

Dear Community Members,

We hope that these letters are providing the answers you need to make an informed decision on the merger of governance for the school systems of Clarendon, Wallingford, Shrewsbury, Tinmouth, and Mill River Union High School at Town Meeting this coming March.

Concerns with the timing of both the proposal and the vote leads to this question: **What is the rush?**

The answer, pure and simple: **We are not rushing, we are ready** and we prefer a district consolidation that we design ourselves to one thrust upon us by the State in 2018.

The Rutland South Supervisory Union (RSSU) has been working for the last decade on various consolidations of functions that have made our supervisory union more efficient and pushed our elementary schools to provide a more equal preparation for kids attending Mill River. These consolidations have included:

- Curriculum Alignment at SU level
- Combined Professional Development at SU level
- Consolidated Special Education at SU level
- Combined Teacher Contracts at the Elementary Level that includes all Special Education Staff
- Consolidated Transportation at SU level
- District-wide Personnel Evaluation System
- Consolidated Financial Systems at SU level

Even functions that have not been consolidated at the SU level like individual building staffing levels or building improvements and maintenance have seen SU involvement and help. So when Act 46 was enacted, the RSSU Board decided that we should look at what it might mean for us to consolidate fully. We won't say that we embraced consolidation with great enthusiasm (who wants to lose any of their autonomy?), but the Board decided that it was an idea worth further study, if only because that study was required by Act 46. When the Study Committee looked hard at what were still independent functions and what was already consolidated and how those consolidations functioned, we were surprised at how little would really change in our schools on a day-to-day basis. We saw that there were some things that may work better for us. Our smaller schools should not have to be as worried about the financial implication of yearly ups and downs in population. We will be able to offer more choice amongst our elementary schools to parents to fit their families' needs. All in all, we were surprised that what we first perceived to be a great loss to our individual towns may in fact work in our favor to increase our students' educational opportunities.

We are under no misapprehension that this will be free of difficulties, especially in the budgeting process in the near future, as board members move away from thinking "my school" and "my town" to a more inclusive "our schools for our kids," but this will improve every year. The process of combining all of the staffing contracts will be slow and not much fun, but it will be accomplished. The Articles of Agreement for the new district include very strong protection for our smaller schools. Despite consolidation, no elementary school can be closed without approval of the individual town in which it is located.

All in all, we are ready to move to this new level of consolidation, and given the financial advantages to doing it sooner rather than later, the decision to do it now became clear. **We are not rushing, we are ready!**

Sincerely, The RSSU Study Committee (George Ambrose, Tammy Heffernan, Grant Reynolds, John McKenna, Ken Fredette, and Adrienne Raymond)