

Nancy Cornell 4/22/15

Public Hearing Testimony from Nancy Cornell April 22, 2015

As a member of the Robinson Elementary School Board in Starksboro and the Addison Northeast Supervisory Union Board; and as the former Associate Superintendent/Curriculum Director in ANESU and in RNESU, I have worked for over 30 years in the service of our schools.

Addison Northeast is a supervisory union with 6 schools serving students from 5 unique towns. Our board members and our communities are engaged, and committed to our kids. We have a proven track record of solving difficult problems particular to our distinctive communities. Our school boards have always been committed to ensuring that our taxpayers receive an excellent return on their investment. Our 6 local boards are already working collaboratively toward greater efficiencies and economies of scale. Because our school boards are close to the schools and the communities they serve, they are able to adapt quickly and flexibly to the changing needs of their students.

W: think about changing from governance structure

There is no evidence in research that changing governance structures would result in more effective or efficient education for our kids. For us (as for many) shifting our focus to school consolidation would be a detrimental distraction from the important work we are doing.

This Senate Education bill, is basically offering Vermonters temporary tax breaks and grants as bribes to relinquish their democratic responsibilities and rights. Some districts will take the bribe... and 6 years later, when the incentives sunset, citizens will look back and wonder why.

- Why has their town's democracy faded?
- Why has citizen engagement in its community school, disappeared?
- Why is no one interested in serving on a school board?

~~Why do citizens resent their p...~~

For the Vermont Legislature:

- it would be better to take a capacity-building approach, rather than a thinly-veiled regulatory approach, to helping communities solve the problems they face;
- it would be better to provide support to school districts as they work through their most pressing issues, rather than to try to fashion solutions, or even processes, that fit all cases;
- it would be better to take the time needed to improve the school funding system in a way that meets the imperatives of the Brigham decision, rather than to bribe voters into approving changes that will launch a Race to the Bottom;
- it would be better to do nothing, for now, than to do harm.

The Whole State is Watching.

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