

Vermont State Board of Education
Ms. Krista Huling, Board Chair

Dear Ms. Huling and State Board Members:

I have been a Stannard School Board member for the past two years. Previously I was a Stannard Board member for fifteen years and a Lakeview Union Elementary school board member of seven years. After attending the June 8, 2018, State Board meeting and hearing the discussion on new proposed geographic isolation metrics, I feel compelled to let the board know the severe impact there will be on Stannard students if Lakeview Union Elementary School loses the small school grant. Loss of the grant will impact the school budget to the point where we may have to close the school in the near future.

Stannard is an extremely small town (less than 250 residents including children). The town is 1700 feet elevation, surrounded by mountains on three sides. There are 18 miles of hilly dirt roads. There is a dirt road (12 miles) over Stannard Mountain through a state wildlife management area that is not suitable for travel by bus. The other roads out of town go through Greensboro. Stannard grades K-6 students are bused to Lakeview Elementary School in Greensboro; grades 7-12 students are tuitioned to local schools according to parent choice. The SU wide busing system enables Stannard students to ride the bus the Greensboro and be transported to both Hazen Union High School in Hardwick, and Craftsbury Academy. Stannard has never operated a high school due its small size. The one room school serving grades 1-8, closed in 1966. For 22 years (1966 – 1988) Stannard tuitioned grades K-12. In 1988 Stannard and Greensboro voted to form Lakeview Union # 43 serving grade K-6 students from both towns. Stannard has two votes on the eight member board.

Stannard students have benefitted from the elementary union with Greensboro; students and families have a community school providing continuity and stability for students and families. If the school were to close, Stannard students face a much longer bus ride (it's currently around 45 minutes on "good day" – can be longer due to weather/road conditions). The next closest schools offering the same grades are Craftsbury and Hardwick- over an hour one way.(just under the proposed metric 30 minutes from "small school to next school").While our 7-12 students manage this daily ride, the board feels deeply, that it's not in the best interest of young children to spend this much time riding the school bus. It most certainly does not lead to improved outcomes, only more inequities. Students whose parents are able to drive them or form carpools will do so. Families who parents work or don't have a second car available will be forced to have their children ride the bus. Lakeview has a high poverty rate (59% free/reduced meal rate) so this is a real concern.

I urge the board to listen to facts presented about the negative impact the loss of geographic isolation designation will have for so many small schools. Stannard has no other option for a local community school than continuing our union with Lakeview.

Thank you,
Sincerely, Diane Janukajtis
Stannard School Board member

