

*Vermont School Governance
Study and Collaboration
Initiatives*

Presented By:

**Vermont School Boards
Association**

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Definition of School Governance

“Governance is the relationship between school district voters, school boards, school administrators, and the legislative and executive branches of state government.

It means the assignment of roles and responsibilities to each of those entities, and the organizational structures created to allow each entity to carry out its responsibilities.”

What's Currently Happening in School Districts

- **Establishing informal working relationships**
- **Creating cooperative & collaborative working agreements**
- **Sharing staff, programs, co-curricular offerings**

What's Currently Happening in School Districts

- **Creating joint contract districts**
- **Studying union and unified union school governance consolidation**
- **Closing schools and tuitioning students out**

Supervisory Unions-Districts Conducting Governance Research

- **Addison Northwest** - Two failed votes to create a PK-12 unified union district in 2005
- **Rutland South** - Failed vote to create a PK-12 unified union district in 2007
- **Chittenden Central/Essex Town** - Failed vote to create a PK-12 unified union in 2007 – Westford would move to another supervisory union
- **Windsor Central** - Studied creation of variety of union districts; decided not to pursue community votes
- **Orange North** - Studied the creation of a union middle school

Supervisory Unions-Districts Conducting Governance Research

- **Rutland Central** - Completed Phase I governance research; used VELA to clarify roles for adm. and boards
- **Winooski** - Researched possible collaborations with other Chittenden Cty. districts; no decision to change anything
- **Bennington-Rutland** - Researching possible middle school collaboration with other BRSU districts – used VELA to clarify roles for adm. and boards
- **Windham Southwest** - Completing Phase I governance research – one option to create a union high school with tuition choice towns

Supervisory Unions-Districts Conducting Governance Research

- **Windsor Southeast** – Completed Phase I governance study
- **Hartford and Hartland** – Currently participating in a Phase I governance study researching the creation of a high school union district
- **Windsor Northwest** – Pittsford will vote in March to undertake a phase I study to research creation of an elementary and/or high school joint contract or union

Supervisory Unions-Districts Conducting Governance Research

- **Twinfield** – Studied possible collaboration with other districts in 2007; could save \$300,000 by merging with other districts
- **Underhill, Underhill ID, and Jericho** – Completing a second governance study of possible district collaboration

Supervisory Unions-Districts Conducting Governance Research

- **St. Johnsbury** - Explored possible consolidation with area supervisory unions – decided no advantage – restructured administrative duties
- **Windham Central** - Conducted administrative efficiency study for Leland and Gray as well as the entire supervisory union
- **Rutland Southwest** - Completed Phase I governance research – one option to create separate union middle and union high schools with adjacent supervisory union

Supervisory Unions-Districts Conducting Governance Research

- **Southwest Vermont** - Completed Phase I research and hosted forums to engage residents - closed one elem. school and saved over 1M dollars
- **Grand Isle** - Conducted research on, both, creation of an Island high school and elementary school consolidation

Supervisory Unions-Districts Conducting Governance Research

- **Chittenden South** - Researched centralization of curriculum, special education, & technology
- **Orleans Central** - Studied special education equity, increasing small school efficiency; used VELA to clarify roles & responsibilities for adm. and boards
- **Washington West** - Conducted governance research with elem. districts

Districts Researching Collaborative Options

- **Orange North** – Failed vote to create a joint contract district between Orange and Washington; currently sharing middle school programs and sports teams
- **Green Mtn./LAPD/NEK** – Multi-supervisory union professional development collaboratives
- **Others**
 - Negotiating single supervisory union contract
 - Agreeing to adopt consistent policy across supervisory union
 - Making supervisory union grant fund decisions
 - Supervisory union manage special education, technology, and transportation

New Joint Contract Agreements

- **Whitingham & Wilmington** - Created Twin Valley Joint Contract School District – Middle School in Whitingham - High School in Wilmington
- **Granville & Hancock** - Created prek-6 Granville–Hancock Joint Contract School District
- **Grafton & Athens** - Created prek-6 Grafton-Athens Joint Contract School District
- **Whiting & Sudbury** - Failed vote on a joint contract school district, fall, 2007 [k-2 Whiting and 3-6 in Sudbury]

Districts That Studied Governance Options and Decided Not to Change

- **Underhill, Underhill ID, & Jericho** - Completed governance study - Underhill ID not interested in closing school - estimated savings \$675,000
- **Townshend & Brookline** - Researched creating a joint contract district – Townshend pulled out – not adequate benefits
- **Morgan with Holland, Charleston, Island Pond** - Morgan researched governance options; little interest from other towns - Morgan is partnering with a recreation ctr. for technology, physical education...

Districts That Studied Governance Options and Decided Not to Change

- **Bethel & South Royalton** - Completed researching creation of single prek-12 district; decided not to move forward
- **Bethel & Rochester** - Studied creation of joint middle and high schools between both towns
- **Montpelier & Washington Central** - Explored creation of formal agreements and possible central office collaboration

Past Supervisory Union, Union School, or District Governance Changes

- **Barre Supervisory Union** - Barre City, Barre Town Elem., & Spaulding HS
- **Metawee Valley Union Elementary** - Rupert & Pawlett
- **Rivendell Interstate School District** - Fairlee, W. Fairlee, Vershire & Orford, NH

Recent Supervisory Union, Union School, or District Governance Changes

- **BFA St. Albans** - Changed governance from private to public school & joined the Franklin Central SU
- **U-45 Waterbury-Duxbury Union Elem.**
Created a 2-town union elem. district
- **Kirby, Belvidere, Granby, Norton, and North Hero Middle School** - Closed schools and tuition students out after enrollment became too small

Informal Collaboration

- Sharing teachers and staff
- Joint curricular programs
- Collaborative co-curricular activities
 - Art, music, dance
- Creating single sports teams
- After-school programs
- Other

School and district size/scale

Smaller schools and districts are associated with:

- Better attendance rates
- Stronger academic achievement (higher test scores, better grades, fewer failed courses)
- Lower dropout rates
- Greater student participation in activities
- Less vandalism and violence
- Fewer behavioral incidents
- Especially strong academic results for low income and minority students

Cotton (1996); Darling-Hammond, et al (2002)

VSBA 4-Phase Governance Study Approach

- **Phase I** – Advance Research
- **Phase II** – Voters Authorize 16 VSA 706 Study - Committee Completes 12 Step Process
- **Phase III** – Commissioner & State Board Approval Articles of Agreement
- **Phase IV** – Voters Authorize Implementation of New Governance System

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