

April 14th, 2016

David Sharpe
House Representative
Vermont Legislature

Dear David: with the help of Patsy French, our local Legislative representative, we put forth a bill to amend Act 46's expedited merger criteria that pertains to the 900 ADM minimum requirement. Specifically, we proposed that the minimum student enrollment requirement be amended to include all students being served in a supervisory union. Without this amendment, the OSSU cannot qualify for the full tax credits (10 cents in year one) it deserves for successfully merging into a single, pre-K through 12 district.

The rationale for this proposal is as follows:

- School districts should be organized around the number of students actually being served.

ADM is an equalized, two-year average student count that is primarily used for determining the local tax rate of a town, and does not reflect the actual number of students being served in schools or a district. For example, the Orange Southwest Supervisory Union's (OSSU) ADM is between 870 and 901 depending on the year, whereas the actual number of student being served in the OSSU is over 1000. Why? Because, in addition to its ADM, the OSSU oversees one of the 15 state technical high schools (RTCC) that serves 162 students, hosts two 21 town regional collaboratives (VIP and RAVEN) that serve 30 students, receives over 20 tuition students from other districts, and hosts several school choice students (through the state lottery). As a result, the OSSU serves 870 regular education students, 81 additional RTCC students (half of RTCC's students from other districts), and 70 other students (tuition, choice, collaboratives), totaling approximately 1020 students.

By comparison, every district that does not host a technical center or collaboratives has a heavily overstated ADM; that is, the number of students actually being served in the school district is significantly less than what is recorded for tax purposes (ADM) and for Act 46 purposes.

We understand you may have a concern related to double-counting students and we believe this would not be an issue with our proposal.

- During testimony in the House Education Committee and at Williamstown Middle/High School (Green Mountain Forest Collaborative meeting that you attended with other legislators), we were told that the 900 ADM figure was going to be a guideline, not a firm number. With that understanding, the OSSU felt assured that it would more than qualify for the expedited merger.

We would, at your convenience, welcome an opportunity to discuss this issue with you in more detail in order to better understand your opposition to our proposed amendment.

Please consider our request. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Thanks,

Angelo Odatu

Chairperson, OSSU Board