

Rebecca Holcombe 1/20/16

Merger Update

Secretary of Education
Rebecca Holcombe

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)
- Elmore –Morristown (EMUU)
- Mountain Town (RED) – Operational July 1, 2013
- Mount Mansfield (MUUSD) (Huntington vote pending) – Operational July 1, 2015

Rutland Northeast Unofficial Vote Tally

- Neshobe 269 yes 87 no
- Whiting 51 yes 16 no
- Sudbury 72 yes 21 no
- Goshen 30 to 9
- Leicester 59 yes 12 no
- Pittsford 156 yes 39 no
- Mendon 121 Yes 4 No 2 blank
- Chittenden 230 yes 3 no

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 mergers (prior to July 1, 2016, not yet presented to SBE)

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

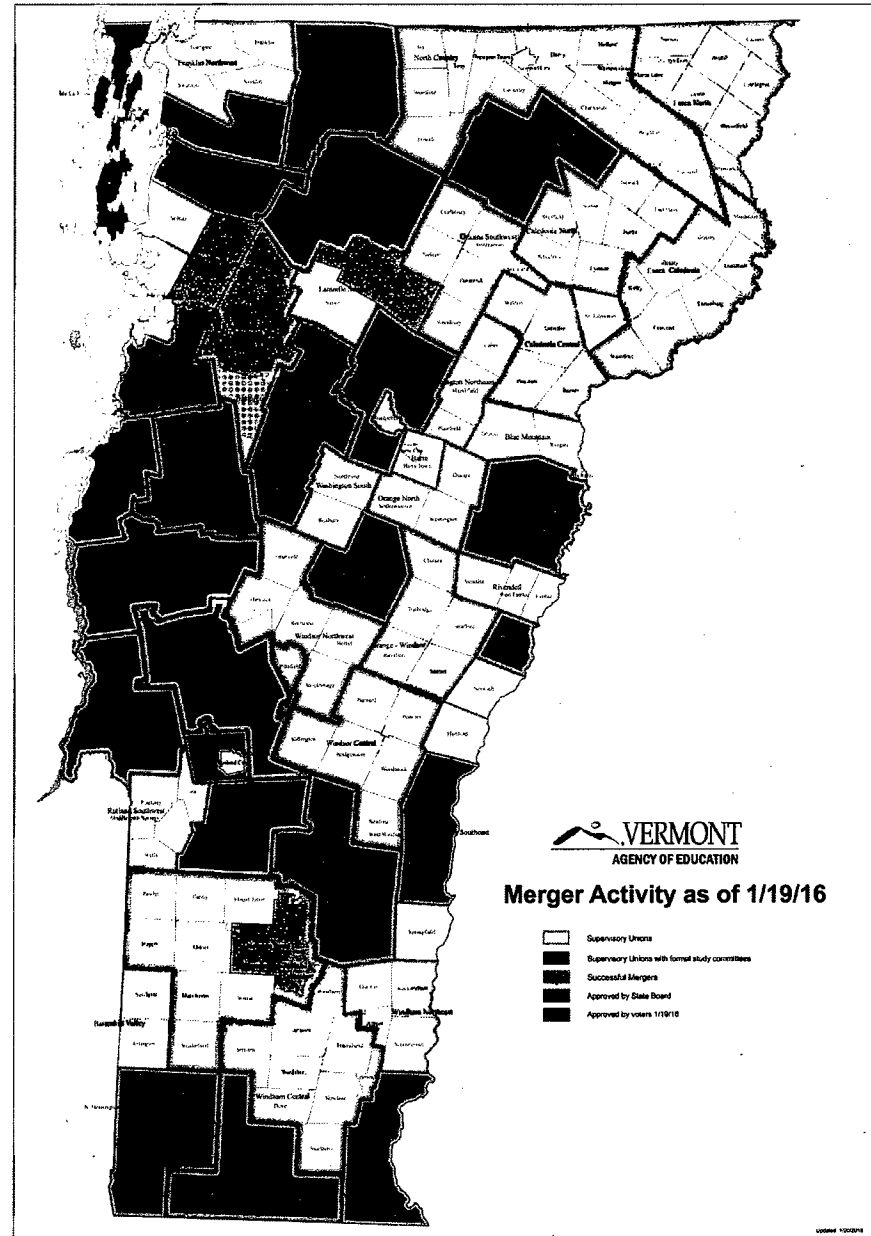
Other anticipated mergers prior to July 1, 2016

- Grand Isle (possibly accelerated)
- Franklin NE (possibly accelerated)
- Orange SW (RED)
- Two Rivers (maybe a June vote)

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

Map of merger activity type and date of merger



Sample benefits identified to date:

- Better professional development and retention of teachers
- Greater equity in access to technology
- Ability to develop specialized programs using the strengths of particular staff and the strengths of particular schools
- Greater ability to provide broader, richer educational opportunities
- Equity in preparation for high school
- Clearer accountability for the superintendent and transparency for the electorate

Sample Challenges:

Proportionality of Board membership:

- Only needs to be proportional if (1) the articles of agreement apportion board members to each member town AND (2) only voters of that town vote for their own apportioned members.
- In other words, there are no constitutional requirements of proportionality if members are apportioned to each town (e.g., 2 are residents of Town A, 3 are residents of Town B, etc.) but are voted on at-large by all voters in the district. This is what we are calling the Hybrid Model.
- A new guidance document is under the FAQs on the webpage at: <http://education.vermont.gov/documents/education-act46-faq-proportionality-nominating-voting.pdf>

Sample Challenges:

Management of choice to avoid inequities:

- In most proposals, the New Unified Union School Board is charged with developing a process to allow elementary school students to select the elementary school (sometimes mentioning magnet approach) – usually within a year after the new district begins operation.
- The State Board has asked districts also to provide for true access (e.g. transportation, etc...)

Sample Challenges:

Closing elementary schools:

- Boards are addressing this in a number of ways – $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of Unified Union School Board; unanimous vote of Board; subsequent vote of host town approving; etc.
- NOTE that some of the accelerated merger articles of agreement include the RED provision of 4 years with no school closure without town approval

Debt

Questions?