

## Testimony to House Ed

Dear members of the House Education Committee: Thank you for your time and attention to the education of the children of Vermont.

I want to assure you that Act 46 has triggered the most substantive discussions about education that I have seen in my over 30 years as a school board member. Marlboro has met with educators from WSWSU, to our south and west, we have met extensively with all districts in our own S U as recommended and supported by Act 46, and we have met with administrators and educators from WSESU, the Brattleboro region to our east, all to discuss ways in which all of the kids in our region could benefit from collaboration. How can the Marlboro school be of benefit to kids from our immediate region, and how can other local schools bring diversity and opportunity to Marlboro's kids? My opinion is that the discussions which were not part of the official Act 46 Committees have been broader ranging, less about governance and more about ways in which our kids could really benefit from regional collaboration. These discussions have also brought out serious concerns about merging, about ownership, debt, loss of local engagement, centralization of administration, and loss of individuality among our schools.

Today I want to express my concern that the Legislature is over-thinking and micro-managing the ways in which Alternative Governance Structures can be allowed by the State Board of Education. It will be this Board that designs and implements the final educational Statewide Plan, in collaboration with our Secretary of Education, and as such they will be reviewing and accepting (or not) the Alternative proposals from around the State. I trust that they will do so with a view to what works best in each individual situation. To have narrowly defined legislation governing these decisions- what is and is not allowed- seems counter-productive and seems to needlessly tie their hands.

So I urge you to review the legislation coming over from the Senate and to work with the House and the Senate to allow maximum flexibility so the State Board of Ed. can permit schools in Vermont to continue these substantive discussions, create useful Alternative Structures, maintain their local governance and engagement, and to collaborate with each other in ways that will benefit children across all lines, not just within narrowly pre-defined merged units.

If I have time I would like to point out that I and my children attended, and my grandchildren are now attending this small local school over the span of the last 65 years.

Dan MacArthur Marlboro School Board