



# Mountain Views School District's Pathway to a Voluntary Act 46 Merger

Testimony of Sherry Sousa, Superintendent — Mountain Views Supervisory Union

Seven communities · Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Pittsfield, Pomfret, Reading & Woodstock · 1,000+ students

# What Is Act 46?



## The Goal

Act 46 was designed to encourage local school districts to consolidate boards into a single unified district — improving educational quality at a more affordable cost.

① WCSU's bold aspiration: make our good schools **absolutely great**.



# The Exploratory Stage

## Summer 2015

Six school boards voted to form a 706 Study Committee to assess governance patterns within WCSU.

## 16 Months of Work

Bimonthly open sessions with transparent records posted publicly — minutes, documents, and draft findings.

## The Core Question

How would unification benefit our children and provide more equitable instructional opportunities?

# Community Engagement

14

## Public Meetings

Held across Barnard,  
Woodstock, Killington, Reading  
& Pomfret beginning May 2016

27

## Study Committee Meetings

Thorough deliberation on  
educational, financial, and  
operational issues

4

## Task Force Meetings

Focused sessions drafting  
Articles of Agreement

## What the Committee Examined

- Opportunities & challenges of unification — educational, cultural, financial
- Enrollment and staffing patterns in each district
- Financial and tax implications, including incentives and potential loss of small schools grants





# Educational Opportunities Identified



## Unified Curriculum

Coordinated PreK–8 standards-based reading, writing, and mathematics curriculum across all schools.



## Science Standards

Development of a PreK–12 NGSS science curriculum with a uniform local assessment system.



## Teacher Support

Instructional coaching, professional development, and collaborative curriculum planning opportunities.



## Expanded Access

Universal Pre-K, common academic expectations, and strengthened special education alignment.





# The Case for Unification



## Committee Conclusion

Disparities in achievement among students living in close proximity were **unacceptable**. A unified PK–12 system could maximize student potential by treating districts as parts of a whole — not independent components.





# Articles of Agreement & The Vote





After 27 study committee meetings, 14 community forums, and 4 task force meetings, the Joint 706 Study Committee voted on **January 18, 2017** to accept the Act 46 report. The merger was ultimately finalized in **July 2019**.







# Lessons Learned:



# Facilitation & Legal Support



## Experienced Facilitators Matter

The committee's facilitator lacked regional context. A trained facilitator with Act 46 experience — ideally a former Vermont superintendent or business manager — is essential. Recommended: **\$50,000 per facilitator / \$60,000 for a lead facilitator.**

## Budget for Legal Costs

Legal fees for Windsor Central from 2016–2019 exceeded **\$30,000**. Legal consultation is not optional — plan for it from the start.









# What "Unified" Means Today



Unified Contract



Unified Curriculum



Strategic Plan & Portrait of  
a Graduate



Unified Budget



Unified Faculty & Staff



Unified Board & Leadership

"Unified is synonymous with opportunity, efficiency, and effectiveness."  
— Superintendent Sherry Sousa











# A Meaningful Difference for All Students

Mountain Views Supervisory District is now a vibrant and successful learning community. This level of student achievement would not have been possible without unification.

- ✔ Voluntary merger across seven communities proves that with patience, transparency, and community trust — transformation is possible. Thank you for exploring further opportunities for voluntary mergers in Vermont.











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