

Dear Members of the House Education Committee.

I see that you will be hearing from my colleague, Jill Stahl-Tyler this morning. Jill and I have worked together on the Brattleboro Town School Board for nearly a decade. During that time we have managed to work closely with administration and staff to develop an innovative, creative, highly effective school system. I'm sure Jill will share details with you.

I hope she will also point out that a forced merger would *reduce* our SU enrollment by 7% due to the loss of the K-6 students from Vernon. These students would join an SU that uses the International Baccalaureate approach to elementary education, rather than the well-developed, coordinated, and supported curricula our SU uses. This will be a different preparation than that received by the students they will be joining when they choose to attend our middle and high schools. This loss of students will also decrease the efficiency of our SU.

The special educators who have been working with Vernon students for years will be recalled the SU and reassigned to other schools, and recently hired special educators in those schools will have to be laid off. Hopefully they will be hired at Vernon, but there will be a major loss of experience and knowledge of the Vernon students' needs.

I hope Jill also talks about the public rejection of the merger articles by a margin of more than 2-1. I hope she tells you of the dozens of letters to the editor and regular articles about the merger issue in the daily and weekly newspapers in our area over the past 2 1/2 years. She will probably mention the professional video and two district-wide mailings the study committee produced just before the vote. Our voters were well informed on the issue.

I hope she mentions that our Brattleboro board voted 3-2 to ask the SBE to respect the will of the voters and support our Alternative Governance Proposal, and in another vote asked that if forced to merge, the SBE allow us to use our already-approved Articles. She witnessed our Town Meeting voting three different years to oppose any governance changes that were not supported by the voters.

Once you have heard from Jill, please invite someone from our AGS committee to come speak as well. We are a large SU and have a very interesting proposal that the SBE chose not to explore with us.

Sincerely,
David Schoales
Member, Brattleboro Town School Board
Member, Brattleboro Select Board