

Good Morning. My name is Gary Blodgett. I am the Chairperson of the ESBR board and a life career educator who retired close to 20 years ago after teaching, coaching and being one of the few teaching principals of a multi-age building. Before my school in Spfld went to multi-age we hosted a meeting given by the State of VT education department. The Dept. was concerned by graduation rates and they pointed to outdated models of education. So, with the help of a community of parents, teachers and townspeople, we researched and decided to break the mold of restarting with a new teacher every year and changing buildings every few years. This helped develop a strong family-like community where students and teachers knew each other over many years. I got back involved in education because ESBR looked to me to try to break the old mold and was trying to develop flexible ways of educating students, as this board and the department of ed has been advocating.

ESBR is like a family school, where students are accepted and supported by each other and the staff, and in this day and age it is quite evident this is lacking in many schools and communities as we see in the news all too frequently. ESBR will be graduating its 4th senior this year. All of these students, did not have success in the traditional school model and schedule available and would have slipped through the cracks. Instead, all have gone on to either college, further education or to a full time job.

I have been so impressed with how our parents are involved with the school and how the school has utilized the resources made available by Weston Playhouse, the NHAS, the arts and craft school, the local bank and many more Town and state resources.

This community, which lost its high school, has helped support this school generously to keep it open for 3 years, including just voting at town mtg this year to give the school \$75,000 to help keep it here. The town and the school's parents are sending their tax dollars to other schools. This is not an expensive academy for out of staters or for a sports school. These kids and parents are just local kids and working parents that want a local option for them to attend, and one that fits their needs.

We have just needed to find a replacement for our head of schools because after 3 years of devoted so much of her time and energy to this application process, she was told we could not be on the up coming agendas of your committees. After hearing this again, and turning down previous offers of funded schools, she needed to protect her livelihood and future and accepted another position.

This notebook is a copy of our application and all of the back and forth questions and answers to the AOE, including the most recent response to additional questions that we sent in a week ago.

We are extremely fortunate that Judy Pullinen, a seasoned educator, principal and superintendent has offered to step in as interm head of school, because she also was retired but sees the value and need of ESBR for the Ludlow community.

I know you can only listen today, but it is my sincere hope that this process can be moved along for the sake of the educators and students involved, who would like to have a few more resources that their parents' tax dollars could provide. Thank you for your time and consideration.