



Orange East Supervisory Union

64 Main Street | PO Box 296 | Bradford, VT 05633

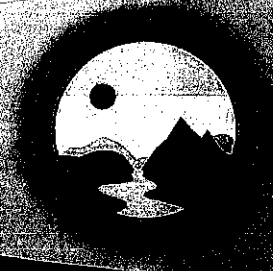
September 13, 2022

Mr. Oliver Olsen - Chair
Vermont State Board of Education
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, Vermont 05602-2501
RE: Lincoln School District and Orange East Supervisory Union

Dear Chair Olsen and Members of the State Board of Education:

As Chair of the Orange East Supervisory Union Board, I write to you today to provide a response to the inquiry by the Lincoln School District to the State Board of Education relating to a potential merger with the Orange East Supervisory Union (OESU) and our views on the Lincoln School District being placed, involuntarily, within our SU. The OESU believes strongly that there are too many issues and potential problems with this union, whether structurally or financially, which would arise from the addition of a geographically distant, culturally unrelated, historically unaffiliated district to the OESU. As such, we do not support a decision that would seek to place Lincoln School District (LSD) within our Supervisory Union against our wishes.

The impact of the initial merger of the districts into what is now the OESU caused a significant disruption in the various communities we serve and, quite frankly, a certain degree of animosity between some member communities and the SU. Therefore, OESU is deeply concerned about the selection of our particular Supervisory Union by a school district that is in no way connected to us through history or geography and believe that it would have a deleterious effect on the culture and climate we have worked so very hard to create. Moreover, community concerns about the merger in general, and the SU in particular, have not yet fully abated and the addition of any staffing to the Supervisory Union would be seen as an affront to these communities that have raised questions about efficiencies to begin with. We have worked to alleviate the stresses caused by the merger and have, in large part, been successful. The issues are not gone, but we are moving forward in a productive and positive way. The addition of the LSD into the OESU at this time would have the potential to reopen wounds that have been largely healed and cause significant disruption to the progress that has thus far been realized.



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Moreover, beyond the impact on the communities we serve, if this district were to be placed within the SU, it will negatively impact the efficiencies we have worked to create within the Supervisory Union as well as the services we provide for our now interconnected member districts. It cannot be overlooked that the hard won collaboration of the schools and communities within the OESU has permitted us to move forward in a positive way with the important work of supporting our students across the Supervisory Union while also seeking to provide exceptional programs for not only our students, but also for staff and community members through a union they feel a close personal connection to.

This sense of connection and community is particularly important to us and we have worked extremely hard to personalize the services of OESU for the people who need them. To this end, there is a close connection between our SU schools and our communities. It is with this in mind that we are even further and more acutely concerned about the potential forced merger of our SU with the Lincoln School District. In fact, we believe the selection of OESU as one of the potential merger districts by the Lincoln School Board to be directly counter to what we have come to stand for; moreover, it appears to us to be largely disingenuous on their part, as the above mentioned geographic, cultural, and historical lack of connectivity would suggest that we were chosen not because of a potential connection to the LSD, but rather because of the distinct lack of the potential for one. We believe that they would like to have the benefit of our management without the imposition of a shared culture or community, and thus a partnership in name only. This is not at all what we are about and it would be incredibly disruptive to what we are committed to doing both now and in the future as it directly relates to our work with our member OESU schools.

Thus, it is our belief that the Lincoln School District should seek partnership with a district more closely aligned with their community and, for this reason, *the members of the Orange East Supervisory Union board voted unanimously against the addition of the Lincoln School District to the OESU* and have authorized the board chair to sign and send this letter to the Vermont State Board of Education stating such. (Vote taken at the regular meeting on September 12, 2022.)

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to the superintendent, Randy Gawel, or myself.

Sincerely,

Angelina Alley- Chair
Orange East Supervisory Union