benefits and challenges under the current school choice system and compare the VSBA findings to the options associated with selecting or designating school(s), creating a joint contract school, or establishing a union or unified union school district.
3. The most significant cost driver in public education is the student/teacher ratio. Eighty per cent of all school budgets are driven by combined employee salary and benefits.
4. Under the Vermont Act 68 education funding system, eliminating school choice and developing a governance relationship with a single school district may reduce Pittsfield voters' education tax liability.
5. Study Committee members recognize the benefits of school board representation but believe when schools compete in the marketplace for students that school quality is maintained.
6. If school choice was eliminated, the decision would be highly unpopular with parents and, possibly, some residents.
7. Pittsfield voters could choose to select or designate school(s), create a joint contract school, or union district with another elementary district, high school district, or both; in each case, the Pittsfield School Board would no longer pay tuition to other schools outside the new governance entity (there are limited exceptions to this assumption).
8. Creating either a joint contract school or union district will enable Pittsfield voters to elect a board member to serve on the new joint contract school or union school board.
9. The Pittsfield School Board will acquire more control over the delivery of education services by creating a formal governance relationship with another school district or districts.
10. Not all area districts will be interested in developing a joint contract or union district with Pittsfield.
11. If the Pittsfield voters elect to enter into a joint contract or union district outside the Windsor Northwest Supervisory Union, the Pittsfield School Board will need to weigh the benefits and challenges for changing supervisory unions. The State Board of Education has final decision making authority over this decision.
12. If Pittsfield creates a joint contract or union relationship with another district, Pittsfield voters will share in costs that are outside the current parameters of allowable tuition charges i.e. special education and transportation (16 VSA §825).

13. The law (16 VSA §706b) does allow the union district articles of agreement to back out facility upgrade/construction costs for a member district. However, politically unlikely that the new union district board would agree to this provision. The same dynamic exists in joint contract school law (16 VSA §572).
14. Pittsfield voters and the School Board have no control over rising tuition costs charged by schools in the region. However, the Vermont Department of Education does regulate the amount receiving schools can charge, proportionally linking announced tuition fees to district adopted budgets. Receiving and sending school districts can enter into tuition agreements that set tuition rates lower than those calculated by the Vermont Department of Education, provided the receiving district makes the same offer to all other sending districts (16 VSA §826-824).
15. There is sometimes a substantial difference between receiving districts' announced tuition rate and the allowable tuition rate actually charged.
16. Receiving districts can include building construction/renovation expenses (16 VSA §825) within their allowable tuition rate. They must exclude transportation and special education but may back charge per diem costs for additional special education expenses.
17. The Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) has a dramatic affect on property tax bills but is not influenced up or down by local school spending.
18. School quality is very difficult to evaluate and compare across district boundaries. Quantitative measures include, for example, NECAP assessments, high school drop-out rate, access to online courses, and student/teacher ratios, to name a few. Qualitative analysis is far more subjective, making it difficult to ascertain the influence that variables like school culture, supportive learning environment, and educator or principal experience have on parent and student perception of quality.
19. Provision of special education services at a single designated public school, joint contract school, or union school district could be coordinated and delivered more efficiently than what now occurs with students attending many different schools.

School Funding Legal Overview

The governance study explored options to improve learning opportunities and contain education costs for students from the Pittsfield School District.

The current Act 68 funding system is based on per pupil expenditures. The Vermont legislature recently passed cost containment laws designed to keep school budgets in check. For FY2010, the excess spending threshold, \$13,984, is triggered by high per pupil expenditures. For districts that exceed this per pupil spending level, tax payers must pay two dollars for each property tax dollar that exceeds this annually imposed threshold.

Act 82 is another education cost control law that was passed in 2008. It imposes a complex two-vote requirement on school budget passage by district voters. The legislative intent of Act 82 is to make voters aware of school budgets that increase annually more than inflationary costs plus 1%.

In 2009, the legislature made changes to the Act 68 excess spending threshold and Act 82 laws. The new law allows districts to decide whether to exclude or include tuition costs for grade levels for which the district does not maintain a school; it's the district's choice. If the School Board decides not to include tuition costs, the following expenses will not be considered for the purpose of determining whether a district is subject to the excess spending threshold and Act 82 divided question (two-vote) laws (i.e., the expenses will still be part of education spending for determining homestead tax rates):

- Anticipated tuition costs for students in grade levels for which the district does not maintain a school.
- Spending attributable to the cost of planning a merger of a school with an average grade size of 20 students or fewer.

Summary of Governance Research Findings

Finding #1: The 2009 legislature passed a new public secondary school designation law. For the law to be enacted in Pittsfield, residents would vote to designate a particular public secondary school (could be a school that educates students in grade 7-12 or 9-12, or any variation of these grade levels). The school board from the tuition receiving district would also have to agree to accept designation.

The law also provides that a parent can request the School Board allow enrollment of his or her child at a non-designated school, but the Pittsfield District will pay a tuition amount not to exceed the lesser of the statewide average announced union high school tuition or the tuition rate for the designated school. Parents would be required to pay any additional tuition charges at the receiving school.

Finding #2: Based on cost research, Pittsfield voters benefit from a lower than allowed elementary tuition charged by the Sherburne School Board. Sherburne's elementary education spending is \$14,534 (FY2009) per pupil, the amount that is included in the school budget which Sherburne voters adopt. The Sherburne School Board charges the Pittsfield District \$9,256 (FY2010) per pupil. Adding the averaged \$2,787 WNSU assessment, Pittsfield voters pay \$12,043 per pupil. What this means is it is almost \$2,500 cheaper per pupil to continue tuitioning the existing Pittsfield students to Sherburne Elementary School than it would be to join the Sherburne District, creating either a joint contract school or union district. Sherburne could charge a higher tuition rate than they do now. Alternately, the Sherburne and Pittsfield School Boards could enter into an agreement that would fix tuition costs to be an amount less than the annual allowable rate, provided the Sherburne Board makes the same offer to any other tuitioning district (16 VSA §826). Negotiating a reduced tuition agreement (16 VSA §826) could occur within the full school choice dynamic, currently in effect, or if Pittsfield voters decided to select Sherburne Elementary as the only school where the School Board would pay tuition (16 VSA §821).

Finding #3: The least expensive elementary alternative would be to select the Rutland Elementary Schools and pay tuition only to that district. Pittsfield voters could save \$76,402 (FY2010) if all elementary students were enrolled in the Rutland District this year. However, Rutland is much farther away than the districts where Pittsfield students currently attend. This savings does not include bus transportation, which the Pittsfield District doesn't have to provide. Parents of elementary students could petition the board to send their children to an adjacent school (16 VSA §821) for geographic considerations. Parents of secondary students could request their child attend a school other than the designated one and parents would pay any tuition amount that exceeds the designated school's tuition charge. If Pittsfield decided to contract for an elementary bus to run from the center of Pittsfield to Rutland, it would cost a minimum of \$15,000 for an 180 day school year @ \$3.00 per mile.

Finding #4: The opinion expressed by members of the Pittsfield Study Committee was that parents were able to manage school quality through exercising school choice. Individuals on the Committee felt that parents' choice option exceeded any gains that might accrue from placing a single board member on a joint contract or union school board.

Finding #5: In a governance study where the district, in this case, Pittsfield, did not operate a school, the efficiency question was not as relevant as in other studies where a district operated a school. However, given the variety of districts that were studied, both within and outside the SU, the most efficient creation of a formal governance relationship would be with either the K-12 Rochester or K-12 Bethel School Districts. For example, if Pittsfield voters discontinued school choice and created a K-12 unified union district with their closest neighbor town, Rochester, all special education costs and WNSU assessments would be dissipated over 12 grade levels within a single district. What is more difficult to predict is the diminished cost per pupil that could be realized if 64 additional Pittsfield students were enrolled in the Rochester School.

First-look statistics suggest that the Rochester School is operated with a significantly lower cost per pupil than the tuition payments that comprise Pittsfield's budget. Rochester's education spending per pupil, a figure that is proportional to the district's residential tax rate, is approximately \$900 less than Pittsfield's. However, there are two important mitigating factors. First, Rochester receives a significant Small Schools Grant from the state, which totals about \$100,000 and reduces their expense per pupil by \$620. Also, Rochester's special education costs are currently more than \$1,100 greater per pupil than Pittsfield's. About 60 percent of those higher special education costs are reimbursed through the state special education formula, but approximately \$440 per pupil is paid by local voters.

If Pittsfield and Rochester were to join in a unified union school relationship, the consolidated district would lose its Small Schools Grant after a three-year phase out period. Pittsfield residents would also absorb some of the higher costs of special education and share transportation costs currently provided by the Rochester School. (It is important to note that special education costs at small schools can increase or decrease significantly from year to year.) Therefore, the mitigating factors come close to washing out the \$900-per-pupil lower cost the Rochester currently enjoys relative to Pittsfield. Therefore, there would be no immediate cost savings to Pittsfield taxpayers, unless meaningful economies of scale can be established with the creation of this new governance entity.

Rochester's student-teacher ratio is 11 to 1, which is average for Vermont and low by national standards. Because employee salaries and benefits typically comprise about 80 percent of school budgets, the fiscal implications of this potential consolidated school district cannot be realized until decisions about staffing levels at the consolidated school could be made. Pittsfield's resident students would increase the Rochester School student population by 30 percent; presumably some of these students could fit into existing classrooms (depending upon grade level density at the various grades). How much additional administrative staff would be required is another important consideration. If Rochester school leaders believe that Pittsfield's student population can be absorbed with relatively few staff increases, the potential to lower education tax rates in both communities would be promising. Otherwise, it is likely that education tax rates would not increase or decrease significantly for Pittsfield taxpayers.

Finding #6: If Pittsfield and another town's voters decided to create, either, a joint contract school or union district, the shared development and legal costs to transition and get the new governance entity operational would run between \$18,000 and \$24,000. The Vermont legislature enacted a school consolidation aid program that is scheduled to sunset in June 2010. The Vermont Department of Education will reimburse districts that create a new union school governance entity either \$150,000 or 5% of the base education payment (\$8544) multiplied by the combined enrollment of the new district as of October 1st in the year that the vote was taken, whichever is less.

Finding #7: The high school with the (lowest) tuition cost is Rutland, followed closely by Whitcomb and Sharon Academy. Rutland's cost per pupil is \$620 per pupil less than the next more expensive tuition district, Whitcomb. Woodstock's tuition charges are \$2690 greater, per pupil, than Rutland's. Unless there is a governance change, there is no linkage between school choice decisions that parents and students make and the cost containment benefits that tax payers could realize from Rutland School District's economy of scale. If 25 Pittsfield 7-12 students were enrolled in the Rutland School District this year, voters would spend \$28,570 less than what is budgeted for total FY2010 secondary school tuition. It should be noted that any savings between the status quo and designating all Pittsfield grade 7-12 students enroll in Rutland Middle and High School does not take into account transportation costs. There is currently no transportation arrangement with the Rutland School District.

If all Pittsfield K-12 students were tuitioned to Rutland this year, Pittsfield voters could save \$104,972, however this figure is dependent upon a variety of factors including transportation, student enrollment, and parents petitioning for attendance to other schools. Windsor Northwest SU assessments remain the same in both of the above scenarios, with an additional proration of \$2787 allocated to each Pittsfield student. Details would have to be worked out, but provision of special education services at a public school could be considerably easier to manage and deliver than it is now with students attending many different schools.

Finding #8: There is no comprehensive system for fully comparing the quality of one school against others. It is subjective, at best; personal perceptions play a key role. For this study, school quality was assessed based on NECAP (New England Common Assessment Program) scores, meeting AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) measures required by NCLB (No Child Left Behind - federal legislation), high schools offering honors, Advance Placement, and online courses, college dual enrollment programs, dropout rates, and student-teacher ratios.

Phase II school quality analysis might look at teacher/administrator experience and longevity in the school district, educator professional development, number of National Board Certified teachers, implementation of a strategic plan, and routine completion of parent satisfaction survey analysis.

Woodstock offers the most breadth of school quality with a low student-teacher ratio, 13 AP courses, 8 honors classes, and the choice of 200 Virtual High School online offerings; NECAP scores were generally higher than other secondary schools with the exception of Sharon Academy. However, Woodstock's tuition and special education costs are considerably higher than any other school where Pittsfield students currently attend. A high school governance transition with Woodstock would be easier in one regard, i.e. expansion of the current union high school district, but more difficult in that Woodstock resides in a different supervisory union. Addition of Pittsfield to the Woodstock Union High School District does not require starting from scratch, as is the case with all the other district options. Another downside, Woodstock is the farthest distance away from Pittsfield for transportation consideration.

Finding #9: Elementary quality is more difficult to assess. However, based on NECAP assessment scores and low student-teacher ratio, the Sherburne School stands above the other elementary schools that were studied. This is the school where the majority of Pittsfield elementary students currently attend. If Pittsfield and Sherburne voters agreed to create a joint contract school or union school district, one problem exists. That is, Sherburne resides in a different supervisory union, which adds complexity to the process.

Sherburne is also the second closest district to Pittsfield and the majority of students currently are enrolled there. Stockbridge and Barstow provide similar program quality. However, neither facility can absorb all Pittsfield students. Furthermore, Barstow is not particularly interested in expanding their long-standing joint contract between Mendon and Chittenden to include Pittsfield.

Finding #10: As a result of historical research, it was discovered that the Pittsfield School District had not been charged a WNSU assessment consistent with the other member districts of the SU. It is believed that this annual WNSU assessment undercharge had been occurring since the mid-1980s. The ongoing undercharge has benefited Pittsfield taxpayers for a number of years. The eventual discovery of inequitable annual assessments caused Pittsfield's WNSU assessment to go up by 40% this year, which increased the Pittsfield school budget substantially. In FY2010 the WNSU assessment is \$3,878; less revenues, the prorated calculation, used in this study, equals \$2787 per pupil. The latter figure should be added to the tuition amount in every district to understand the real cost to educate a Pittsfield student (The WNSU assessment figure was derived by dividing the total WNSU assessment by 64 Pittsfield students; see Appendix 10 and 11 spreadsheets for deeper analysis).

Finding # 11: Pittsfield voters do not receive the benefit of the small schools support grant, (16 VSA §4015) provided by the state to districts that operate schools with fewer than 100 students, or where grade sizes are less than 20 each. The maximum reimbursement for districts that do qualify is \$2500 per student. Pittsfield voters also do not receive the benefit of transportation reimbursement funds from the state, as the District does not offer transportation. "The grant shall be equal to 50 percent of allowable transportation expenditures provided to districts that do offer busing for students"(16 VSA §4016).

Individual School District Governance Analysis

Barstow Joint Contract School (Chittenden and Mendon)

Pittsfield K-8 student population: 8

Current enrollment: 272

Capacity: Not adequate facility space to enroll all Pittsfield students

The Barstow Joint Contract School is geographically close to Pittsfield and could offer a viable governance option and low tuition costs. However, the Barstow School Board is not interested in expanding its longstanding joint contract relationship with Mendon and Chittenden to include Pittsfield. The School also lacks existing space to enroll all Pittsfield elementary and middle level students without undertaking a building project and hiring additional teachers.

Rochester

Pittsfield K-12 student population: 2 elementary, 2 middle level, and 2 high school

Current enrollment: 190

Capacity: Can absorb the entire Pittsfield student population

Nearby Rochester Elementary/High School currently attracts 6 Pittsfield students. Each Pittsfield elementary student tuition cost is \$9,785; individual secondary tuition expenses are \$12,360. Rochester has a near-state average student-teacher ratio of 11:1 and higher than average special education costs.

If some economies of scale were realized, and existing capital debt was absorbed by Rochester taxpayers, it is conceivable that entering into a full K-12 governance relationship with Pittsfield could be a cost-saver for both communities. Pittsfield students would lose school choice, K-12, but voters would gain up to two seats on the newly formed Rochester/Pittsfield School Board.

The biggest potential for cost increases from a Pittsfield perspective would result from removing 22 students from Sherburne Elementary School, with its very low \$9,256 tuition cost. On the other side of the ledger, 7 secondary students currently attend Woodstock UMHS with tuition costs of \$13,400 each, and these students would become less expensive to educate in Rochester if school designation, joint contract, or union governance relationship were established. However the financial benefit for this small number of students is not significant and Woodstock offers many more academic and co-curricular opportunities.

Rochester does not show any high school drop-outs but also does not offer any high school AP or honors courses. Rochester NECAP scores trail behind the statewide average in all areas except high school math. The school does have an effective college dual enrollment program in which 10 students currently participate.

See Finding #5 for more details.

Rochester is currently collaborating with Bethel, where both Districts share the same principal and curriculum coordinator.

Rutland Elementary, Intermediate, and High School

Pittsfield K-12 student population: 2 elementary and 4 high school students

Current enrollment: 584 elementary school and 1026 high school students

Capacity: Can absorb the entire Pittsfield population

Rutland's per pupil elementary tuition cost is \$1,956 cheaper than Sherburne, which offers the next lowest cost per student.

Rutland has the lowest high school cost per pupil, which is \$620 per pupil cheaper than the next more expensive district, Whitcomb. Woodstock UHS tuition charges are \$2,690 higher per pupil than Rutland.

If all Pittsfield K-6 students were enrolled in the Rutland School District, voters could save \$76,402; if all 7-12 students attended Rutland this year the savings would be \$28,570 in tuition payments. The combined K-12 tuition savings to voters, if Pittsfield designated Rutland, would be \$104,972.

Windsor Northwest SU assessments remains the same in the above scenarios, an additional \$2,787, per student, just as it is now with Pittsfield students attending many receiving schools. Details would have to be worked out, but provision of special education services at a public school, that already operates a special education program, could be considerably easier than it is now with students attending many different schools.

Rutland administrators are not interested in creating a joint contract school or union district with Pittsfield, mainly an issue of disparate scale. School leaders may be interested to discuss possible options for elementary selection and/or secondary school designation, given the 2009 passage of the public high school designation law (16 VSA §827) and prior existence of elementary school tuition statute (16 VSA §821). If Pittsfield designated the Rutland High School District for tuition purposes, there is some flexibility for parents who may want their children to attend a different high school district.

“The school board may pay tuition to another approved high school as requested by the parent or legal guardian if in its judgment that will best serve the interests of the pupil. If the board approves the parent's request, the board shall pay tuition for the pupil in an amount not to exceed the per-pupil tuition the district pays to the designated school.”

This law changes the existing full school choice option, swinging the pendulum of cost-containment in favor of voters

Sharon Academy

Pittsfield 7-12 student population: 2 middle level and 3 high school students

Current enrollment: 167

Capacity: Can absorb the entire Pittsfield population

Sharon Academy is an approved independent school which means they are required to only perform some of the functions that Vermont law requires of all public schools. They do not have to offer special education services but are required to provide 504 accommodations to learners with qualifying disabilities. Sharon Academy, historically, has maintained their announced tuition rate at the statewide average for union districts, and elects not to charge extra tuition to parents from choice towns like Pittsfield. All students are asked to pay annual fees, in addition to the tuition paid by Pittsfield voters, which can amount to \$300-\$400 per year. These fees include

field trips, sport fees, and an “intent to return” fee to hold a student's place for the next year. The school fundraises and writes grants to backfill budget shortfalls necessary to operate the school.

Sharon Academy, an approved independent school, could be designated by Pittsfield voters to be the only secondary school the Board would pay for students to attend (16 VSA §827). This means that all secondary students, grades 7-12, would have to give up school choice to other districts and only attend Sharon Academy. Designation of Sharon Academy would decrease costs to Pittsfield voters by a total of \$6,920 (FY2010 data).

At this time, three other approved independent schools in the state operate under this state law: Thetford Academy, Lyndon Institute, and St. Johnsbury Academy. St. Johnsbury Academy, although not a public high school, is treated like one, due to the association with the Applied Technology Center at St. Johnsbury Academy. For these purposes, St. Johnsbury Academy receives the legal distinction as a comprehensive high school and, thus, can charge sending districts full tuition.

Sherburne (Killington)

Pittsfield K-6 student population: 22

Current enrollment: 98

Capacity: Can absorb the entire Pittsfield population

Sherburne Elementary is already the preferred destination for 22 of Pittsfield’s 38 elementary students. The tuition cost is competitive fiscally at \$9,256 per student. It charges the second lowest elementary tuition of those districts in this governance study.

It costs significantly more than \$9,256 per student to operate Sherburne for Killington taxpayers. FY2009 education spending per pupil for the district is \$14,534; FY2010 education spending is likely higher but not available yet. Even discounting approximately \$1,161 per student for capital improvements, Killington is bumping up against the Act 68 excess spending threshold (\$13,984) with \$13,373 of education spending minus capital debt service.

Entering into a governance relationship with Sherburne Elementary would provide Pittsfield voters with representation on the School Board. Based on current enrollments, Pittsfield would acquire one to two seats on the new governance school board. However the fiscal cost would increase significantly for Pittsfield voters. Rather than accept Sherburne’s offer of \$9,256 per student tuition, Pittsfield would become responsible for paying its share of school costs as great as \$13,500 per student. The current Pittsfield per pupil tuition, inclusive of the WNSU assessment, is \$12,043, Even if Sherburne subtracted its existing debt cost and some economies of scale were realized, per pupil costs in the \$13,000 range would be expected. Pittsfield elementary families would also lose school choice options they enjoy now.

Another major complication to be worked out would be which supervisory union Pittsfield would be served by, Windsor Central or Windsor Northwest.

Currently, Pittsfield’s per pupil costs for purposes of setting the homestead tax rate are \$11,781; Sherburne’s homestead tax rate is \$14,534. Entering into a governance relationship with Sherburne Elementary would raise Pittsfield’s homestead education tax rate substantially.

Stockbridge

Pittsfield K-6 student population: 7

Current enrollment: 78

Capacity: Not adequate capacity to enroll all Pittsfield students

Stockbridge is currently the second most popular destination for Pittsfield elementary students, with 7 students attending. Its tuition rate is low, at \$9,500 per student, and its student population is increasing, as it is the only area elementary school to add more than ten students over the last decade. Therefore it is likely that new construction would be necessary to absorb all of Pittsfield's students. Stockbridge has one of the highest student-teacher ratios in the state, at 16:1 (most Vermont districts ratios range from 10:1 to 13:1).

The costs to operate Stockbridge appear to be just below the average for Vermont. Their elementary budget plus 50% of the general district budget divided by elementary student enrollment in FY2008 was ~\$11,000 per pupil. In FY2009, Stockbridge's education spending per pupil number is almost identical to Pittsfield's (\$11,711 vs. \$11,781). Stockbridge has no outstanding capital debt costs.

Pittsfield and Stockbridge's costs appear to be similar. Economies of scale are not likely to be major cost savers in this case because Stockbridge already has a high student-teacher ratio; therefore, adding more Pittsfield students would likely require hiring new staff. Capital improvement costs would be incurred to expand Stockbridge Central School to accommodate all Pittsfield students. Currently, there is a moratorium on state aid for school construction. Thus, full bond payments and interest would be shared between the two school districts in addition to per pupil operating expenses.

Pittsfield residents would be deserving of approximately one to two seats on a combined school board, should they join Stockbridge in a new governance relationship.

Pittsfield voters could pursue selecting Stockbridge, but, again, the school would have to expand to absorb all Pittsfield elementary students. The Stockbridge School Board would be unlikely to accept all tuition students for this reason.

Pittsfield was a partner district with Stockbridge in operating a joint contract district from 1969 to 1985. The governance relationship ended in 1985. The 2007 Vermont legislature changed the technical distinction from joint contract district to joint contract school.

Whitcomb Jr.-Sr. (Bethel)

Pittsfield 7-12 student population: 1 middle and 1 high school student

Current enrollment: 132

Capacity: Can absorb the entire Pittsfield population

(No Pittsfield students currently attend Bethel Elementary School)

Whitcomb Jr.-Sr. High School in Bethel currently attracts two tuition-paying Pittsfield-secondary students, at \$11,330 per student. Whitcomb has experienced declining enrollment in recent years and has existing capacity to absorb Pittsfield's 26 other secondary students. Bethel has per pupil costs for the K-12 district of \$13,270, with no capital debt. If all Pittsfield secondary students attended Whitcomb, it is conceivable that the School's per pupil costs could be

significantly reduced. Whether that reduction would push the per pupil costs below \$11,781 (FY2009) is debatable.

It is difficult to estimate a per pupil cost for a theoretical Whitcomb governance relationship, because Whitcomb's cost are so closely intertwined with the K-12 Bethel school district. However, a school governance relationship that included Pittsfield would probably create assessments to Pittsfield residents consistent with what they pay currently. This is particularly true because the most popular choice for Pittsfield students, WUHMS, currently charges a tuition rate of \$13,400 per student, which is not much different than the equalized per pupil costs for Whitcomb. Under a governance scenario, Pittsfield students would lose school choice; Pittsfield would elect one board member to represent the district.

If some economies of scale were realized, and existing capital debt was absorbed by Bethel taxpayers, it is conceivable that entering into a full K-12 governance relationship with Pittsfield could be a cost-saver for both communities. Pittsfield students would lose school choice, K-12, but voters would gain up to two seats on the newly formed Bethel/Pittsfield School Board.

The biggest potential for cost increases from a Pittsfield perspective would result from removing 22 students from Sherburne Elementary School, with its very low \$9,256 tuition cost. On the other side of the ledger, 7 secondary students currently attend Woodstock UMHS with tuition costs of \$13,400 each, and these students would become less expensive to educate in Bethel if a school designation, joint contract, or union governance relationship were established. However the financial benefit for this small number of students is not significant and Woodstock offers many more academic and co-curricular opportunities.

One concern to consider is that, although Whitcomb already offers Pittsfield students a competitive tuition of \$11,330, and it is located close by, only two of Pittsfield's secondary students have opted to attend the school. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze why Pittsfield parents and students have not chosen to attend Whitcomb. NECAP scores are well below the statewide average in all areas except 8th grade science. Whitcomb does offer 200 online courses and has a low student-teacher ratio.

Bethel school leaders have expressed interest for Pittsfield to pursue creation of a formal governance relationship. They prefer this to be K-12 but would consider developing either elementary selection or secondary designation, joint contract, or a union relationship.

Bethel is currently collaborating with Rochester, where both Districts share the same principal and curriculum coordinator.

Woodstock Middle and High School

Pittsfield 7-12 student population: 2 middle level and 5 high school students

Current enrollment: 590

Capacity: Can absorb the entire Pittsfield population

Woodstock Union Middle and High School is the most popular choice for Pittsfield secondary students, with 7 currently attending. It has a relatively high tuition rate of \$13,400 for secondary students, and is located over 30 minutes away by car from most areas of Pittsfield. WUMHS features one of the lowest student-teacher ratios in the area, at 10:1. WUMHS has a small outstanding capital debt, equal to \$203 per student.

WUMHS' per pupil costs exceed that of Pittsfield (\$13,333 vs. \$11,781). Although WUMHS has ample space for all of Pittsfield's students, it would likely not dramatically change costs at WUMHS if Pittsfield joined the Union (Pittsfield would be sending a total of 26 grade 7-12 students to a school that currently enrolls 590). WUMHS' per pupil costs would decline to about \$13,000 per student if Pittsfield stopped sending tuition payments, and instead sent all its students as a member of the union, assuming WUHMS could add the students without adding staff.

This per pupil cost is comparable to the tuition rate of \$13,400, but under this scenario, Pittsfield's costs would still go up. Nineteen Pittsfield secondary students currently attend other schools, and each of these schools charge a tuition rate of \$12,360 or less.

Woodstock offers the most breadth of school quality with a low student-teacher ratio, 13 AP courses, 8 honors classes, and the choice of 200 Virtual High School online offerings; NECAP scores are generally higher than other secondary schools with the exception of Sharon Academy.

If Pittsfield joined the WUMHS union its costs would likely rise, and school choice for secondary students would be eliminated. Being relatively small, Pittsfield would elect a single board member to represent the district on the union school board.

There would be no interest on Woodstock's part to create a joint contract school with Pittsfield.

Designation of Woodstock could be voted on by Pittsfield voters. If so voted, school choice would be generally eliminated. There is some latitude in current law for students to still attend other schools. Parents would pay any amount that exceeded Woodstock's tuition rate if the Pittsfield Board agreed to allow this provision.

Details would have to be worked out, but provision of special education services at a public school, that already operates a special education program, could be considerably easier than it is now with students attending many different schools. As in the case with Sherburne Elementary, a decision would need to be made regarding which supervisory union Pittsfield would be a member of.

If Sherburne Elementary and Woodstock Union became the only schools for Pittsfield students to attend, then it would make sense for Pittsfield to secede from Windsor NWSU and join the Windsor Central SU.

Next Steps

This report should be read in it's entirely and shared broadly with community, staff, and administrators. The report should also be distributed to school leaders from the other districts identified in this governance study. The information in the report should prompt honest and in-depth discussions about the potential benefits and challenges of all identified governance options.

If Pittsfield and another district or districts wish to continue exploring the creation of a single district with one governing board, formation of a study committee would be the next action. To explore creating a union district, the study committee must be established pursuant to 16 VSA §706. (See Appendix 2 for details)

A similar study committee may be charged with the creation of a joint contract school, 16 VSA §571. The steps are similar but less complex to implement. Creating a joint contract school is easier to formulate and easier to terminate the governance relationship than a union school district. (See Appendix 3)

Completing phases II, III, and IV of the VSBA governance study are the next steps to be considered if the Pittsfield School Board decides to move the process forward. For more information, reference the proposed governance study planning steps and time line found in the Appendix 4.

If the Pittsfield School Board decides to move a union district development process forward they should identify a single elementary or secondary school or schools that would offer low cost and high quality education services. The VSBA staff would then initiate a conversation with district leaders to explore interest in developing a formal governance relationship. If viable, the next step would be for the districts to either ask voters for or collectively generate funds from existing budgets to pay for phases II, III, and IV of the VSBA governance study. VSBA staff would then facilitate the completion of the full study and prepare information for consideration by the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education. The culmination of the study would be to present final recommendations to the respective school boards and then convene a public vote in each community. If all community votes were in the affirmative, there would need to be a year-long transition period which would enable existing contracts to culminate and the new governance structure to formalize.

If Pittsfield school leaders decided that selection of an elementary or designation of a secondary school was the direction for further research, then the VSBA would work with both sets of school leaders to study the next steps and provide information for use in a Pittsfield community vote process, although the law does not require VSBA involvement for these options.

Creating a Governing Board Between Two or More School Districts

School boards are critically important in creating the district vision with the community, establishing policy, ensuring sound use of public resources, setting direction for the schools through their administrators, and monitoring student achievement.

School Board Configuration

Union or Unified Union School Districts

Union school districts are governed by a union school board, which is subject to the one person one vote requirement of the United States Constitution. A union school board may have up to eighteen members, and each member district shall be entitled to at least one representative. Membership must be determined based on the populations of the towns involved.

As an alternative, the school board can be structured to allow for weighted voting by union school board members, in order to equalize the voting power of its school directors. Under this system the district could have a board of any size between three and eighteen members. Each of the two districts could even have the same number of representatives serving on the board. This allows for an equal representation of voices at the board table. However, to comply with the one person one vote requirement, board member's votes would be weighted in proportion to the census data.

Joint Contract School Boards

Unless a different method of allocating board members that is consistent with law is agreed to, the allocation of the board members shall be as follows. The school district having the largest number of pupils attending the joint contract school shall have three members on the joint board. Each other school district shall have at least one member on the joint board, and its total membership shall be determined by dividing the number of pupils from the school district with the largest enrollment by three, rounding off the quotient to the nearest whole number, which shall be called the "factor," and then dividing the pupil enrollment of each of the other school districts by the "factor," rounding off this quotient to the nearest whole number, this number being the number of school directors on the joint board from each of the other school districts. Pupil enrollment for the purpose of determining the number of members on the joint board to which each school district is entitled shall be taken from the school registers on January 1 of the calendar year in which the school year starts.

Benefits and Challenges

Benefits of a joint contract school or union district:

Creating a formal governance structure with another district would benefit Pittsfield voters and families in the following ways:

1. Future planning would become more predictable for the School Board as all students would attend a single elementary or high school.
2. Depending on the school, education costs might diminish somewhat; in most scenarios, the cost would increase substantially.
3. Depending on the partner district(s) and their current enrollment, Pittsfield would elect one or two board members for representation on the new governance board.

4. All voters would help pay for school transportation costs rather than simply parents who currently exercise school choice. It is likely that the new district(s) would transport students from Pittsfield to the school(s).
5. Formal school communications with district leaders would improve, given fewer schools where students would attend.
6. Students would likely share a more cohesive identity as they assimilate into a single school culture rather than many disparate ones.
7. The Pittsfield School Board would gain more financial and program oversight for the delivery of education services.
8. Depending on the governance partner district, special education costs would be shared equally across both districts. This would only be a benefit if Pittsfield's new partner district currently has low special education spending.

Challenges of a joint contract or union district:

The following challenges would have to be addressed before Pittsfield created a formal governance structure with another district or districts:

1. Finding a partner district that was interested to explore changing the governance structure.
2. Identifying a district that could absorb all Pittsfield students without undertaking a building renovation and adding staff.
3. Whether to secede from Windsor Northwest and become a member of another supervisory union or remain in Windsor Northwest and create highly complex management relationships across multiple supervisory unions.
4. Parents would no longer have the benefit of school choice; less incentive for families to move to Pittsfield to take advantage of school choice options.
5. Education costs may increase somewhat causing Pittsfield to potentially exceed the Act 68 per pupil spending threshold and require the Act 82 two-vote budget passage provision.
6. Higher special education costs by the partner district would adversely impact Pittsfield's assessment in a union school district but might not in a joint contract school, depending on how the contract was written.
7. All voters would help pay for school transportation costs rather than just Pittsfield parents.
8. Dealing with and communicating about the complexities of a governance change with parents and community members who would vote on a change if the School Board decides to complete phases II, III, and IV of the governance study.
9. Funding the completion of phases II, III, and IV (\$8,000) of the VSBA governance study and incurring some legal expenses if voters approve the implementation of a new governance system.
10. Receiving Department of Education Commissioner and State Board approval for a governance change.
11. Enduring a couple of years of continued meetings and decision making by a Study Committee and the School Board.
12. Jointly deciding on a name for the new joint contract school or union school district.

School Board Representation

Below is a chart that provides a snapshot of what school board representation might look like if a joint contract school or union district were created with other districts. School board representation is driven by the constitutional standard of “one person, one vote.” There is greater flexibility in board representation on a joint contract school board than a union district board. Regardless of dramatic town population differences, Pittsfield would always have at least one elected official on either a joint contract school or union district board.

District	Town Population	Pittsfield Population	Joint Board Reps	Union Board Reps
Barstow (Mendon/Chittenden)			Not Interested	Not Interested
Bethel	1,940	419	B=3/P=1	B=5/P=1
Rochester	1,135	419	R=3/P=1	R=3/P=1
Rutland City			Not Interested	Not Interested
Sherburne (Killington)	1,138	419	K=3/P=1	K=3/P=1
Stockbridge	685	419	S=3/P=2	S=3/P=2
Woodstock UMS/UHS	3,143	419	NA	W=14/P=1

Benefits and Challenges Comparing School Choice to Creating a New Governance Structure

	Benefits	Challenges
Continue with school choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cost for further study or reorganization votes • Parents believe they are able to match their children’s learning needs with appropriate schools and maintain school quality • Attract families to the town who are interested in school choice options • Some schools offer tuition rates far less than actual costs • Sending district not required to address Act 68 excess spending threshold and Act 82 two-vote budget passage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No board representation • Difficult for the school board to plan for the future • No control over escalating tuition costs • Parents must provide transportation • No uniform town identity at a single school • Attract families to the town who are interested in school choice options
Designate a school(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board can control tuition costs • All students attend the same grade level school • Federal Title and SPED services easier to deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents give up school choice and pay difference in tuition between designated and petitioned school for grades 7-12 • Receiving school must accept designation
Create a joint contract school or union district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports unified curriculum • Improves equity in distribution of resources • Removes geographic boundaries for education purposes • Places an elected board member on the new joint contract/union school board • Begins to respond to declining enrollment in the region • Provides for transportation in the school budget rather than from parents pockets • Increases economies of scale for both towns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents lose school choice • Informing voters about benefits and challenges • New relationships to establish • Focusing the discussion on educational as well as financial impact of change • Initially, cost per pupil may increase • Common Level of Appraisal impacts each town differently • Legal process and time involved in governance study and votes • Figuring out board representation • Political reality

Appendix 1 – School Quality Standards Excerpts

2120.8.1 School Leadership

Each school shall employ a licensed principal who shall be responsible for the day-to-day leadership of the school. The principal shall be answerable to the superintendent in the performance of his or her duties.

Schools with 10 or more full-time equivalent teachers shall employ a full-time licensed principal. Schools with fewer than 10 FTE teachers shall employ a licensed principal on a pro-rata basis.

2120.8.2 Staff

(a) All professional staff shall be licensed and appropriately endorsed and shall have had adequate academic preparation and training to teach or provide services in the area to which they are assigned.

(b) At the elementary level, classes in grades K-3, when taken together, shall average fewer than 20 students per teacher. In grades 4-8, when taken together, classes shall average fewer than 25 students per teacher.

(d) The services of a library-media specialist shall be available to students. Schools with over 300 students shall have at least one full-time library-media specialist and sufficient additional staff to carry out the program. Schools with fewer than 300 students shall employ a library-media specialist in at least an approximate proportion of the number of students in the school to 300.

(e) Each school shall employ sufficient and qualified special education staff as are needed to identify students eligible for special education services and to implement each eligible student's Individual Education Plan and Section 504 plan.

2120.8.4 School Counselors

(a) A school counseling program shall be available to all students in grades K-12. At the elementary level, there shall be no more than 400 students per school counselor. Schools with fewer than 400 students shall employ a school counselor at least proportionate to the ratio of the number of students to 400.

2120.8.5 Health Services

(b) Each school shall engage the services of a person licensed as a School Nurse or Associate School Nurse and shall specify in writing his or her duties. There shall be no more than 500 students per school nurse. Schools with fewer than 500 students shall employ a nurse at least proportionate to the ratio of the number of students to 500. Notwithstanding the ratios set forth above, a school shall provide for sufficient coverage by a School Nurse or an Associate School Nurse to develop individual health care plans (IHPs), train staff on the implementation of IHPs, and ensure appropriate administration of medication.

2120.8.9 Curriculum Leadership, Content and Coordination

(5) Each elementary school offering education in grades K-6 shall provide students with programs at least twice weekly, or the equivalent thereof, in both the arts and physical education.

(7) Each school offering education in grades K-8 shall provide opportunities for all students to become literate in using educational technology as a tool to enhance their learning by December 31, 2006.

Appendix 2 – VSBA Governance Study Time Line & Costs

Phase	Activity	Time	Cost
Phase I	Conduct advance research to identify potential governance efficiency of operations, improved learning opportunities, and cost-containment options prior to a more formal Phase II.	6 Months	\$4000
Phase II	Convene a governance study and allocate funds to pay for it in each community. Complete study and identify findings and options. Inform public through print, television, and radio media.	6 Months	\$5000
Phase III	Submit final governance study report to the Commissioner and State Board of Education for approval.	2 Months	NA
Phase IV	Inform public through print, television, and radio media, as well as community forums. Schedule votes in each community authorizing the creation of a new governance structure. Finalize implementation strategies.	6 Months	\$3000
Total			\$12,000

Governance studies generally take between 18 months and 4 years to complete; implementation requires an additional 12 to 18 months to transition from existing structure to the new governance entity.

In addition to the VSBA contract, districts generally incur costs for legal research, community forum expenses, media communication charges, as well as materials and printing expenses. These costs often range between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and are not included within the scope of the Vermont School Boards Association contract.

Appendix 3 – Supervisory Union Efficiency Comparisons

Vermont is unique in the structure of supervisory unions. There is great variation in the degree to which supervisory unions coordinate their efforts. The following chart compares traditional supervisory union operations with those identified as potentially more efficient in controlling costs and delivering educational services for students.

Supervisory Union Operations

Traditional Operation	Potentially More Efficient
Local districts negotiate separate contracts	Single supervisory union negotiated contract for all districts. Ratification by individual member district boards and teachers.
Local districts develop and adopt policies and procedures	Policies are researched and drafted by supervisory union committee and reviewed for adoption by local district boards. Principals and the superintendent develop procedures/guidelines. Boards may review procedures/guidelines to check for alignment with policies. 16 V.S.A. §564(1).
Centralized book keeping in some local districts	S.U. business manager provides financial services for all districts via joint contracts with member districts. 16 V.S.A. §261a (8).
Special education and compensatory services are coordinated for local districts by S.U.	Special education and compensatory services provided for all districts delivered from S.U. office. 16 V.S.A. §261a (6).
Curriculum is articulated by superintendent	Curriculum director coordinates curriculum development and adoption through supervisory union executive committee. 16 V.S.A. §261a (1) & (2).
Local schools create their own in-service programs	Superintendent/curriculum director oversees professional development within supervisory union or as part of a regional collaborative. 16 V.S.A. §261a (5).
Local districts run their own transportation systems	The supervisory union is responsible for the entire transportation system. 16 V.S.A. §261a (8).
Local districts purchase services, equipment, and materials locally	All contracted services, equipment, and materials are purchased through the central office. 16 V.S.A. §261a (8).
Local districts develop and communicate annual school report independently	The supervisory union coordinates all school report information and distributes in a k-12 context.
Local principals respond independently to the media	Central office coordinates communications with the media.
Principals and the superintendent do not articulate particular roles and responsibilities	School boards, principals, and the superintendent identify appropriate leadership roles and responsibilities. [May participate in the Vermont Education Leadership Alliance (VELA) development work.]

Appendix 4 – Selecting Elementary and Designating Secondary Schools

What does designation mean? Designation of a secondary school occurs when a district does not operate its own school and voters decide to identify the school where the school board will only pay tuition. The receiving school board must also agree to accept tuition from the sending district.

What are the advantages? The sending district school board acquires more control over the quality and costs of the receiving schools where the district pays tuition. The school board may be able to reduce the budget presented to voters by negotiating with the receiving district(s).

What are disadvantages? Parents enjoy a wider range of school choice options and do not want to give up the ability to send their children to schools that are often in the community where they work, or that, in the parents' view, better meet their children's unique learning needs. Also, if parents want their children to attend schools other than the one(s) that have been designated, parents have to pay additional tuition costs in grades 7-12, if the non-designated district tuition charges are greater.

Where are they? Previous to a new public high school designation law, passed in 2009, secondary districts could only designate an approved independent secondary school. Currently, no public secondary schools have been designated. Two approved independent secondary schools have been designated in Vermont. The first, Thetford Academy, is designated by Strafford and Thetford. East Haven, Sutton, Miller's Run, Burke, Newark, and Lyndon Town all designate Lyndon Institute; Wells designates Granville, NY.

The St. George District created a ten-year contract with Williston to pay tuition to Williston Elementary School, where all St. George students attend.

The Laws that Govern Elementary Tuition and Secondary School Designation

§ 821. School district to maintain public elementary schools or pay tuition

(a) Elementary school. Each school district shall provide, furnish, and maintain one or more approved schools within the district in which elementary education for its pupils is provided unless:

(1) The electorate authorizes the school board to provide for the elementary education of the pupils residing in the district by paying tuition in accordance with law to one or more public elementary schools in one or more school districts.

(2) The school district is organized to provide only high school education for its pupils.

(3) Otherwise provided for by the general assembly.

(b) Kindergarten program. Each school district shall provide public kindergarten education within the district. However, a school district may pay tuition for the kindergarten education of its pupils:

(1) at one or more public schools under subdivision (a)(1) of this section; or

(2) if the electorate authorizes the school board to pay tuition to one or more approved independent schools or independent schools meeting school quality standards, but only if the school district did not operate a kindergarten on September 1, 1984, and has not done so afterward.

(c) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, a school board without previous authorization by the electorate may pay tuition for elementary pupils who reside near a public elementary school in an adjacent district upon request of the pupil's parent or guardian, if in the board's judgment the pupil's education can be more conveniently furnished there due to geographic considerations. Within 30 days of the board's decision, a parent or guardian who is dissatisfied with the decision of the board under this subsection may request a determination by the commissioner, who shall have authority to direct the school board to pay all, some, or none of the pupil's tuition and whose decision shall be final.

(d) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the electorate of a school district that does not maintain an elementary school may grant general authority to the school board to pay tuition for an elementary pupil at an approved independent elementary school upon notice given by the pupil's parent or legal guardian before April 15 for the next academic year; provided the board shall pay tuition for the pupil in an amount not to exceed the least of:

(1) The statewide average announced tuition of Vermont union elementary schools.

(2) The average per-pupil tuition the district pays for its other resident elementary pupils in the year in which the pupil is enrolled in the approved independent school.

(3) The tuition charged by the approved independent school in the year in which the pupil is enrolled

§ 826. Elementary tuition

(a) Tuition for elementary pupils shall be paid by the district in which the pupil is a resident. The district shall pay the full tuition charged its students attending a public elementary school. If a payment made to a public elementary school is three percent more or less than the calculated net cost per elementary pupil in the receiving school district for the year of attendance, the district shall be reimbursed, credited, or refunded pursuant to section 836 of this title. Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection or of subsection 825(b) of this title, the boards of both the receiving and sending districts may enter into tuition agreements with terms differing from the provisions of those subsections, provided that the receiving district must offer identical terms to all sending districts...

(b) The tuition paid to an approved independent elementary school or an independent school meeting school quality standards shall not exceed the lesser of:

(1) the average announced tuition of Vermont union elementary schools for the year of attendance; or

(2) the tuition charged by the independent school. However, the electorate of a school district may authorize the payment of a higher amount at an annual or special meeting warned for the purpose

§ 822. School district to maintain public high schools or pay tuition

(a) Each school district shall provide, furnish, and maintain one or more approved high schools in which high school education is provided for its pupils unless:

(1) The electorate authorizes the school board to close an existing high school and to

.....provide for the high school education of its pupils by paying tuition in accordance with.....

law. Tuition for its pupils shall be paid to a public high school, an approved independent high school, or an independent school meeting school quality standards, to be selected by the parents or guardians of the pupil, within or without the state; or

(c) The school board may both maintain a high school and furnish high school education by paying tuition to a public school as in the judgment of the board may best serve the interests of the pupils, or to an approved independent school or an independent school meeting school quality standards if the board judges that a pupil has unique educational needs that cannot be served within the district or at a nearby public school. Its judgment shall be final in regard to the institution the pupils may attend at public cost.

§ 824. High school tuition

(a) Tuition for high school pupils shall be paid by the school district in which the pupil is a resident.

(b) Except as otherwise provided for technical students, the district shall pay the full tuition charged its pupils attending a public high school in Vermont or an adjoining state or a public or approved independent school in Vermont functioning as an approved area technical center, or an independent school meeting school quality standards; provided:

(1) If a payment made to a public high school or an independent school meeting school quality standards is three percent more or less than the calculated net cost per secondary pupil in the receiving school district or independent school for the year of attendance then the district or school shall be reimbursed, credited, or refunded pursuant to section 836 of this title.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection or of subsection 825(b) of this title, the board of the receiving public school district, public or approved independent school functioning as an area technical center, or independent school meeting school quality standards may enter into tuition agreements with the boards of sending districts that have terms differing from the provisions of those subsections, provided that the receiving district or school must offer identical terms to all sending districts, and further provided that the statutory provisions apply to any sending district that declines the offered terms.

(c) The district shall pay an amount not to exceed the average announced tuition of Vermont union high schools for the year of attendance for its pupils enrolled in an approved independent school not functioning as a Vermont area technical center, or any higher amount approved by the electorate at an annual or special meeting warned for that purpose.

§ 827. Designation of a public high school or an approved independent high school as the sole public high school of a school district

(a) A school district not maintaining an approved public high school may vote on such terms or conditions as it deems appropriate, to designate an approved independent school or a public school as the public high school of the district.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in this section, if the board of trustees or the school board of the designated school votes to accept this designation the school shall be regarded as a public school for tuition purposes under subsection 824(b) of this title and the sending school district shall pay tuition to that school only, until such time as the sending school district or the designated school votes to rescind the designation.

(c) A parent or legal guardian who is dissatisfied with the instruction provided at the designated school or who cannot obtain for his or her child the kind of course or instruction desired there, or whose child can be better accommodated in an approved independent or public high school nearer his or her home during the next academic year, may request on or before April 15 that the school board pay tuition to another approved independent or public high school selected by the parent or guardian.

(d) The school board may pay tuition to another approved high school as requested by the parent or legal guardian if in its judgment that will best serve the interests of the pupil. Its decision shall be final in regard to the institution the pupil may attend. If the board approves the parent's request, the board shall pay tuition for the pupil in an amount not to exceed the least of:

- (1) The statewide average announced tuition of Vermont union high schools.
- (2) The per-pupil tuition the district pays to the designated school in the year in which the pupil is enrolled in the non-designated school.
- (3) The tuition charged by the approved non-designated school in the year in which the pupil is enrolled.

Appendix 5 – Joint Contract School

What are they? Joint contract schools are schools that are operated by a board of directors made up of members of school district boards that have joined together to operate a school. Once formed, the joint contract board has “full authority to act on all matters pertaining to finance, location, construction, and operation of (joint) schools...including the selection and hiring of teachers.”

Joint board representation shall consist of members chosen annually from the duly elected school boards of the school districts...Unless the school districts ... have agreed upon a different method of allocating board members... the school district having the largest number of pupils attending the joint, contract or consolidated school shall have three members on the joint board. Each other school district shall have at least one member on the joint board, and its total membership shall be determined by dividing the number of pupils from the school district with the largest enrollment by three, rounding off the quotient to the nearest whole number, which shall be called the “factor” and by then dividing the pupil enrollment of each of the other school districts by the “factor,”...

How are they formed? The electorate of a school district may authorize its board to enter into a joint contract with another school district or school districts. Upon authorization, the board may “enter into a contract or contracts with other towns and parties for the financing, construction, operation and maintenance of a competent school or schools...”

What are their advantages? Joint contract schools have the advantage of being easily formed.

What are their disadvantages? There are several potential disadvantages to a joint contract school. They result in the formation of a new school board, while maintaining the prior existing boards even though those boards may no longer operate a school. The new board can develop and adopt a budget without a vote of the electorates of the member districts. There are numerous ambiguities in the law related to the operation of joint contract schools. The financing and ownership of property by member districts is, for example, not clearly prescribed in the law.

Where are they? There are joint contract schools in Jay/Westfield, Chittenden/Mendon (Barstow), Granville/Hancock (dissolved 2009), Wilmington/Whitingham (Twin Valley), Athens/Grafton, and Newfane/Brookline (NewBrook).

The Laws That Govern the Creation of Joint Contract Schools

16 VSA § 571. Contracts to construct and operate joint schools

By a majority vote of the voters present and voting at a meeting, duly warned for that purpose, a town school district or incorporated school district may authorize its school directors to enter into a contract or contracts with other towns and parties for the financing, construction, maintenance and operation of a competent school or schools to provide means and facilities for the convenient and adequate development, education and training of the youth of such town.

16 VSA § 572. Joint boards for joint, contract or consolidated schools

(a) The control of joint, contract or consolidated schools, set up by two or more school districts, shall be vested in a joint school board from such school districts and such board shall be chosen in the manner hereinafter provided for and for the purpose of this section, a joint, contract or consolidated school board shall be referred to as a joint board.

(b) The joint board shall have full authority to act on all matters pertaining to the finance, location, construction, maintenance and operation of schools set up as joint, contract or consolidated schools, including the selection and hiring of teachers.

(c) The joint board shall consist of members chosen annually from the duly elected school boards of the school districts, each school district board electing a member or members to the joint board from among its own members.

(d) Unless the school districts which are parties to the contract have agreed upon a different method of allocating board members that is consistent with law, the allocation of the board members shall be as follows. The school district having the largest number of pupils attending the joint, contract or consolidated school shall have three members on the joint board. Each other school district shall have at least one member on the joint board, and its total membership shall be determined by dividing the number of pupils from the school district with the largest enrollment by three, rounding off the quotient to the nearest whole number, which shall be called the "factor" and by then dividing the pupil enrollment of each of the other school districts by the "factor," rounding off this quotient to the nearest whole number, this number being the number of school directors on the joint board from each of the other school districts. Pupil enrollment for the purpose of determining the number of members on the joint board to which each school district is entitled shall be taken from the school registers on January 1 of the calendar year in which the school year starts. Such joint board shall annually select from among the members thereof a chairman and clerk. (Amended 1961, No. 79; 1991, No. 173 [Adj. Sess.]).

Appendix 6 – Union and Unified Union School Districts

What are they? Union school districts are formed by agreement between participating school districts to operate a single school in certain grades for residents of the participating districts. A union school district has a school board comprised of representatives of the member district, elected on a one-person-one-vote basis from each district. A union school district has its own school district meeting to adopt an annual budget, and member districts pay assessments in accord with the union district's articles of agreement.

Union schools generally encompass grade levels configured as PK-6, PK-8, 9-12, or 7-12. A unified union means all grade levels are combined into a PK-12 district.

How are they formed? There is a comprehensive statutory process for the formation of union school districts. Formation requires an extensive study process (preceded by vote of the electorate *only if the budget is over \$25,000*), approval by the State Board of Education and final approval by the electorate of each member district to create the new union.

What are their advantages? Union school districts are municipal entities, as are all school districts. As such, union school districts have powers to build, finance, own and operate schools. They are therefore stable entities. The level of public participation in union school districts is on a par with the level of public participation in "town" school districts.

What are their disadvantages? Union school districts are difficult to form and difficult to alter once formed. On occasion, a member district may want to leave a union district, or a new district may wish to join an existing union district. While there are statutory processes to allow these things to happen, a single district will be unable to enter or leave a union without the assent of other members.

Where are they? There are approximately 36 union school districts. Most are high school or middle school unions. Union districts for elementary schools have recently been formed in Waterbury/Duxbury and Metawee Valley (Rupert and Pawlet).

The Laws that Govern the Creation of Union School Districts

16 VSA § 701. POLICY

It is declared to be the policy of the state to provide equal educational opportunities for all children in Vermont by authorizing two or more school districts, including an existing union school district, to establish a union school district for the purpose of owning, constructing, maintaining, or operating schools and to constitute the district so formed a municipal corporation with all of the rights and responsibilities which a town school district has in providing education for its youth.

§ 701b. APPLICATION OF CHAPTER

(a) Whenever referred to in this subchapter, the term "school district" shall include a "town school district," "incorporated school district," "union school district," or "city school district," and this subchapter shall accordingly apply to the organization and operation of a union school district of which any school district is a member or prospective member. The provisions of this subchapter shall apply and take precedence in the event of any conflict between those provisions and the provisions of the charter of a municipality which is a member or prospective member of a union district. Upon the organization of a union district under this subchapter, any charter of a member municipality is considered to be amended accordingly without further action.

§ 706. PROPOSAL TO FORM PLANNING COMMITTEE

When the boards of two or more school districts believe that a planning committee should be established to study the advisability of forming a union school district, or if five percent of the voters eligible to vote at the last annual or special school district meeting petition the board of their respective school districts to do so, each of the boards shall meet with the superintendent of each participating district. With the advice of the superintendent, the boards shall establish a budget, and shall fix the number of persons to serve on the planning committee, that prepares the report required by this subchapter. The boards' proposal shall ensure that each participating district share in the committee's budget, and be represented on the committee, in that proportion which the equalized pupils (as defined in section 4001 of this title) of the district bear to the total equalized pupils of all school districts intending to participate in the committee's study. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit informal exploration between and among school districts prior to the formation of a planning committee.

§ 706a. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BUDGET; APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING COMMITTEE

(a) If the proposed budget established in section 706 of this chapter exceeds \$25,000.00, then:
(1) The voters of each participating district shall be warned to meet at an annual or special school district meeting to vote on a question in substantially the following form: "Shall the school district of appropriate funds necessary to support the district's financial share of a study to determine the advisability of forming a union school district with some or all of the following school districts:? It is estimated that the district's share, if all the above-listed districts vote to participate, will be \$..... The total proposed budget, to be shared by all participating districts, is \$....." It is not necessary for the voters of each participating district to vote on the same date to establish a union school district planning committee.

(2) If the vote is in the affirmative in two or more districts, the boards of the participating districts shall appoint a planning committee consisting of the number of persons previously fixed. At least one school director from each participating district shall be on the committee. A district board may appoint residents to the committee who are not school directors.

(3) The sums expended for planning purposes under this section, shall be considered a part of the approved cost of any project in which the district participates pursuant to sections 3447 through 3449 of this title.

(b) If the proposed budget established in section 706 of this chapter does not exceed \$25,000.00, then the boards of the participating districts shall appoint a planning committee consisting of the number of persons previously fixed. At least one school director from each participating district shall be on the committee. A district board may appoint residents who are not school directors to the committee. The sums expended for planning purposes under this section shall be considered a part of the approved cost of any project in which the district participates pursuant to sections 3447 through 3449 of this title.

§ 706b. PLANNING COMMITTEE; CONTENTS OF PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

(a) Planning committee. When a planning committee is appointed, the members shall elect a chair who shall notify the commissioner of education, of the appointment. The commissioner shall cooperate with the planning committee and may make department staff available to assist in the study of the proposed union school district. The committee is a public body pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 310(3). The committee shall cease to exist when the clerk of each district voting on a proposal to establish a union school district has certified the results of the vote to the commissioner of education pursuant to section 706g of this chapter.

(b) Decision and report. The planning committee may determine that it is inadvisable to form a union school district or it may prepare a report in the form of an agreement between member districts for the government of the proposed union school district. In making its determination,

the committee may contact additional school districts it believes may be advisable to include within a new union school district. If the committee decides to recommend formation of a union school district, its report shall specify:

(1) the names of school districts the committee considers necessary to the establishment of the proposed union; provided, however, only districts named in the warning for the vote under section 706a of this chapter may be identified as necessary;

(2) the names of additional school districts the committee considers advisable to include in the proposed union school district;

(3) the grades to be operated by the proposed union school district;

(4) the cost and general location of any proposed new schools to be constructed and the cost and general description of any proposed renovations;

(5) a plan for the first year of the union school district's operation for the transportation of students, the assignment of staff, and curriculum that is consistent with existing contracts, collective bargaining agreements, or other provisions of law. The board of the union school district shall make all subsequent decisions regarding transportation, staff, and curriculum subject to existing contracts, collective bargaining agreements, or other provisions of law;

(6) the indebtedness of proposed member districts that the union school district shall assume;

(7) the specific pieces of real property of proposed member districts that the union shall acquire, their valuation, and how the union school district shall pay for them;

(8) the allocation of capital and operating expenses of the union school district among the member districts;

(9) consistent with the proportional representation requirements of the equal protection clause of the Constitution of the United States, the method of apportioning the representation that each proposed member district shall have on the union school board. The union school board shall have no more than 18 members, and each member district shall be entitled to at least one representative;

(10) the term of office of directors initially elected, to be arranged so that one-third expire on the day of the second annual meeting of the respective districts, one-third on the day of the third annual meeting of the respective districts, and one-third on the day of the fourth annual meeting of the respective districts, or as near to that proportion as possible;

(11) the date on which the union school district proposal will be submitted to the voters;

(12) the date on which the union school district will begin operating schools and providing educational services; and

(13) any other matters that the committee considers pertinent, including whether votes on the union school district budget or public questions shall be by Australian ballot.

§ 706c. APPROVAL BY STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

If a planning committee prepares a report under section 706b of this chapter, the committee shall transmit the report to the commissioner who shall submit the report with his or her recommendations to the state board of education. That board after notice to the planning committee and after giving the committee an opportunity to be heard shall consider the report and the commissioner's recommendations, and decide whether the formation of such union

school district will be for the best interest of the state, the students, and the school districts proposed to be members of the union. The board may request the commissioner and the planning committee to make further investigation and may consider any other information deemed by it to be pertinent. If, after due consideration and any further meetings as it may deem necessary, the board finds that the formation of the proposed union school district is in the best interests of the state, the students, and the school districts, it shall approve the report submitted by the committee, together with any amendments, as a final report of the planning committee, and shall give notice of its action to the committee. The chair of the planning committee shall file a copy of the final report with the town clerk of each proposed member district at least 20 days prior to the vote to establish the union.

§ 706d. VOTE TO ESTABLISH UNION SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Each school district that is designated in the final report as necessary to the proposed union school district shall vote, and any school district designated in the final report as advisable to be included may, vote on the establishment of the proposed union school district. The vote shall be held on the date specified in the final report. The vote shall be warned in each proposed member school district by the school board of that district, and the vote shall be by Australian ballot, at separate school district meetings held on the same day and during the same hours. The polls shall remain open at least eight hours. Early or absentee voting as provided by sections 2531 to 2550 of Title 17 shall be permitted. The meetings shall be warned as a special meeting of each school district voting on the proposal. The school board of a school district designated as “advisable” in the proposed union school district may choose not to hold a meeting to vote on the question of establishing the union school district; provided, however, it shall warn and conduct the meeting on application of ten percent of the voters in the school district.

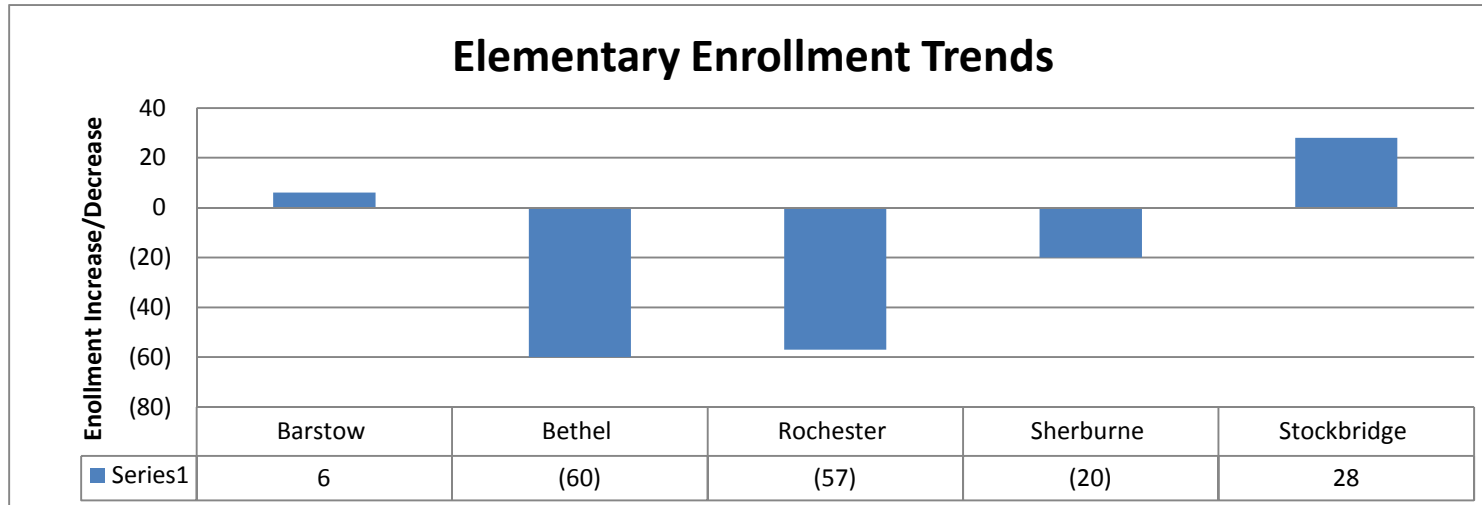
Appendix 7 – Examples of Joint Contract Schools and Union Districts

District	Towns Served	Square Miles	Grades Served	Students Served	Buildings	Year Formed
Athens/Grafton Joint Contract	Athens, Grafton	51.5	K-6	97	1	2003
Flood Brook Union Elementary	Londonderry, Landgrove, Peru, Weston	117.6	K-8	418	1	1965 [Peru 1970]
Hancock/Granville Joint District	Hancock, Granville	90.7	K-6	42	2	2004 (Dissolved 2009)
Mettawee Community USD #47	Rupert, Pawlet	87.9	K-6	188	1	1998
NewBrook Joint Contract	Newfane, Brookline	53	K-6	127	2	2009
Rivendell Interstate District	Fairlee, Orford, NH, West, Fairlee, Vershire	125.7	K-12	552	3	1998

Appendix 8 – Elementary Enrollment

Elementary School Enrollment Trends 1999 – 2008

Secondary School Name	Total 99	Total 04	Total 05	Total 06	Total 07	Total 08	FY99-08	Can Absorb All Pittsfield Students	Interested Governance Partner
							Incr/(Decr)		
Barstow Memorial School	294	306	318	302	302	300	6	No	No
Bethel Elementary School	206	143	153	149	150	146	(60)	Yes	Yes
Rochester Elem/High School	266	252	249	261	220	209	(57)	Yes	Yes
Sherburne Elementary School	114	86	81	92	88	94	(20)	Yes	Yes
Stockbridge Central School	47	64	71	72	69	75	28	No	Yes

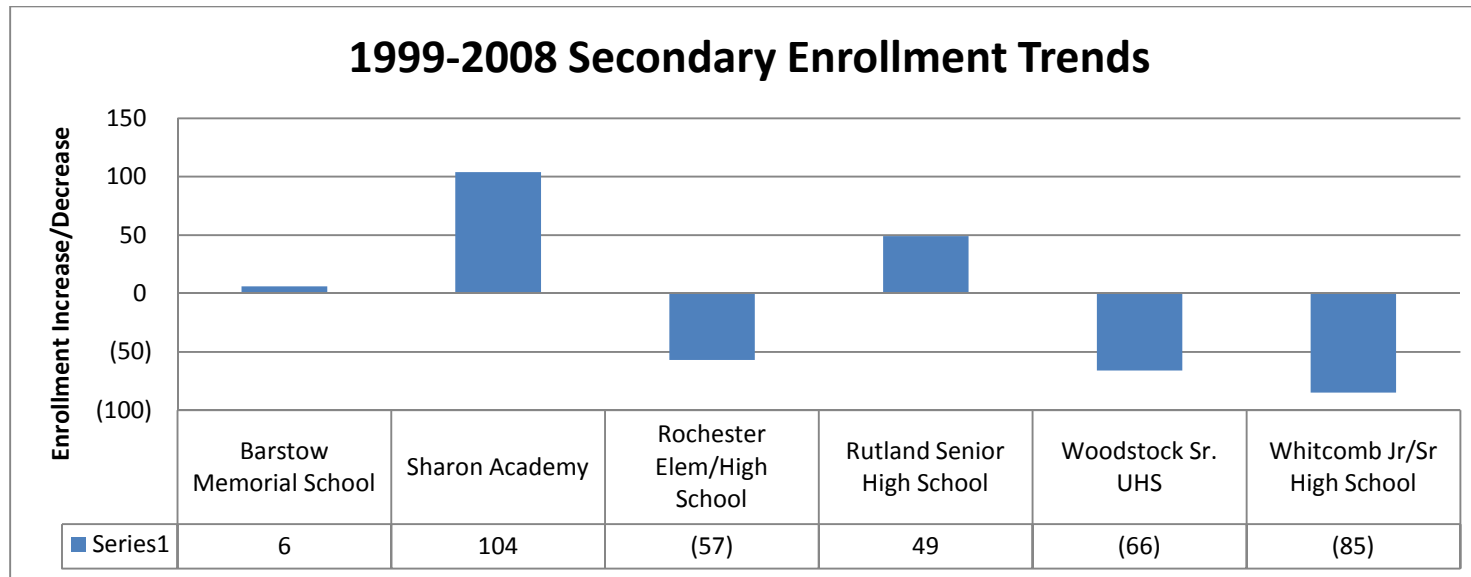


Appendix 9 – Secondary Enrollment Trends

Most elementary and secondary school districts in the region have experienced decreased student enrollment since 1999. Sharon Academy has grown their enrollment by 265% over the past decade. This general enrollment decline challenges school leaders to maximize use of space, staff, and facilities. Unification of the school districts will enhance the new partner school board’s capacity for flexible use of school facilities, sharing of staff, and generally maximizing economies of scale. This expanded enrollment opportunity may benefit Pittsfield financially and programmatically.

Secondary School Enrollment Trends 1999 - 2008

Secondary School Name	Total 99	Total 04	Total 05	Total 06	Total 07	Total 08	FY99-08	Can Absorb All Pittsfield Students	Interested Governance Partner
							Incr/(Decr)		
Barstow Memorial School	294	306	318	302	302	300	6	No	No
Rochester Elem/High School	266	252	249	261	220	209	(57)	Yes	Yes
Rutland Senior High School	1,025	1,142	1,134	1,151	1,157	1,074	49	Yes	No
Sharon Academy	64	120	140	156	160	167	104	Yes	Yes
Whitcomb Jr/Sr High School	207	179	164	157	136	122	(85)	Yes	Yes
Woodstock Sr. UHS	489	440	422	425	436	426	(66)	Yes	Yes



Appendix 10 – Elementary Costs Per Pupil

Proposed FY 2010 Elementary School Costs (11/7/09)

Area District Data

Avg. Cost to Educate a Pittsfield Elem. Student

Barstow (K-8)**

Rochester (K-6)

Rutland Intermediate(3-6)

Rutland Northeast (K-2)

Sherburne (K-6)

Stockbridge (PK-6)

Total Elem. Costs

Pittsfield	FY2010	FY2010	*FY2010	FY2010	**FY	FY201
Stud.	Announce	Total	Plus	Total	2010	0
Attend	Tuition	Tuition	WNSU	Education	Ed.	Total Ed. Costs
			Asses.	Costs	Costs	Less Revenues
			Per Pupil		Less Rev.	
					Per Pupil	
	9,311		13,188		12,098	
5	\$9,900	49,500	13,778	68,890	12,687	64,435
2	\$9,785	19,570	13,663	27,326	12,572	25,144
1	\$7,300	7,300	11,178	11,178	10,087	10,087
1	\$7,300	7,300	11,178	11,178	10,087	10,087
22	\$9,256	203,632	13,134	288,948	12,043	264,946
7	\$9,500	66,500	13,378	93,646	12,287	86,009
38		353,802		501,166		459,708

*Avg. total WNSU assessment per pupil = \$3878

**Avg. WNSU assessment per pupil, less revenues = \$2787

Assumptions:

1. Number of enrolled Pittsfield students will remain the same as budgeted
2. Allowable tuition will be within + or - 3% range from the announced tuition rate

Appendix 11 – Secondary Costs Per Pupil

Proposed FY2010 Secondary School Costs

Area District Data	Pittsfield	FY10	FY2010	*FY2010 Tuition	FY2010 Total	**FY 2010 Ed.	FY2010
	Stud.	Announced	Total	Plus WNSU Asses.	Education	Costs Less Rev.	Total Ed. Costs
	Attend	Tuition	Tuition	Per Pupil	Costs	Per Pupil	Less Revenues
Avg. Total Cost to Educate a Pittsfield Second. Student		11,853		15,731		\$14,640	
Barstow (K-8)	3	\$9,900	29,700	13,778	41,334	12,687	38,061
Rochester (7-12)	4	\$12,360	49,440	16,268	64,952	15,147	60,588
Rutland HS (9-12)	4	\$10,710	42,840	14,588	58,352	13,497	53,988
Sharon Academy (7-12)	5	\$11,576	57,880	15,454	77,270	14,363	71,815
Whitcomb Jr/Sr (7-12)	2	\$11,330	22,660	15,208	30,416	14,117	28,264
Woodstock UHSD (7-12)	7	\$13,400	93,800	17,278	120,946	16,187	113,309
Total Secondary Costs	25		296,320		393,270		365,995

*Avg. total WNSU assessment per pupil = \$3878

**Avg. WNSU assessment per pupil, less revenues = \$2787

Assumptions:

1. Number of enrolled Pittsfield students will remain the same as budgeted
2. Allowable tuition will be within + or - 3% range from the announced tuition rate
3. Average announced tuition rate for Vermont union 7-12 schools = \$11,576

Appendix 12 – NECAP Assessment Comparisons

NECAP School Quality Comparisons (4/16/09)

New England Common Assessment Program Results

% proficient or above (grades 3-6)

	% FRL	Reading	Math	Writing	Science (4th)
Vermont Totals	29%	70%	64%	49%	48%
<u>Elementary Schools</u>					
Barstow (K-6)	17%	84%	79%	80%	50%
Bethel (K-6)	39%	76%	67%	59%	44%
Rochester (K-6)	44%	59%	52%	36%	*
Sherburne (K-6)	28%	93%	90%	*	79%
Stockbridge (PK-6)	25%	82%	76%	86%	*

% proficient or above (grade 7-12)

	% FRL	Reading	Math	Writing	Science (8th)	Science (11th)
Vermont Totals		72%	35%	42%	27%	24%
<u>Secondary Schools</u>						
Barstow (7-8)	17%	84%	79%	80%	37%	NA
Rochester (7-12)	44%	59%	52%	36%	26%	24%
Rutland HS (9-12)	25%	62%	26%	32%	NA	21%
**Sharon Academy (7-8)	ND	83%	75%	47%	57%	NA
**Sharon Academy (9-12)	ND	88%	40%	78%	NA	19%
Whitcomb Jr/Sr (7-12)	39%	50%	8%	25%	36%	20%
Woodstock UMS (7-8)	19%	76%	64%	56%	48%	NA
Woodstock UHS (9-12)	17%	75%	35%	43%	NA	28%

Source: VT Dept. of Education - 2008

76% - Means the percentage of students who met or exceeded state standards in each assessment area

% FRL - Free or Reduced Lunch(Breakfast) distinction; measure of poverty used to ensure equity

* Fewer than 10 students took test; results sealed to protect student confidentiality.

** Data from The Sharon Academy

Appendix 13 – Secondary School Quality Indicators

Secondary School Quality

Area District Data	Travel	# Pittsfield	Student	Advance	Honors	Virtual	College	Met	Annual
	Distances	Students	/ Teacher	Placement	Classes	High	Dual	Adequate	Drop-out
		Attending	Ratio	Courses		School	Enroll.	Yearly Prog	Rate
Pittsfield									
**Barstow (7-8)	18	3	13.25	NA	NA	NA	NA	Yes	NA
Rochester (K-12)	11	4	11.00	0	Unweighted	0	10	Yes	0
Rutland HS (9-12)	17	4	13.64	14	24	No	10	No	3.83
Sharon Academy (7-12)	25	5	13.50	No	No	3	5	NA	0.01
Whitcomb Jr/Sr (7-12)	14	2	10.61	1	3	200	?	Yes	9.64
Woodstock UHSD (7-12)	26	7	9.89	13	8	200	?	Yes	2.58

* Travel distance from center of Pittsfield village to each school

** Barstow school (Chittenden & Mendon) finances estimated from town report, not official DOE figures

Data source is the Vermont Dept. of Education, except for Barstow School, Sharon Academy, and travel distances.