



Member Districts: Danby, Dorset, Manchester, Mt. Tabor, Mountain Towns RED, and Sunderland

October Newsletter

Northshire Merger Study Committee

Update on recent work from committee chair Jon Wilson

The committee made significant strides in September on some issues of chief concern to our smaller member districts. During the September 29 meeting, for example, we approved criteria the prospective merged district would need to follow in order to close a school. We also determined how seventh grade students would be grandfathered if they have school choice at the time of merger in Danby, Mt. Tabor, and Sunderland ([go to link to meeting minutes for more info](#)). Beyond developing language for our study report, we began the community engagement process in September. While the study group plans to hold larger public outreach sessions in the future, it reasoned the best course of action was to hold smaller community-based forums in the near term. Forums have already been held at Flood Brook and Currier, but if you are a resident of the towns indicated below, please attend your upcoming community forum as scheduled:

Location	Date and Time	Towns forum is serving
MEMS, Jackie Parks Room	October 13 at 6pm	Manchester
Dorset School	October 26 at 7 pm (tentatively scheduled time)	Dorset
Sunderland Elementary School	October 18 at 6:30 pm	Sunderland

Issues the Committee Will Take on in October Meetings

The study group is tentatively planning to hold a committee vote in November on whether it is advisable to merge or not. The committee has some essential concepts to explore in the meantime. The committee plans to tackle the following issues in October:

- Plan for merged district transportation
- Designing a model for first-year of operations
- Merger implications concerning assets and liabilities
- Agreeing on a name for the proposed district

Check out our website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/northshiremergerstudy>

Find us on [Facebook](#)

Future Meeting Dates

October 11 at 6pm at Dorset School

Would you like to receive emailed updates on the committee's work? If so, email jon.wilson@brsu.org

During our meeting on September 22, we made a list of questions and issues we need to resolve in the next month. One item on the list concerned whether we would recommend merging into a Supervisory District or a Regional Education District (for more info on SD's and REDs, [see our FAQs](#)). The Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union, which serves in an advisory capacity to this merger study, produced financial models that estimated an SD could cost more and yield higher tax rates than a RED merger for some towns involved in the consolidation. While the committee is mindful of the fiscal outcomes, it is deeply considerate of the educational manifestations of each governance structure. We have identified many positive outcomes for our kids common to both structures (see FAQ on next page).



[Click to watch an update on our work from GNAT](#)

In late September, we received some guidance from the State Board of Education; it has since become increasingly clear to our study group that we hold little-to-no authority in the decision to become a RED or SD ([for more context about REDs and SDs, click here](#)). Many committee members, including myself, have speculated that since we would geographically isolate neighboring districts, the prospective Northshire district could end up in an SU even if we recommend an SD to the state board. While speculation has its obvious limitations, committee members are apprehensive that if we merge into a RED, then we could end up greatly underrepresented on the future SU board.

We are currently operating under the assumption that if the Northshire District ended up in an SU, the state board would most likely partner us with Arlington, Pawlet/ Rupert, and a non-operating district. Even if the SU composition turned out to be a permutation of this estimation, our committee deems it an untenable proposition if the Northshire district received the same number of SU board seats as the other less-populated districts; if the aforementioned districts formed an SU board according to the default methodology, the board would have ten seats with the Northshire district claiming only three. Thankfully, Vermont law provides some recourse--the state board reserves the power to waive the default board composition method in favor of a viable alternative. In the coming weeks, we plan to engage our neighbors on possible alternatives.

At our September 29 meeting, our committee reasoned that choosing the RED or SD path in the immediate future could be fruitless or unwise given the SU board composition uncertainty coupled with our mutual interpretation that the vast majority of our decisions yet-to-be-made do not hinge on our recommendation to become a RED or SD. In short, we agreed that we have more pressing matters to attend to, and we will circle back around to this issue later.

Sincerely,

Jon Wilson
Committee Chair of the Northshire Merger Study Committee

FAQ for October

What are the positive education outcomes the committee identified resulting from merger into either a RED or SD?

The outcomes below are taken from the [committee's merger worksheet](#):

- Increases consistency and equity of opportunity by having a single board:

Check out our website:
<https://sites.google.com/site/northshirermergerstudy>
Find us on [Facebook](#)

Future Meeting Dates
October 11 at 6pm at Dorset School

Would you like to receive emailed updates on the committee's work? If so, email jon.wilson@brsu.org

- Single mission statement and unified vision
- Single strategic plan
- Common language about teaching/learning shared across all schools
 - Increases consistency in curriculum development and creates greater opportunity to incubate ideas (experiential learning, blended learning, authentic performance assessment, distance learning, expeditionary learning)
 - Increases ability to coordinate curricula and programs both vertically (K to Grade 8) and horizontally (across schools by grade)
 - Increases consistency in delivery of student support systems
 - Increases consistency and power of Personalized Learning Plans and Flexible Pathways by sharing resources, processes and results across the merged district to meet the needs of individual students
 - Increases access to the arts through sharing resources, program and personnel
 - Increases access to innovative PE programming by sharing resources across the district (mountain bikes, fly fishing, outdoor education, etc.)
- Improves the development of teaching and leadership skills among all teaching staff within the merged district
 - Development of a uniform, powerful district professional development process
 - Potential for expanded collaboration and learning from and with teachers across the district by developing professional learning networks
- Increases the potential to expand learning opportunities for students in the merged district– World Languages, STEM, Media Arts, and more.
- Increases opportunity for sharing staff among schools as to provide more diverse programming to further meet the needs of students.
 - Develops an integrated technology program for the entire district
 - Comprehensive integration of curriculum and technology systems and supports with focus on meeting and exceeding Education Quality Standards
 - Development of leadership skills and district-wide vision for technology among all teaching staff within unified district
 - Improves the capacity to monitor students' progress and develop interventions accordingly.

Spotlight on a Committee Member - Jen Rosenthal

Check out our website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/northshirerstudy>

Find us on [Facebook](#)

Future Meeting Dates

October 11 at 6pm at Dorset School

Would you like to receive emailed updates on the committee's work? If so, email jon.wilson@brsu.org



I have been a Sunderland resident for 14 years and live with my two daughters and husband. This coming year my youngest daughter will be in 4th grade at Sunderland Elementary School and my oldest will be entering Long Trail School as a 7th grader. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry, a Master's Degree in Secondary Science Education and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on Place-based Education. I have taught middle and secondary school science for over 15 years as well as science and education courses at the college level. I have a strong passion for education and a very vested interest in the future of our educational system at the local, state and national levels. Presently, I teach middle and upper school science at Long Trail School in Dorset. In addition to being a teacher I am active in my church, I am a local 4-H leader and I serve on the Sunderland School Board.

Check out our website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/northshirerstudy>

Find us on [Facebook](#)

Future Meeting Dates

October 11 at 6pm at Dorset School

Would you like to receive emailed updates on the committee's work? If so, email jon.wilson@brsu.org