

State Board of Education
September 20, 2017
Item L

AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Governance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education:

1. Adjust the current boundaries of the Orange North Supervisory Union (ONSU) and the Washington South Supervisory Union (WSSU) pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261 in order to create one new supervisory union to be named the Central Vermont Supervisory Union (New SU), the members of which will be the newly created Central Vermont Unified Union School District (CVUUSD) and the Orange-Washington Unified Union School District (OWUUSD)?
2. Establish July 1, 2018 as the date on which the New SU shall become fully operational?
3. Authorize the boards of the CVUUSD and the OWUUSD to appoint a supervisory union board (Transitional SU Board) on or after September 20, 2017 for the purposes of adopting policies and making other transitional decisions before the new or adjusted supervisory union is fully operational on July 1, 2018. It is intended that this authorization would not negate the State Board's prior assignment of the newly created unified districts to the OSSU for administrative and other transitional services.

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. **That the State Board adjust the ONSU and WSSU boundaries to create the New SU, to include the CVUUSD and the OWUUSD pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261.**
2. **That the State Board establish July 1, 2018 as the date on which the New SU shall become fully operational.**
3. **That the State Board of Education authorize the boards of the CVUUSD and the OWUUSD to appoint a Transitional SU Board on or after September 20, 2017.**
4. **That the State Board of Education declare that the authorization to appoint a Transitional SU Board does not negate the State Board's prior temporary assignment of the newly created unified districts to the ONSU for administrative and other transitional services.**

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 16 V.S.A. § 261; Act 153 (2010), as amended; Act 156 (2012), as amended

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Prior to creation of the new unified union school districts, the ONSU consisted solely of three PK-12 districts (the Williamstown, Orange, and Washington School Districts) and the WSSU consisted of two PK-12 school districts (the Northfield and Roxbury School Districts). The two supervisory unions are adjoining. They have an established history of collaboration and jointly employ a Business Manager and a Curriculum Director.

In March 2017, the Joint Northfield / Williamstown 706 Study Committee and the Joint Orange / Washington 706 Study Committee presented the State Board with their proposals to create two new unified union school districts (the CVUUSD and OWUUSD, respectively). If created, the two new UUSDs would be jointly eligible for tax rate reductions and other transitional assistance under the Side-by-Side program created by Act 156 of 2012. It was understood that, under the provisions of that program, the two new unified districts would become members of one supervisory union. It was unclear at the time whether the only remaining school district – Roxbury – would remain an unmerged member of that new SU.

The State Board approved both merger proposals. In addition, the Board's order temporarily assigned the two newly unified districts, if created, to the ONSU for transitional services. Given other discussions and votes in the region at that time, the State Board did not adjust supervisory union boundaries at its March meeting.

The voters approved creation of two unified union school districts – the CVUUSD and the OWUUSD – that are jointly eligible under the Side-by-Side program created in Act 156. Both districts have had their organizational meeting and will be fully operational on July 1, 2018.

In May 2017, the State Board approved the proposal of the Montpelier and Roxbury School Districts to create a new unified union school district that would be its own supervisory district. The voters of both districts approved the proposal and the new supervisory district will be fully operational on July 1, 2018.

ADJUSTMENT OF SU BOUNDARIES

16 V.S.A. § 261(a) authorizes the State Board, on its own initiative or when requested by a school district or group of school districts, to adjust the boundaries of existing supervisory unions "to afford increased efficiency or greater convenience and economy and to facilitate prekindergarten through grade 12 curriculum planning and coordination as changed conditions may seem to require." This section has been in law for decades.

In addition, the Side-by-Side program requires that the newly merged districts are member districts of the same supervisory union when they become fully operational.

By letter dated August 10, 2017, the Superintendent of the ONSU requested that the State Board take action at its September meeting to adjust the ONSU and WSSU boundaries. The letter states in part that "both study committees concluded that their communities would prefer to be assigned to a new supervisory union rather than "absorbed" by one of the two existing SUs associated with these new districts." Accordingly, she requests on their behalf that the State Board adjust existing SU boundaries to create a new SU to be known as the Central Vermont Supervisory Union. The letter requests that the new SU have two member districts – the CVUUSD and the OWUUSD – and be fully operational on July 1, 2018, the date on which both

unified districts assume full responsibility for district operations. It is also the date on which the newly created Montpelier-Roxbury School District will be fully operational.

Accordingly, it is advisable for the State Board to adjust the existing supervisory union boundaries to create a New SU consisting of the CVUUSD and the OWUUSD, to be fully operational on July 1, 2018.¹

Just as the new UUSDs will use the transitional months to prepare for full operations, so too must the new SU prepare for the responsibilities it will assume on July 1, 2018.

We recommend that the State Board authorize the boards of the CVUUSD and the OWUUSD to appoint members to a Transitional SU Board.

The purpose of a Transitional SU Board would be to adopt policies and make other decisions necessary to support the SU's assumption of duties on July 1, 2018. Creation of a Transitional SU Board would not negate the State Board's earlier assignment of the member UUSDs to the ONSU for administrative services during the transition period.

STAFF AVAILABLE: Donna Russo-Savage, Principal Assistant, School Governance

¹ Unless the Legislature repeals the authority provided in 16 V.S.A. § 261, the State Board will continue to have the authority to adjust the boundaries of SUs in its Statewide Plan or at any other time in the future that "conditions may seem to require." As a result, it is possible that at some point in the future the CVUUSD and OWUUSD will be in an SU that includes additional member districts.