

32 yrs central office administration

Vermont House Education Committee Testimony  
Catherine M. McClure, Superintendent of Schools  
Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union  
March 18, 2014.

Superintendent of Schools, Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union, 2009-2014  
Bennington, North Bennington, Pownal, Shaftsbury, Woodford, Mt Anthony Union  
Six school districts; 2,904 students,  
Six elementary schools; a middle school; a high school  
Extensive PreK locations one school based and through Act 62

Seven Boards/Prudential Committee

34 board members filling 47 board member seats, plus 6 alternate SU seats  
5 resignations in the last year and a half, and currently 2 vacant seats (March '14)  
NBGSD (Prudential Committee) a non-operating elementary district with choice

Also a waiver to move from  
SVSU 18 members to  
11 because lack  
of business

Director of Compensatory Education, Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union, 2008-2009  
Superintendent of Schools Litchfield, NH, 2002-2007  
Associate Superintendent of Schools Litchfield, NH, 2001-2002  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Manchester, NH 1997-2001  
Principal Harold Martin Elementary School, Hopkinton, NH 1988-2001  
Federal Projects Manager, School Administrative Unit #51, NH 1980-1987  
Reading Specialist, Concord, NH 1977-1980  
Peace Corps, Botswana Africa, Assistant to the Officer for English 1975-1976  
Social Studies Teacher, Springfield and Woodstock, Vermont 1971-1974

Comments *represent my thoughts & meant to complement testimony of other superintendents.*

- I am pleased with the momentum and attention to the PreK-12 education system draft bill. In my service as Superintendent in the SVSU I have seen the cohesiveness of a union organizational structure in the Mt Anthony Union District #14; with board members ~~voted from each town~~ *filled by town* ~~to the union board~~ *but elected by all the communities* there is a predominant focus on the education of all children without the tension of ~~loyalty and focus~~ *local in* of representing a local school district on a supervisory union board. With each local board electing its representatives to the supervisory union board the ties are primarily to the local school district and only to the supervisory union as representing the local district rather than focusing on a common purpose supervisory union wide. This was clearly evident in our R.E.D. study under Act 153 when the participating districts concluded they did not have a common purpose nor did they wish to combine their local assets and liabilities, nor disband their local boards.

continued

Catherine McClure  
Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union

- Our supervisory union is one of the most centralized in services and leadership in the State, providing a common core curriculum with centralized ~~purpose~~ <sup>purchase</sup> of core resources; common professional development (with selections also at the local district or school), ~~common~~ common financial and personnel services, collaboration among Principals on school effectiveness planning, ~~and~~ <sup>centralized</sup> special education, ~~and~~ early childhood education. Yet as one of my colleagues has characterized the supervisory union structure is fragile. We are experiencing this in the SVSU currently as some members are requesting to return to a fee for service model, thus impacting the direction of the supervisory union toward a less unified approach.
- Although we are centralized <sup>in many areas</sup> there are inefficiencies. Although we have an SVSU Policy Committee the warnings and adoptions are circulated through all the member districts and finally through the supervisory union board, a system which takes a minimum of two to three months. More often than not, edits are requested by local boards at warning or adoption returning the policy back in circulation of warning then adoption. This impact one of the primary functions of the board setting policy. Equally with seven employing boards, the employment of professional staff is lengthy, particularly in the area of special education whereby a local board may want to authorize the person coming to their building prior to the approval of the SU Board.
- There are many other aspects of the difficulties of the current governance system which I might address, but I would like to leave today remarking on the work ethic and commitment of superintendents within the current structures. We look to provide service and leadership. Much of the work of a superintendent is accomplished through strong relationships with board members. A PreK-12 educational system with one Board would provide a closer relationship and focus on common goals for our students. To build such relationship with 34, 47, or 60 or more board members is not possible. I might reference that in my tenure in NH larger school administrative units of multiple boards dissolved to form single districts. This effort continues even today.
- We need ~~to continue~~ to find a Vermont solution to our current governance structures of supervisory unions; we must do so for our students, our children, our future by ~~sustaining~~ <sup>and</sup> expanding their opportunities

and sustaining

and do so

successfully

three  
collective  
bargaining  
units

We also experience transportation routes  
past schools closer to residences. We could  
better distribute students  
in a single district