

First, we appreciate you allowing us to share our opinion regarding the State Board of Education's assignment of Ripton School District (RSD) as they secede from Addison Central School District (ACSD). This has been a challenging process given the many vagaries inherent within state statute, and we are grateful that the Agency of Education and the State Board of Education are focused on students throughout this process.

Second, you requested that we respond to your recommendation to the State Board of Education on Ripton's assignment for supervisory union services. You shared that you were planning to recommend that Ripton School District be declared a single district SU from the three options available (16 V.S.A. § 261(c)). We support a recommendation that does not recreate a supervisory union for ACSD, for the following reasons:

1. **Creating a new SU to provide SU services to the RSD and the Addison Central School District would dismantle the significant growth of ACSD**
 - a. Our singular focus as the ACSD has allowed us to concentrate on common goals and take on big challenges. Creating a new SU would divert the already strained resources of time and energy of staff and our community who have worked hard to bring our community together under one district. This has enabled significant benefits that would now be in jeopardy.
 - i. The commonly adopted budget allows us to share resources in an increasingly equitable way. This is equity we've been building toward for the past five years. Disentangling ACSD would be a step backward.
 - ii. A single district budget has allowed us to invest in systemic improvements that have impacted all students and all schools - i.e The International Baccalaureate authorization - supporting a cohesive curriculum, effective professional learning communities and common yardsticks of success
 - iii. Flexible staffing, as a result of our district formation, has allowed us to respond to changing demographics (e.g., small vs. large cohorts, especially from year to year in very small schools) as needed. This was especially helpful during COVID when we needed to serve remote learners from many buildings. It will be helpful again as we consider new systems and staffing models to support implementation of Act 173.
 - iv. The buffers that come from a larger unified staff force and budget allow us to flex as needed.
 - b. The new governance structure of an SU would provide an additional layer of leadership, increasing the complexity required for ACSD to build on the work we have accomplished over the last four years.
2. **Creating a new SU would be a step backwards in our mission to provide equitable access for all students**
 - a. Locally voted, separate budgets would make it harder to prioritize common initiatives related to curriculum, student services, and professional learning.
3. **Creating a new SU would be more costly and less efficient**

- a. Our community has consistently voted in support of the power behind ACSD. We have done the hard work to codify our systems, benefit from the intentions of ACT 46 and build a strong foundation for equity. This work has required sacrifices community members have been willing to make. Recreating an SU would recreate the inefficiencies that our community voted to eliminate.
 - b. Given the complex structure of a supervisory union, our ability to attract high-quality personnel across all positions would be impacted.

- 4. **Creating a new SU would create unequal representation on the potential SU Board**
 - a. A new supervisory union would have unequal representation, with ACSD only having half of the seats on that board but representing over 90% of the student population. The SU Board would shift current responsibility from the ACSD Board, including critical oversight of curricular direction and leadership.

- 5. **Creating a new SU would establish an entity that could ultimately deconstruct ACSD and undermine Middlebury Union Middle and High Schools**
 - a. Creating an SU could see other districts withdraw from ACSD, which automatically creates secondary school choice for seceding districts. Ultimately, this could lead to both Middlebury Union Middle and High Schools left without belonging to any school district.