



Act 46: Unification

Act 46 is designed to encourage and support local decisions while exploring opportunities to unify existing education governance structures.

Initial Implementation of Act 46

Rebecca Holcombe
February 12, 2016

Overview:

- Why we are doing this?
- Progress to date?
- Benefits?
- Challenges?

Our Goals

- To ensure all children develop the skills they need to thrive in civic life and in college and/or careers.
- To provide this education in the most effective, efficient and accountable way.
- To reduce inequity of outcomes across the state.

Julia Dunn,
Student member, CESU board

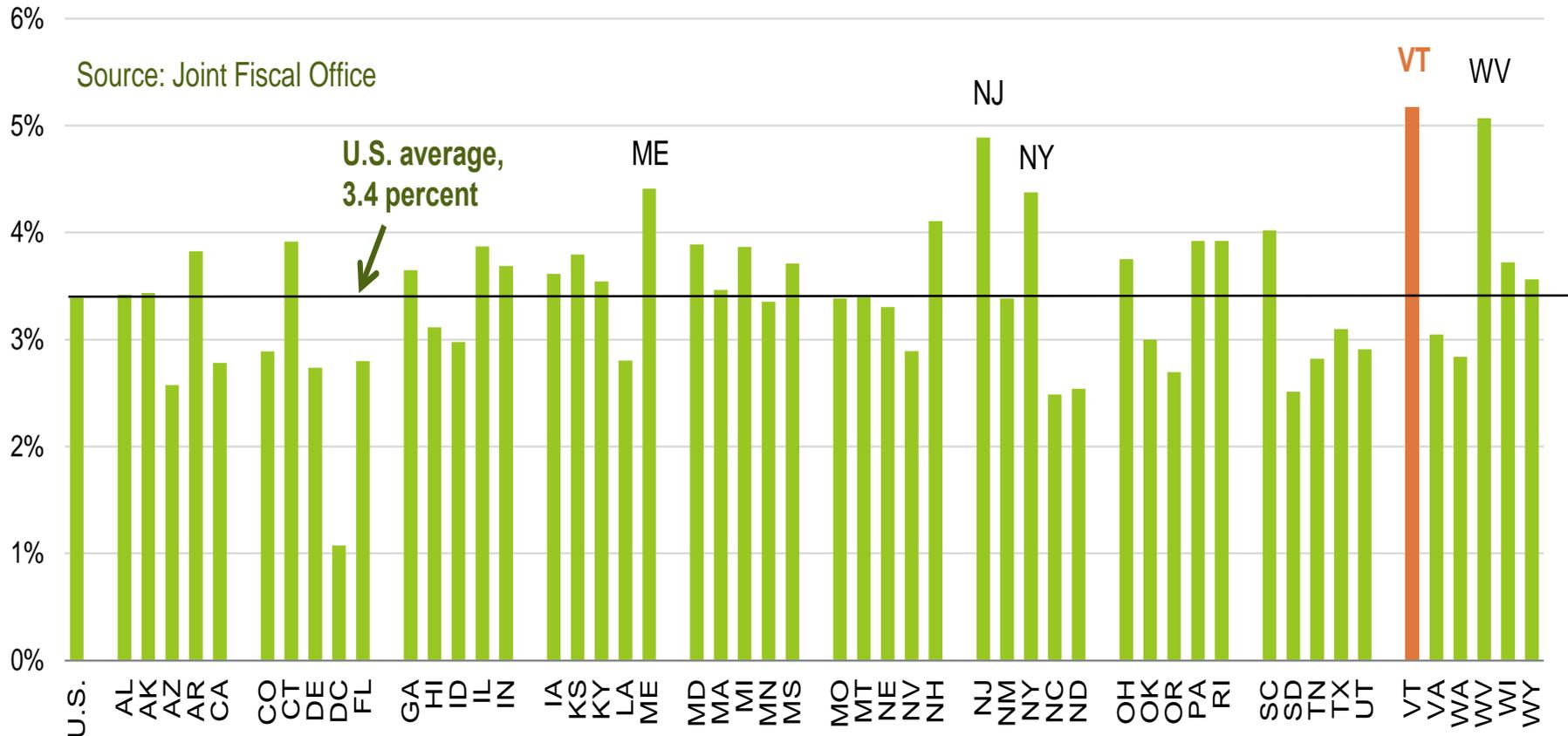
Equity, Quality, Opportunity



We are able to share resources so that when kids come together at the high school, they have all had the same good opportunities and can be at the same level.

State and local revenues to K-12 education as a share of GSP (2011-12)

Highest in Nation: 5.2%



Thank you to Rep. Oliver Olsen for the image.



Mergers approved by the electorate:

Accelerated merger approved by voters to date:

- Essex-Westford Educational Community – organizational meeting-- January 26, 2016

Other mergers approved by voters to date:

- Rutland NE (Side-by-Side) (Vote final 2/13)
- Elmore –Morristown (EMUU)
- Mountain Town (RED) – Operational July 1, 2013
- Mount Mansfield (MUUSD) (Huntington vote pending) – Operational July 1, 2015



Summary of **accelerated** mergers to date approved by the **State Board**/waiting for public vote:

- Addison Central (December)
- Addison NW (January)
- Addison Rutland (Slate Valley UUSD) (January)
- Franklin Central (January)
- Lamoille North (January)



Summary of other mergers approved by the **State Board**/waiting for VOTE:

- Mount Mansfield (MUUSD) and
Huntington
- Rutland South (RED; December SBE)



Summary of **anticipated accelerated** merger proposals to be voted on prior to July 1, 2016, (not yet presented to SBE)

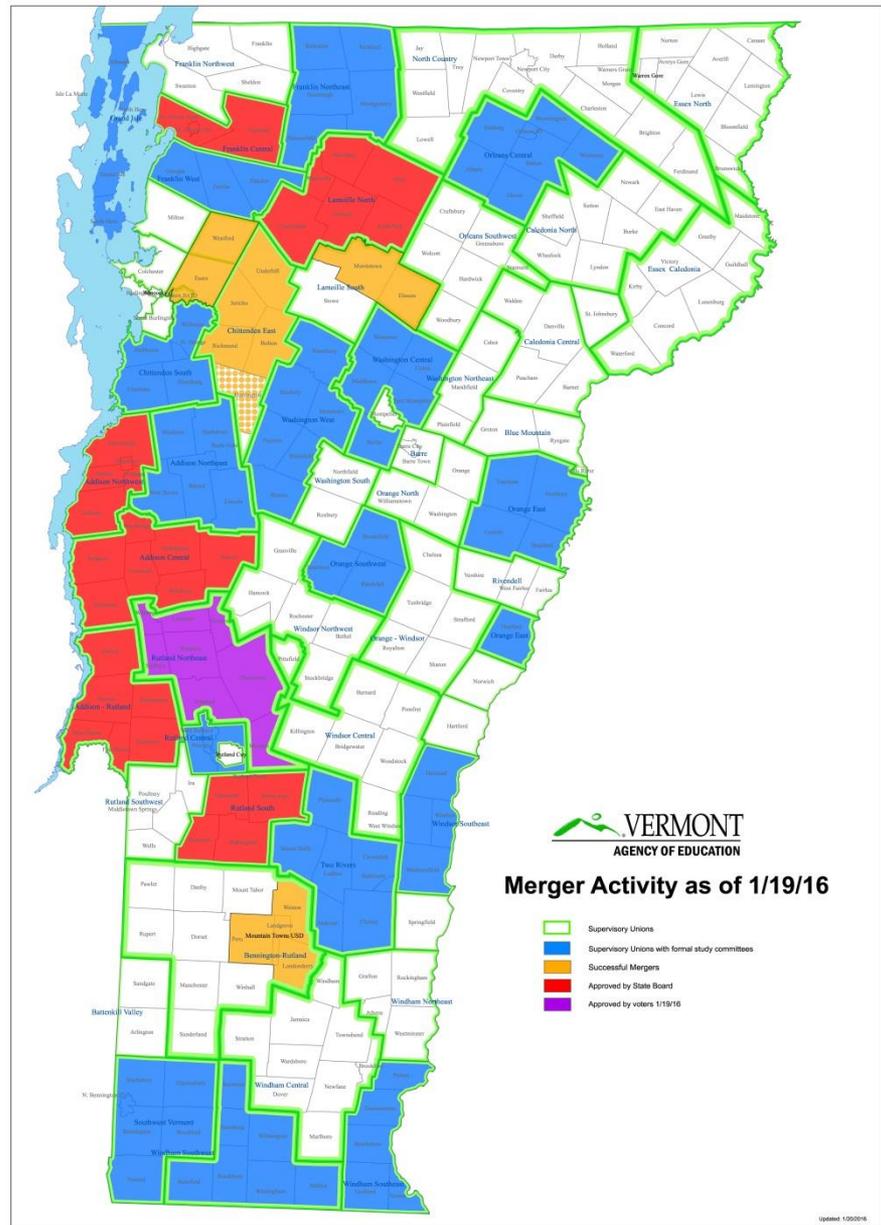
- Chittenden South
- Orleans Central
- Washington West
- Windham SE



Other anticipated merger proposals to be presented to the State Board prior to July 1, 2016

- Orange SW (RED) (proposal before the State Board on February 16)
- Franklin NE (possibly accelerated)
- Two Rivers (maybe a June vote)
- And possibly one more...

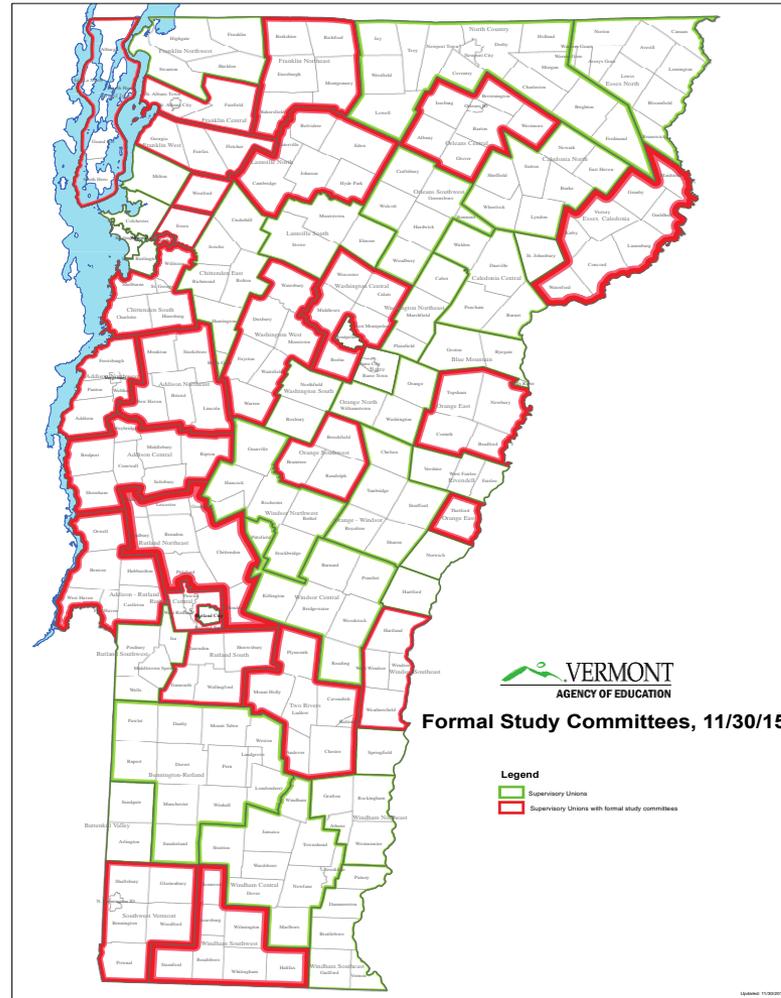
Map of merger activity type and date of merger



Other 706b Study Committees – Vote Likely to be **after July 1, 2016**

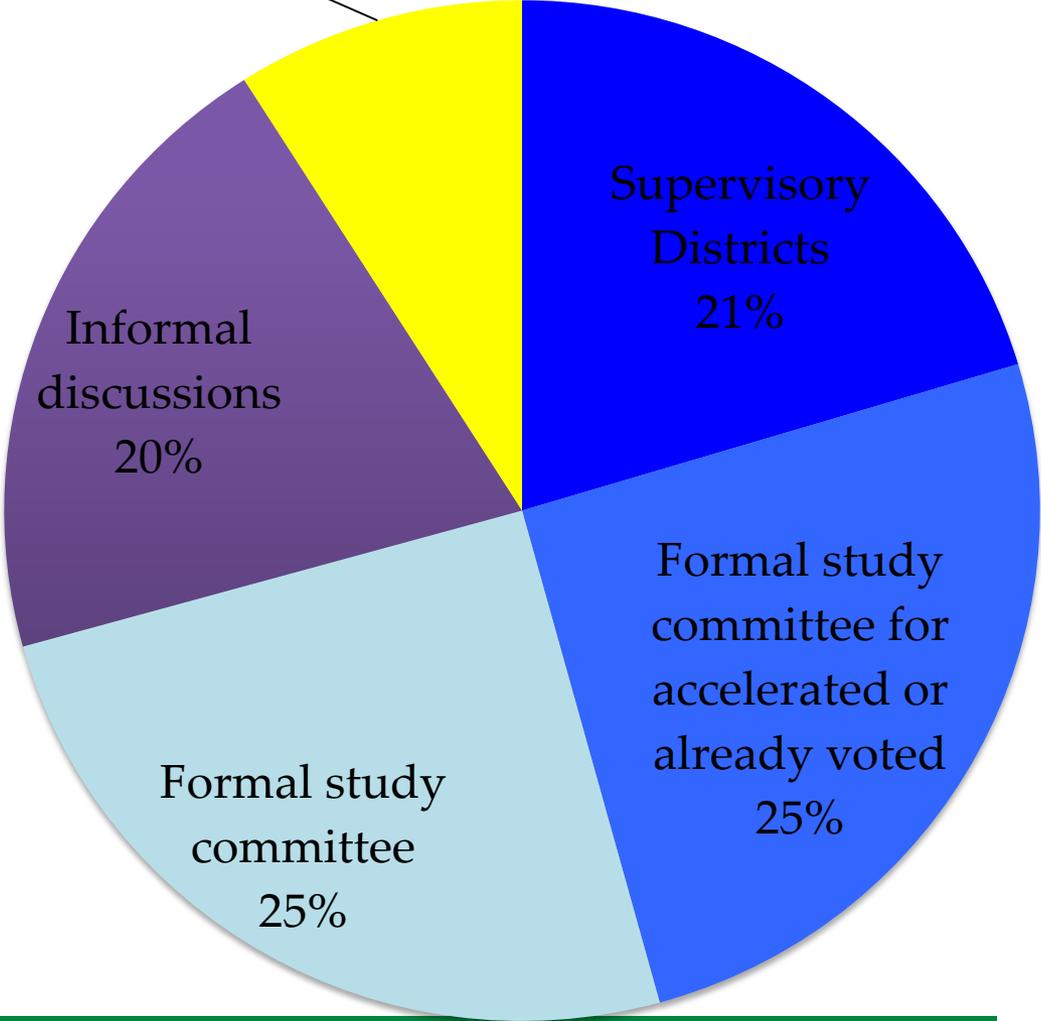
- Addison NE
- Franklin West
- Orange East
- Rutland Central
- SW Vermont
- Washington Central
- Windham SW
- Windsor SE

Governance Activity to Date by Region (SUS outlined in RED have study grants)



Governance Conversations by % of FY15 ADM as of Feb. 9, 2016

No discussions reported 9%



Act 46 is forcing hard questions (big and small) and hard conversations

- Why does the state spend \$1.6 billion a year on education?
- Is our goal to educate all kids equitably for democratic ends or is it to provide every parent with resources to seek out the best fit they can find for their child?
- What is the role of the state and what is the role of a school board and what is the role of a school?
- Can I operate my very small school, offer lots of opportunities, tuition students who want out and still have low tax rates? And when will the legislature write the law that lets me do that?

Benefits of Act 46: It is all in how you see it.



Benefits of Unification:

Supports for 21st Century Learning

- Expertise
- Technology
- Programs
- Training
- Leadership time

The least energizing reason to do anything is to help the central office of a system, BUT it is difficult to support improvements without systems to support teachers and classrooms.

Benefits of Act 46: It is all in how you see it.



Benefits of Unification:

Support for Professional Learning

Instructional coaches:

- share talented teacher experts
- share instructional coaches

Curriculum development and sharing of innovative, high quality teaching, and support

Benefits of Act 46: It is all in how you see it.



Benefits of Unification:

Coherent and continuous systems of support

- Better experience for struggling students owing to greater coordination and alignment among schools
- Consistency and continuity of expectations
- Better support for students and tracking of progress in and through transitions

Act 46: It is all in how you see it.

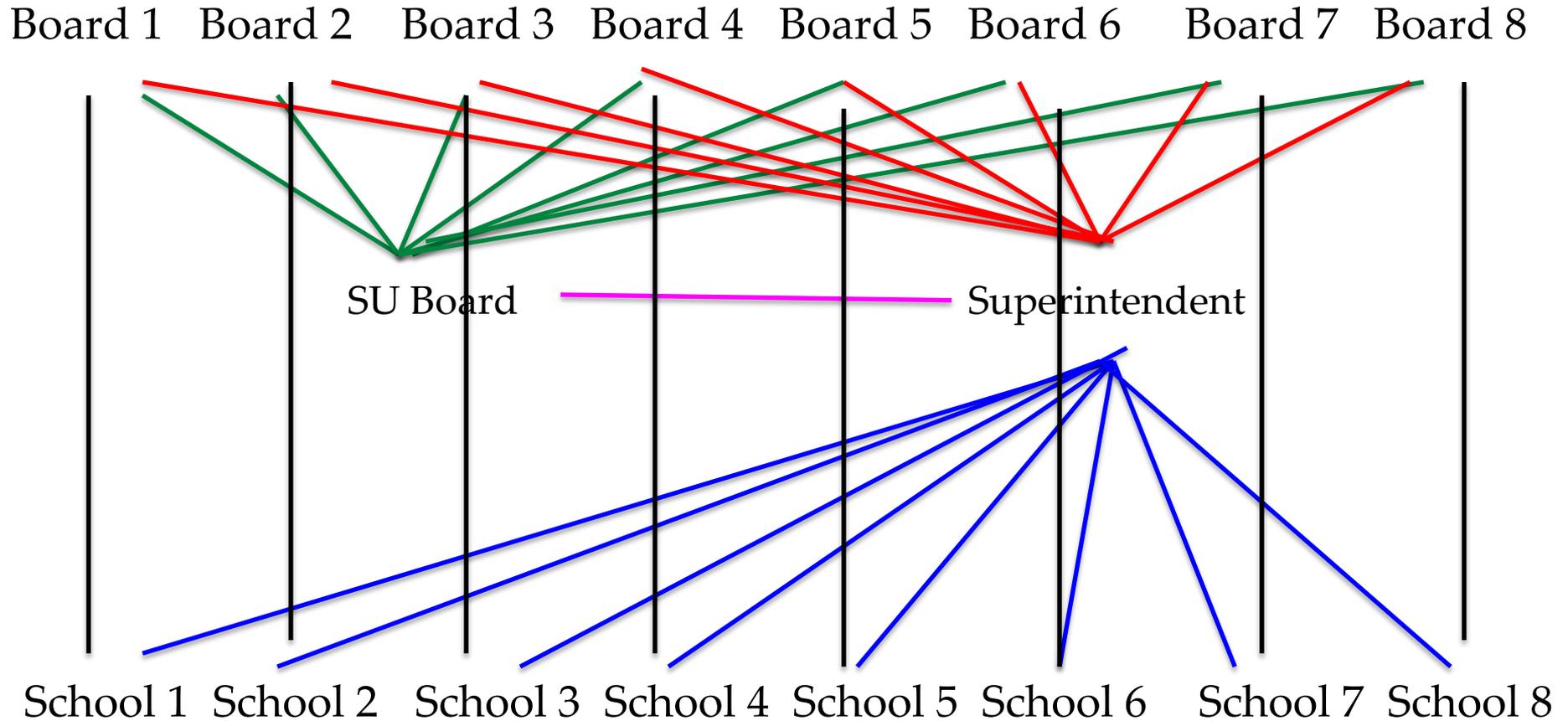


Benefits of Unification:

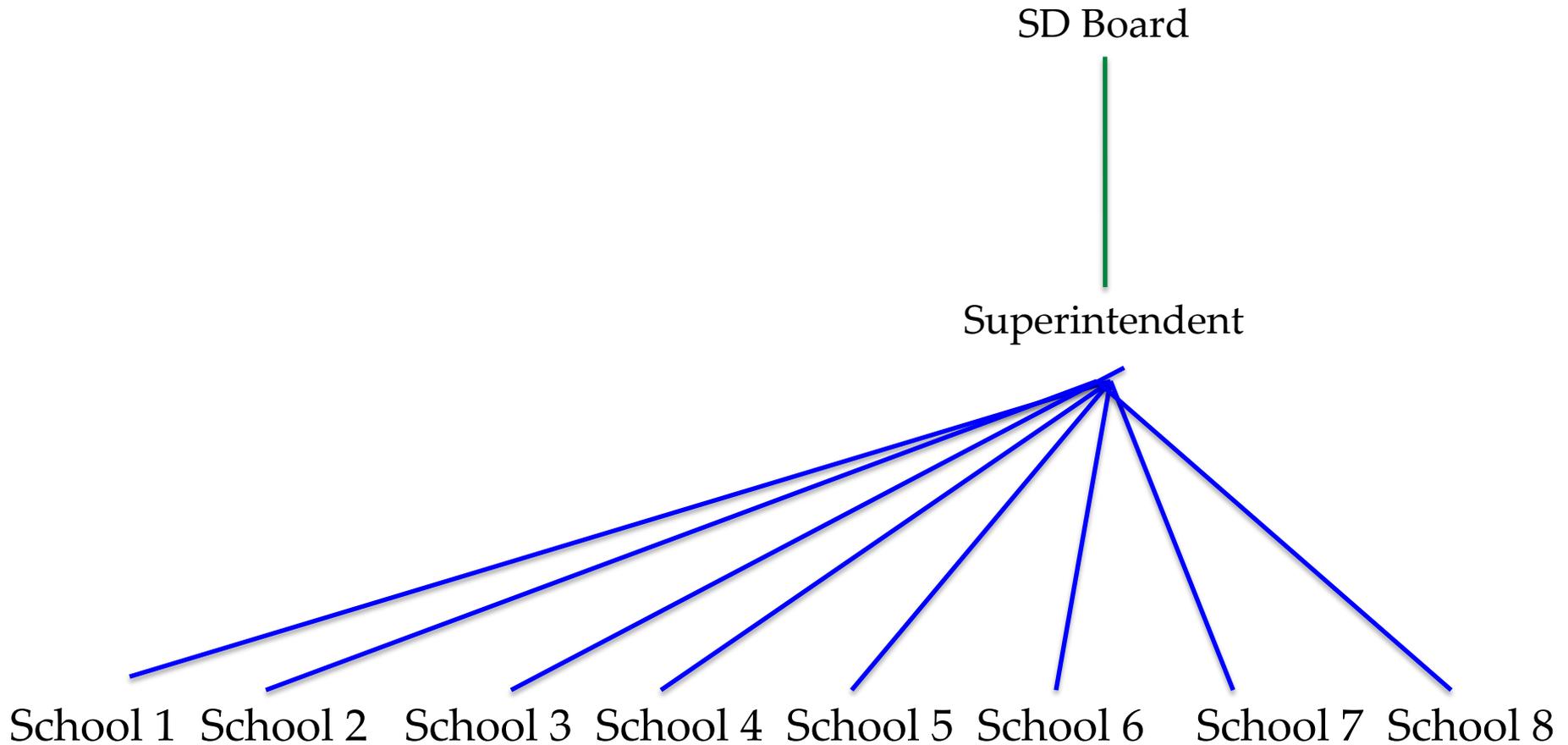
Recruitment and Retention

- Wider and stronger pool of applicants for current teaching and leadership positions.
- Fewer part time positions
- Greater teacher support, better PD, and principals who can focus more on teaching and learning
- More stable leadership
- A preferred place to work

Supervisory Union



Supervisory District



Challenges

- Deciding on purpose
- Letting go of the status quo
- Reconciling choice vs operating as modes of delivery
- Deciding on the right balance between the State and local control
 - Impact on costs
 - Impact on quality of implementation
 - Impact on coherence
- Thinking big

Different Purposes of Education

- Democratic equity (Education as a public good, shared community purpose, common opportunities)
- Social and economic efficiency (Education as a public good, workers for the workforce)
- Individual advancement: “getting ahead” (Education as an individual good, use market competition to incentivize quality)

**Note that these are contradictory goals.
Schools will never “succeed.”**

Thank you to David Labaree, Stanford University, for framing.

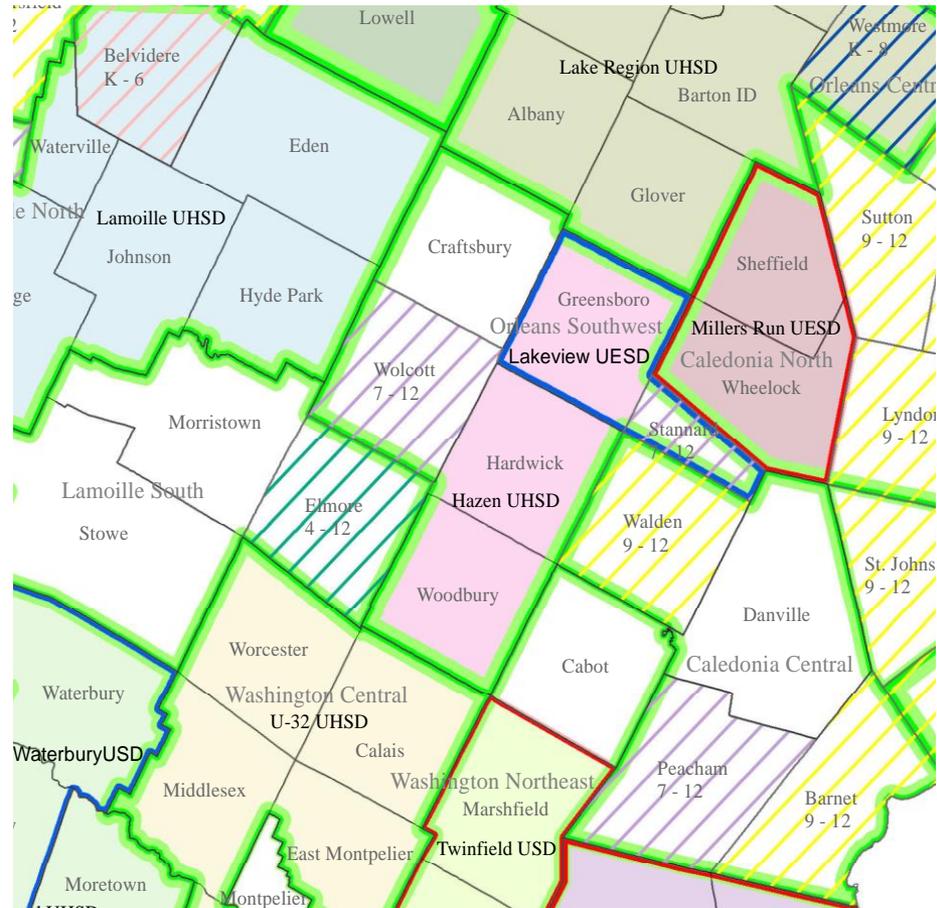
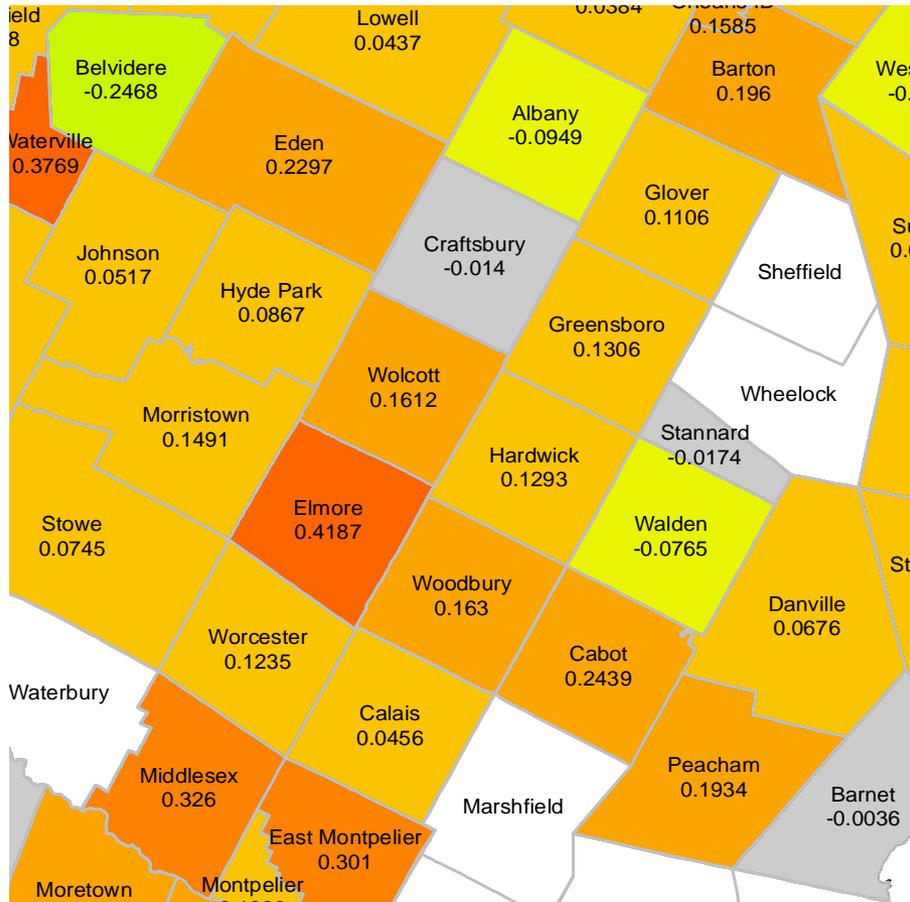
No strategy is perfect.

All strategies present challenges.

Different choices mean different challenges.

District Structure:	Main Challenges:
Operating	Meeting individual needs within one system. If very small, controlling costs.
Tuitioning	Ensuring equity of opportunity, controlling costs.
Operate at some levels and tuition at others	All of above, can mitigate with scale.

These are typical challenges, although local circumstances may vary.



Voters make the choice.



Advice to Communities

Identify and focus on YOUR goals and culture



- Start by clarifying your goals and core commitments.
- The RIGHT strategy is a function of local commitments and regional conditions.
- None of us can have everything, but we can get what we need.

What is it you want most?

Bridgewater and Pomfret

- Declining enrollments, rising taxes
- Wanted a community school
- Closed the Bridgewater school and now jointly operate the Prosper Valley School



	FY14	FY15	FY16
Bridgewater	1.633	1.693	1.511
% Change		3.69%	-10.74%
Pomfret	1.731	1.748	1.452
% Change		0.98%	-16.94%

Elmore



- Tax rate increased \$0.15 between FY15 and FY16
- Projected to increase the same in FY17, which would have put Elmore over the threshold
- Voted to merge with Morristown.
- Now anticipating a tax reduction.

North Bennington



NB ID School District decided to not operate a school.

North Bennington now students attend elementary school in 5 schools in 4 towns.

North Bennington ID tax rate has gone up about 20% from FY13 to FY16. The State as a whole has gone up about 16% in that time.

Bolton



FY14 ETR = 1.5538

FY15 ETR = 1.7162

FY16 ETR = 1.6304



The new entity tax rate is 1.5450 and with the 8 cents off, the incentive rate is 1.4651. Bolton is in the four year transition period that limits a tax rate increase or decrease to 5%. Under that limit, Bolton's rate can only go down to 1.6304

Guildhall



- Only 20 students in grades K-5
- Project only 10 students in 2018
- Expected per pupil costs to rise from \$12k to about \$20k
- Decided to close school and tuition

Weybridge

FY16:

The Education Fund sent \$366,140 to Weybridge beyond what it raised off its local homestead base.



Town Equalized Homestead Rates

	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016
Weybridge	1.635	1.881	2.015

Hard Choices



We have one education fund (our goose that lays the golden eggs).

Are individual districts making decisions we can all afford?

Are we making decisions that take care of all of our children?