



Milton Town School District

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Foremost, thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony. I have served in VT schools since 1993 as a teacher in the Lamoille North SU, principal at the Danville K-12 and Harwood Union Middle and High Schools, and for the last 7 years as superintendent in Milton. My experience has informed my understanding of VTs diverse educational landscape and unique local cultures.

In education, there is always room for growth and improvement. Any transformational approaches to VT education must simultaneously include education funding, governance and delivery. The plan must not only be well thought out, it must be informed by the expertise in the field and the experiences of those we serve - children and families.

For Context, an overview of the Milton Town School District

- Over the last 6 years, the budget has failed 4 times on the first vote and has needed 1-2 additional votes to pass each time causing us to make reductions each time. Year over year, we have been shaving program expenses (field trips, supplies, books, technology, education software, and transportation...) non-special education support staff, and administrators.
- We have 3 schools. The PreK, Elementary and Middle school operate in the same building and the high school is on a separate campus half a mile away.
- Currently our enrollment is
 - PreK (165)
 - K-4 (470)
 - 5-8 (427)
 - 9-12 (420)
- Poverty is 43.4% (an increase of 10% from 2019)
- Students with IEPs is 21% which is higher than the State average. The number of students with autism and low incidence disabilities has been increasing year over year.
- Our high school graduation rate is almost 10% higher than the state average
- Our math and literacy proficiency scores linger below the state average in the lower grades and by 9th grade they are at or above the state average - this is a result of the collective effort over multiple years to support students where they are and provide them with what they need especially those who need additional support.

- Our class sizes are just below the optimum range
- Middle school is starving for space and 4 classrooms were divided in half at one point in time and would not be able to increase their class size beyond 18. All other classroom spaces PreK-12 are adequate to meet increased class sizes

CLASS SIZE INFORMATION

Grade Cluster	Minimum	Optimum	Maximum	Current Average
K-3	14	18	20	15.75
4	16	22	25	18
5-6	16	22	25	19
7-8	16	22	25	18

By Grade - October 30, 2024

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15	16	16	16	18	19	19	18	19

MHS

Type Course	Minimum	Optimum	Maximum	Current
9th Grade Core	16	22	25	17
10th grade Core	16	22	25	18
Elective	12	20	25	14
PE / Band	20	25	35	14

Given that my schools are within range of the EB model class size and based on the details recently released regarding the transformation funding plan, we conducted a modeling exercise based on our FY26 proposed budget factors:

- LTWADM - 2,417.47
- Proposed FY26 Budget - \$39,291,625
- FY26 Education Spending - \$33,266,953

If we were to receive the proposed base of \$13,200 + the adjustments, we would receive \$25,641,000.00 in FY26 instead of \$33,266,953, a difference of 7.6 million. To fully understand the impact, we completely removed the District Office budget - approximately 3.5 million. This did not only include positions and benefits, but all budgeted expenses of the business office, board and legal services, curriculum, assessment, and tech services.

Impact Plan - given that reductions in staff impact the lowest paid teachers first, we estimated that we would need to reduce staff by approximately 45 people.

1. The impact began with addressing class size and ensuring that classes had the maximum number of students. Maximizing class size would result in a 12 teacher ratio
 - a. 1 teacher per grade level K-8 or 8 teachers.
 - b. For high school, we did one per department in the core areas or 4 teachers, this would increase class size but also reduce elective choices for 11 and 12 graders.
2. Next, we reduced all academic interventionists for literacy and math, instructional coaches, HHB coordinators, school wide behavior support and reduced school counselors by 1 in each school - that would be 17 positions of combined professional and support staff positions
3. With 29 reductions and 16 more to go, programs considered next - world language (2.5 at middle and 3.5 at high school), middle school health (1), the continuum of support program for middle level (4), regulation rooms at elementary (2) and then unified arts (3)

A couple more points about the EB model:

- It does not take into account any State required structures for behavior - regulation spaces, restorative practices, and non-exclusionary discipline, behavior threat assessment protocols, other school safety practices
- It does not take into account any required staff for compliance of HHB and Title IX,
- It does not take into account non-special education programs that support reducing outplacement of students...

Their model also assumes 45-50 minute planning blocks. Our teachers (K-12) have 80 minutes per day. The plan does not address how teacher contracts will be reconciled. It is not just about salaries. There are considerable differences in work day, planning time, meeting expectations...

In short, the plan transformation plan claims to expand early childhood, increase summer and after school programming, provide additional mental health services, extend college and career pathways, and raise teacher salaries. Perhaps this is true; however, until we create a model based on the actuals of VT - which district and schools are going to consolidate, how many students will be in the schools remaining, and which schools will be in close enough proximity to share resources - leaning on the model of an imaginary district may not yield the results it claims to provide.

Transformation is necessary. Transformation is messy work. Transformation should not be an experiment that adversely impacts our children. Transformation should be a well thought out plan that is developed in partnership with the field and community.