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MEMORANDUM

TO: Representative Kathryn Webb, Chair, House Committee on Education
Senator Philip Baruth, Chair, Senate Committee on Education
Representative Catherine Toll, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
Senator Jane Kitchel, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Representative Janet Ancel, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Ann Cummings, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
FROM: Donna Russo-Savage, Staff Attorney
DATE: February 7, 2019
RE: Report on Act 46 of 2015, submitted January 2019

Additional bullet points from one superintendent arrived too late for inclusion in the 2019 Report on Act 46, but we thought that your committees might be interested in reviewing them:

Champlain Valley School District – Operational July 1, 2017

- Including FY 20, the district can point to direct savings attributable to the merger: \$612,000. It now has a Facilities Director (it was able to reconfigure the positions and save money to make this possible) and a Director of Communications and Technology (again, it was able to combine various roles and provide a much more impactful position).
- The district's professional development is directly coordinated and aligned across the district. All schools are working on the same Continuous Improvement Plan components and supporting each other.
- The district's principals coordinate hiring across the SD so that candidates need only apply for one position to be considered for all openings at a particular level. Principals understand the importance of being collaborative in this area since any teacher can be assigned to any school if the need arises. Whereas there would have been several RIFs in earlier years - as a result of the merger and the single contract, the district was able to re-assign faculty and not have a single RIF.
- The district's equity focus is much more specific. Prior to merger, it was looking at major equity elements. The district is noticing that it has time and focus now to get to a much smaller grain size (classroom level resources e.g. as opposed to whole school equity).
- The board is doing great work - and more of it. When the districts merged the board opted to have one business meeting per month and one committee meeting night. Each board member joined one of 3 committees: Finance and Facilities, Outcome Data, and Personnel/HR. It is amazing how much great work they are doing in these groups. The board discusses at its yearly retreat if these are still the right committees. For example, in year one, they had a Communications committee. It was the work of this committee (and

the superintendent's advocacy) that led to the restructuring of positions to enable a Director of Communications and Tech Education.

- The district has school choice across the four K-8 schools.
- The district shares resources across the district.
- In the first year of merger, the focus was on big structural elements - how would the board function, how would it maintain - or improve - ties to our local communities, how would the role of the principals change, how would it ensure equity and autonomy at the big level, how would it ensure that the systems and structures it set up were more collaborative, more system-focused, more focused on service to the students and their needs and less focused on protecting individual "fiefdoms." In year three, the district feels like a much more mature system and has the luxury and time to focus on those elements of schooling that are oftentimes given short shrift or even ignored because there just is not enough time or multiple districts are not committed to a single, cohesive, coherent system and programming for all students.
- The superintendent sees the advantages of the merger every day. The district functions differently than it did before - more collaboratively, more unified, more focused.