

Debra Taylor
4/9/14

RUTLAND CENTRAL SUPERVISORY UNION
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Honorable Members of the House of Representatives,

As Superintendent of Rutland Central Supervisory Union, I support the purpose and goals of House 883, An Act Relating to Expanded Prekindergarten to Grade 12 School Districts.

However, the school board members of the towns which comprise Rutland Central Supervisory Union, Rutland Town, Proctor and West Rutland, have expressed concerned that under the current Bill (requiring a minimum of 1250 students or 4 school districts), they will not qualify to remain intact and become a PK-12 Supervisory District. With three districts and an enrollment of 1125 students, we are just shy of this requirement. Our boards have also expressed concern that the waiver criteria will not be published until March of 2015, reducing the window of time to prepare a proposal or seek alternative voluntary alignment. Please reconsider the requirements for student population or number of districts, on behalf of our school board members, so they may be permitted to remain together as a voluntary PK-12 system of schools.

Here is our rationale for this request:

1. We meet and exceed the eight essential elements identified in the legislation for a supervisory district. (with exception of population and number of districts)
2. Our overall cost per pupil is lower than all surrounding supervisory unions and lower than Rutland City, the supervisory district in our region.
3. Our enrollment has remained quite stable with less than a ten % decrease over the past twelve years and our overall budget increases average less than 2.6% annually over this same period. Notably, this year our overall budgets decreased by 2% in response to concerns regarding increased tax rates.
4. We have completed the centralization and coordination of activities required by law of supervisory unions including: negotiated joint collective bargaining agreements; implemented common board policies for all districts; coordinated curriculum and professional development; coordinated transportation, coordinated food service, coordinated purchasing; coordinated special education services; coordinated construction.
5. We have moved a step beyond the requirements for SU-wide cooperation and are in the process of transforming our school system for the 21st Century
 - a. creating a 21st technology infrastructure which provides all of our schools, staff and students with access to broad band through wireless networks (Wi-Fi) in a cloud based environment through a centrally managed wide area network; implemented 1-1 mobile device programs for all schools grades 5-8; high school coursework in Computer Science;
 - b. provide preschool for students age 3-4 in the public schools and established partnerships with 5 private preschool providers to enhance the quality of early education for our students;
 - c. implemented a teacher and principal evaluation system which includes regular observations via walkthroughs for teachers with an emphasis on accountability for student achievement;

Rutland Central Supervisory Union serves the schools and communities of Proctor, Rutland Town and West Rutland. Our Mission is to ensure that all students learn at a high level.

- d. contract as an SU with VTVLC and Middlebury for virtual coursework;
- e. established a common SU-wide curriculum aligned to the common core; developed common formative assessments;
- f. implemented SU-wide professional learning communities where teachers across all districts collaborate to improve education for our students.

We have worked hard over the past three years, at a pace exceeding what many change and reform experts would expect. Our school boards are focused on student achievement. Our teacher practices are improving, and our administrators and faculty are engaged in the work. Our mission: *We exist to ensure that all students achieve at high levels* is the primary focus of our school boards, administrators and staff, each and every day. Our motto: *Together we're better*, captures the spirit of cooperation and commitment we have as a staff.

I urge you to continue to proceed with your efforts to improve opportunities, efficiencies and cost effectiveness through improved governance in Vermont.

I also urge that you reconsider the minimum enrollment limits of the voluntary realignment. We are just 125 students shy of the required number of students to remain together and form a PK-12 district under the current bill. With all respect, causing our three school districts to align with another or seek another member from a neighboring supervisory union, would disrupt a very well-functioning system of schools which is well prepared to form a PK-12 Supervisory District.

Our school boards, administrators and staff are devoted to continuing to pursue excellence. Permit us to continue this hard work – *Together we're better!*

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Debra Taylor, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools