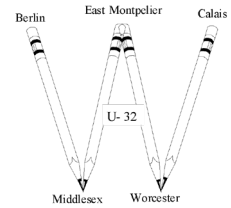


# Washington Central Unified Union School District

*WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.*

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## **WCUUSD Finance Committee Meeting Agenda 8.19.24 5:00-6:00 PM U-32 930 Gallison Hill Rd Montpelier, VT In-Person /Virtual**

### **Virtual Meeting Information**

**<https://tinyurl.com/29ufxpbj>**

**Meeting ID: 872 6393 4572**

**Password: 887596**

**Dial by Your Location: 1-929-205-6099**

1. Call to Order
2. Discussion/Action
  - 2.1. Configuration Study
  - 2.2. Data
    - 2.2.1. [Configuration Conversation Survey Responses](#)
    - 2.2.2. [7.2.24 Virtual Forum Notes](#)
    - 2.2.3. [6.26.24 Meeting Notes](#)
    - 2.2.4. [Letter from Worcester](#)
    - 2.2.5. [Worcester Community Letter](#)
    - 2.2.6. [Synthesized Data from Community Input](#)
    - 2.2.7. [Draft Criteria Synthesized from 7.31.24 Finance Committee Meeting](#)
3. Future Agenda Items
4. Public Comment
5. Adjourn

### **WCUUSD Board Norms - Adopted November 18, 2020**

- **Public input** – Notify the community about public forums and opportunities for public comment at board meetings.
- **Community involvement during regular meetings of the board** – Every meeting will include at least one opportunity for public comment. Public comment is an opportunity for board members to listen and ask clarifying questions. If a board member feels a concern raised in public comment warrants further board discussion, they may request that the issue be added to a future agenda.
- **Community dialogue** – The board may periodically schedule community forums that allow for dialogue, questions and answers from the board or the district leadership team.
- **Stay on time** – Start and end on time. The chair may appoint a time-keeper.
- **All voices will be heard** – Every board member gets a chance to speak. Some topics warrant having each board member speak in turn to ensure full representation.
- **Reflection** – To allow time for reflection, the chair and agenda steering committee will plan time for complex or contentious issues to be discussed at more than one meeting before the board votes, except where a decision is urgent.
- **Announcements in reports** – Announcements from the administration will appear in the reports and not as discussion items.
- **Role of the board** – At the end of each board meeting reflect on whether the board remained focused on its policy-making and oversight role during the meeting, rather than operational details that are the responsibility of leadership team.
- **Respect each other** – Listen, allow others to be heard, share concerns, assume positive intentions, be present, celebrate successes.

## **Configuration Conversation: World Café Survey Responses**

### **Here are the priorities our finance committee identified. What would you add or change, and why?**

- Could not access document.
- Lowering costs and therefore property taxes.
- I am unable to open the link to your priorities. I would like a specific number of what the increase in taxes would be to keep Doty open. I would also like the specific number of how much it would cost to maintain Doty if the school closed. How much would be saved if schools merged - a specific number please.
- A priority would be to have a genuine conversation with the community. A true conversation that is not filled to the brim with edu-jargon and Great Schools speak. Great Schools makes lots of money off school districts by convincing school boards they cannot do anything without them.
- I would add safety. A larger school does seem to pose a few additional, though I assume not insurmountable, problems. Safety is a top priority for us.
- Actively pursue the opportunity to merge High School programs with Montpelier. As Montpelier considers flood mitigation measures and is thinking of options for construction of a building to serve its students, there on the hill is a building (U-32) which has the capacity to to serve the Montpelier students as well.
- I would change ‘fewer than five elementary schools’ as a priority. The governor and legislature have forced consolidation as a cost saving measure, which has already raised costs enormously by removing local control. I rather doubt further consolidation will actually save much. Instead, our children and families will lose our sweet, supportive little elementary school and are bussed to a big school in another town. Even worse, your notion of bussing babies to Berlin is absurd. Who would send a two year old off on a bus for an hour each day? For a 3 hour preschool program? Or would families have to transport, which would make it unusable for half the families. I see that the problem here is with the law that forced consolidation and removed local control. You are forced to make these decisions. Please don’t use scenario 3.
- The biggest cost drivers of schools are not enrollment or head count. They are salaries and health care. 2. Leave Doty and Calais open. It is not right to close the two schools with the lowest median income, and force those students to bus farther away. 2A. Turn some space in each of those schools into studio apartments that people can rent. Of course, those tenants would need to be fingerprinted and background checked. People need a place to live, and Worcester wants to maintain its small elementary school. Perhaps we can do both with taking over two rooms or a wing to create affordable housing.
- There seems an assumption that smaller schools are inherently more expensive, but none of the information I have seen addresses actual cost per student in the individual schools. Also - none of the information presented addresses the concerns of a "top

heavy" district where the resource allocation is tilted towards administration versus teachers and direct student support.

- I think it is OK to have part-time positions to ensure that students receive services/instruction in areas where a full-time employee is not needed.
- This speaks only to your first pillar of academics. It is missing the community engagement piece AND the equity piece. Those absolutely need to be part of this conversation. And equity needs to look at socio-economic issues as central in this district. LISTEN TO THE FAMILIES about which of the competing visions of equity is most important in this instance. "Nothing about us without us." - South African disability rights activists
- I would want to include significant direct savings to the taxpayer. If those savings are not substantial then consolidation is not a valuable choice. I have no children. I am a teacher. Consolidation of our su has not led to significant improvements, changes, or benefits to students. It has also not resulted in significant savings to the taxpayers.
- There isn't anything in these priorities about the children themselves. It's about logistics and offerings... I'd love to see priorities added that illustrate care for children and their overall experience in school to show that the board's decisions are holistic and student-centered.
- I'm in agreement, with no initial changes or additions.
- Community
- Something that would address human resource salary/benefit costs. Are we in-line with similar sized districts? Why? Because it is the largest cost for the district
- Be specific. Put a number on it when you talk about class size targets, such as 14-18.
- I would can the whole idea..it's not cost effective and puts our kids at unnecessary risk
- To cut costs (to be transparent - this is your goal) To make decisions \*with the support\* of the community.
- I was away so could not attend the forum. As I understand the priorities, there would be fewer elementary schools (2-3 consolidated, I assume) and each would include a full time nurse and counselor. If this is correct, that makes sense to me. It seems like shared positions between could work as long as staff are full time equivalent all together.
- I would change the word full time to expansive or comprehensive Nursing and Counseling as I don't believe that good quality is defined by the number of hours on site. I also don't believe each school must have the same types of enrichment as long as there is enrichment available and that there is choice of school if some school provides a program more suitable for a particular child.
- In human-centered design, you center the humans. You have failed to do this. You have forgotten that schools are not just what happens to the children while in the physical building, but the school is a part of a community. The Worcester school kids are a huge part of our community and to remove them will hurt the children's sense of community and home. It will also affect out community culture. Very possibly, it will lower our property tax. I am so saddened this is not being considered.
- Why eliminate shared positions. It works

- Value community and quality of life for our students.
- Value community - an elementary school is the heart of a community
- I would not put sixth graders with 7th and 8th graders, I think junior high should stay the way it is. I think sixth graders are at a tender age they can be pushed forward into maturity or kept young a little longer. My daughter's first dick pic was sent to her in 7th grade, from a peer. Seventh grade slaps both the parents and the kids upside the head with inappropriateness and bullying from peers. It has to be the worst years of kids lives. You have to be prepared for all the crap. Coming out of fifth grade, they just aren't ready nor should be. Kids can only be kids for so long. I also don't think there is anything wrong with job sharing. I actually see a benefit to it, if it is done right, I hate to see finances come before kids safety.
- Allowing our student to access educational opportunities that are outside the normal box.
- Our union's taxpayers would benefit from more financial reporting that is easily digestible. Many of the charts I am seeing are illegible, or don't really offer a takeaway. I had a business professor tell me a graph or chart should take no more than 5 seconds to not only convey objective data, but also inform a subjective view. If there is no takeaway from a chart, don't make a chart. The enrollment by year charts are not valuable and are possibly misleading. There is one set of charts where we use current FY enrollment in the current state, but then use the following FY enrollment (lower) in the 2 subsequent scenarios. The combined sequence of charts tells me that class sizes will decrease at most schools when we consolidate. I believe most of our students above 4th grade math level would agree that a smaller denominator begets a larger quotient (unless someone is gaming the numbers favorably for their purposes!). Apples-to-apples baselines need to be established. A consolidation of a union's schools is not a year-to-year decision. This is a decades long decision that will likely not be reversed in our lifetimes. Therefore using arbitrary and inconsistent baseline values for student populations is also challenging for a worthwhile objective analysis.
- I would add why any of these priorities are beneficial, both financially and for the students education.
- I question every single one of those priorities. It's not clear why any of them would improve on the existing experience at Doty given standing research on smaller school systems. Without a financial analysis it's additionally unclear that this would actually reduce costs... Finally, most such financial analysis prove incorrect in practice, if we look at school system regionalization across the country.
- There is absolutely no reason to start with prioritizing the closing of our schools. I would like to know how this became a priority... who is pushing this model on us? This, as well as moving our 6th graders from the elementary schools, should be removed as priorities. If this is about finances, and it obviously is, then we need to start figuring out what financial resources could be gained through partnerships with Daycare, adult day care, therapy offices, community organizations... paying entities that could inhabit our school buildings to bring in revenue and enrich both students and seniors and or babies. What about the summer months? Who could be renting our

school space over the summer to again, raise revenues. Closing the heartbeat of Worcester is NOT the answer.

- Your first and only priority is to provide effective learning. It's time to streamline district operations and focus on learning
- Why is the grade 6-8 middle school a priority?
- Closing elementary schools is a good decision. Meeting class size standards and offer enrichment is important for the education of all children.
- I would like to see a priority involving a robust MTSS system and getting kids outdoors- Eco programs across all schools, and rather than closing schools who are at the heart of their community, expand services offered there with dental and medical services being provided and adult education, utilizing the school during summer and breaks with childcare provided and special programs for community
- Add what the state quality education standards are for class size.
- I would totally agree with your priorities although I wouldn't label them as coming from your "finance" committee but from the Board as a whole. The educational benefits are many.
- Yes to all of the identified priorities! And cut costs, especially by reducing the cost of operating and maintaining so many buildings. Cost isn't the only reason to reconfigure schools, but let's not pretend it isn't a reason.
- We need to reimagine education. We need to reimagine essential social services and how/who pays for them. Maybe the State pays for them. Reimagine how we classify students as special education (a large # are not sp ed). You're taking too much of a linear approach. To truly work over the long term, it must be a total integrated systems approach. Finances and use of buildings are not starting points. Consolidation has not and will not accomplish what it was billed to do -- reduce taxpayer cost.
- Equity--Do not increase burden on children and families to access the school. Plan must not discriminate against rural poor by making it geographically challenging for students to have reasonable length bus rides (children from impoverished are \*far\* more likely than those from wealth families to ride the bus) and participate in after-school activities, and for parents to participate in PTO and other school functions.
- I would go 5-8 for a middle school and join with Montpelier. Students really suffer with very small peer groups and many districts (like Waterbury/Duxbury) configure 5th graders into Middle School.
- What are the minimum and maximum for Education Quality Standards?
- I don't feel 6th graders need to be with 8th graders
- It is unclear to me why cost is not being discussed as this seems top of mind for at least half of the voters given the most recent failed budget. I do not agree at all with the classroom ESQs. I have subbed in classrooms as a para with the classroom teacher leading and class sizes of 25 are way too big in K-6 with all the behavioral challenges, IEPs, etc. Not a lot of learning is happening when the classes get this large. I do not believe that consolidating elementary schools will result in better student outcomes overall.

- I agree with these priorities but am concerned about the elimination of shared positions with small FTE because I think that we should not eliminate services that we only need a little of, and some of those are federally required, i.e. multilingual learner instruction, special education
- It is shortsighted to propose a solution (fewer than 5 elementary schools) without having conducted a full cost/benefit analysis of possible merger with Montpelier. Where is the study and what are the findings? For a subject that has come up so many times over the decades, the possible merger question deserves investigation. Sadly, this Board seems intent on foregoing that work in favor of closing schools.
- Get rid of music art and language until reading math and science scores top national and state averages.
- While these goals, on face value, are sound for the most part, I am not convinced that the savings gained by closing 2 schools (probably) are going to be enough to satisfy the “tax revolt” faction in our district. The only figure I’ve heard is \$300,000. Correct me if it is higher by enough to make a difference. In the grand scheme, that will not bring down taxes appreciably. And once closed (with only small monetary gain) the schools would never come back. Meanwhile, we may be destining two communities to “ghost town” status. There is never a discussion of the benefits of really small schools. Educators are creative people. Keep looking for solutions that do not doom Worcester and Calais to regional irrelevance.
- Given the urgency and complexity of the educational and funding situation, would not prioritize the following to allow greater flexibility to address these needs: (1) full-time nursing and counseling; (2) limiting/eliminating shared positions and small FTEs; (3) middle school program for 6-8; and (4) fewer than 5 elementary schools. While there may be good reasons for each, specifying these and only these goals is limiting and may undercut more important overarching goals, like quality of education for the district and sustainable financial and capital funding decisions. The other two goals are spot on (class sizes that provide rich instruction and expanded enrichment opportunities, although not sure why consistency is needed - maybe immersion or magnet programs are worth exploring?).
- cut costs!!!!!!
- Add: Effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars! We should be configured to get maximum educational benefit for each dollar spent.
- All sounds good but if the budget doesn’t come down the community will start voting it down as it is out of control and this process should have happened years ago.
- Have some after school programs that are private.
- Add: maintain small town feeling and close knit community of each school
- Agree and emphasize trimming number of schools to 3 so we can maintain a rich and effective array of classes and programs for all students, including AP Classes, language, arts, theater etc. Do not cut programs to maintain 5 schools!
- Assess the para educator situation. Consolidation? Seems it may be bloated in certain situations



- A robust program for the trades and entry-level healthcare fields. College isn't in reach or realistic for some students. Students need alternatives to college-bound studies. They need skills to help them succeed.
- I do not think it is important to have fewer than 5 elementary schools. I think that 5th graders should be in elementary schools, not mixed in with 6th-8th graders. I do not think it necessary to overly limit shared positions across schools. I think classroom teachers can teach at least some of the "enrichment" subjects.
- Maintaining community for socially vulnerable kids whose socialization was disrupted by the COVID pandemic.
- Eliminate a specific number of elementary schools. It does not allow for any solution except closing schools. Add a goal of maintaining community involvement with the school.
- I don't think full time counseling and nursing positions are necessarily needed. I'm also not sure limiting part time positions is a top line priority in and of itself (though retaining quality staff should be). And I don't agree with trying to achieve a set number of elementary schools as a goal unto itself. I think that more qualitative factors should be considered within a more holistic framework; such as impact on mental health, the relationship between school and community, and time spent commuting (for parents and children, which impacts mental health and wellness).
- Nothing
- The word MUST should be eliminated. You set a rigid and inflexible bar in using that word. Losing the uniqueness of a school, with one school or another providing strengths in different areas, that is an advantage not something to be destroyed.
- First of all, I am a Worcester resident and taxpayer, and the parent of a rising Doty first grader. I have a younger child who will be in kindergarten in two years. A list of priorities that already assumes closing at least one school ("fewer than five elementary schools") seems to be biased from the start. I'm also concerned that the finance committee has not outlined any financial priorities - - even though it seems that the big driver behind all of this reconfiguration is actually financial. If it is financially motivated, then do the math and share the numbers. If it is not financially motivated, then tell people that this is not going to bring down our taxes. Otherwise, people will vote to close schools thinking that it'll save them money, even if that's not the case. This seems like a deep flaw in the logic that I've seen presented and the rhetoric I'm hearing circulated. Finally, I see places where things prioritized for the district (ie class size) could be working against high quality education in any one town. How do you square that?
- Connection with and support of the local community enrich their schools and students. And, local schools support and enrich the town. Keep education local.
- I think it's important to have full time nurses and counselors, for sure. Can we look at Administrative Positions in Central Office that have NO DIRECT impact (imo) on students and hire the Nurse and Counselor and RIF a few of those positions? Class sizes over 17 are tough. Period. I don't care about regulations. I teach grades pre-K-5 and LOVE teaching smaller size classes (16-18) and struggle in different ways



teaching those with 23 students. World Language- sure it's good and stimulating for the brain, BUT unless it begins after birth then you're learning it like Algebra- to pass the quiz, and then it leaves you. Immersion is learning. Scattered practice is knowing a bit. Not applying it to your interests or lifestyle needs. This is not a priority for me at all. Not all students care or are interested in learning the basics of a language that they cannot speak unless they are immersed in that language anyway. As for music and art I think all students should have access to these classes in some way. Hopefully they already do weekly. If that is not the case that's an issue in my mind. I think they already access this weekly so we're set there. Why is a priority having fewer than 5 elementary schools?! Every town should have a school- we already do. Don't take it away from us-

- I feel the priorities, as written, only scratch the surface of the Core Beliefs they claim to emanate from. For example, Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction can mean so much more than equal blocks of music or language instruction across a diverse district. Similarly, Humanity, Justice, Community and Belonging might be winked at in the aim of maintaining nursing and counseling, but is undercut by the consequences of closing a community hub like Doty School. The priorities need to be more explicitly grounded in the Core Beliefs and evaluated holistically. Additionally, it is no secret that finances are a significant (if not primary) factor for many voters and probably board members as well. It is beyond time to lay out the financial priorities of any reconfiguration and have honest conversations about whether and how they can be met.
- I am curious how we cut the transportation budget? That tends to be a big number but perhaps we can do better, especially with the Doty bus run, I think cluster stops would be ideal and might cut some costs. Perhaps classrooms could be a little bigger if they aren't at the cap which I think is 24 per class?
- I would also prioritize the impact of commute time for elementary school children. As an example, I attended a rural high school and commuted by bus for over an hour each way. This put me at a disadvantage compared to peers who lived closer. I slept less (and we've all read about the learning retention/focus/energy issues associated with accumulated sleep deficits), had more difficulty participating in extra curricular activities, and therefore it impacted my social life. With teenagers this situation is less than ideal, with elementary children, this is meaningfully and irreparably damaging. These longer commutes will impact the least economically advantaged communities, where young children already often have additional challenges to overcome. In terms of change, I would potentially change the priority for fewer than five elementary schools. The youngest children are the foundation of our future, if they can become strong, resilient, develop good habits, etc. at this younger age then in high school they will be more self-directed. Therefore, it makes sense to enhance resources for younger students rather subtract.
- Follow the mission of educating our children.
- The first bullet point about class size is subjective. Rich instruction can happen in large or small groups. 2. I question why shared positions across schools or very small

FTEs should be eliminated or limited. 3. I do not agree that "enrichment opportunities" need to be consistent across the system. 4. Grade 6 is too early for middle school. 5. High quality, enriching instruction can happen without closing elementary schools. 6. If maintaining full time nursing and counseling means some elementary schools close, this is not a priority.

- Opening or closing a school is a long-range (20-year, at least) decision. It should be made in the context of a long-range plan. How many students should the district plan to have the capacity to accommodate? Where would elementary schools ideally be located in relation to where people actually live in the district (disregarding town lines)? How do existing locations of schools line up with where they should be? How to get from here (2024) to there (2044)?
- I would change the full time nursing and counseling in the smallest schools and share a nurse/ counselor like we did pre covid. It is not necessary to have those FT positions in either school. Perhaps look into telehealth for the days when a nurse or counselor is not present. Also as a parent of a 6th grader who is in a class of 7 ..it would be great if the 6th grade could be moved with more kids at U-32 , not only to grow more and have more opportunities like the middle level but more options to grow socially. Ask the kids in the small classes what they would prefer.
- I think that the finance committee's priorities are tied to the Core Beliefs identified during the Strategic Planning Process, but the Core Beliefs are broader. The priorities fail to represent all of the Core Beliefs when considering the closure of schools. The Core Belief of Community Engagement and Relationships (and also the Core Belief of Humanity, Justice, Community and Belonging), are severely undermined by the proposed closure of Doty and Calais Elementary because the students in those towns will not be able to engage with their community as they do now through programs such as the Worcester Community Lunch and the Worcester residents who volunteer at Doty for certain activities and programs. Regarding the Core Belief of Transparent and Responsible Leadership, many community members at the Community Forums have identified financial sustainability as a key priority in considering any reconfiguration model. Based on the nature of the priorities identified by the finance committee (and the fact that the finance committee led this process), I believe the Board should explicitly acknowledge that financial sustainability is one of the key priorities. As to the Core Belief of Well-Being, there is abundant research examining the relationship between a child's sense of connectedness within one's school and community and child mental health and well-being. It would also be important to consider factors such as students' increased time on buses on both physical and social-emotional well-being. In sum, I believe that the Board should evaluate configuration models based on all of the Core Beliefs instead of the narrower listed priorities.
- no change
- I am okay with those priorities..
- Shared nurse between schools.
- Don't cut education, find cuts in upper admin and athletics
- N/A

- Why are these items called enrichment? What are the disparities now? Even when Calais had 180 students, many teachers were split between two or more schools. What is the goal, saving money ? Can you show us the savings? I disagree with closing schools. Who decided a minimum class size and why? What is the cost of mitigating Toxic building materials in our schools? Which buildings will be the most expensive to mitigate? I recommend we repurpose all Elementary schools, and build one new elementary school at U32. Also, expand school choice within our district and between our district and Montpelier .
- Explore the possibility of bringing special education tuition-out students back to district, establishing programs that are commensurate or better than their out of district placements. Accept tuition-in students from other districts. Share principals across the district. Use a head teacher model in each building to manage a crisis that might occur in the principal's absence. Eliminate the current Handle with Care program and close seclusion rooms. Combine classes across grades where appropriate. Use an in-class resource replacement model to more fully integrate special education students and reduce self-contained programs. If not being done, fully implement Response to Intervention programs at the elementary school level which will benefit all students, particularly in the areas of language arts and mathematics. Create magnet programs in the elementary schools. This was one of the promises made as part of Act 46, which was never fulfilled. Ask teacher and administrative associations to reopen negotiations during this time of crisis. If the community needs to shoulder 14 percent tax increases, the bargaining units should consider not killing the golden goose by offering some salary changes at least in the short term. I have no idea what the last settlement package provided in the way of compensation but surely a rate of inflation increase, currently around 3.5 percent (or less), would be a reasonable contribution to resolving financial issues.
- Not sure that all schools need full-time nursing, why no shared positions, especially for enrichment
- I think that while the priorities are laudable, they may need to be reduced for financial reasons.
- These priorities do not define the problem, establish a goal to solve the problem, and are not rooted in our strategic plan. We should first define the problem - annual double-digit budget increases are required to maintain our existing education program model and these increases are not sustainable for our community (or something similar). Then define the goal - develop an education model (including physical space configuration) that meets the goals of the strategic plan, adapts to a declining student population, maximizes the value of our resources, and is financially sustainable for the community. THEN the priorities that the finance committee identified (and others added) can be bucketed by the values defined in our strategic plan. This way the solutions will focus on solving the primary problem and meeting the goal, not meeting individual priorities. Because, if the solution meets an individual priority (such as reducing part-time employees) but does not affect financial sustainability or meet strategic plan goals (such as providing a rigorous curriculum) then it is not really a

solution. I am concerned that by starting with priorities rather than defining the problem and setting a goal, that our outcome will not solve the real problem. Lets not spend time and energy finding solutions for things that are not problems.

- Add: Maintain vibrant communities. Add: Maximize use of our existing resources.
- Consolidating schools has to be part of the conversation.
- I feel like while having a full time nurse, counseling might be the goal, maybe they are not reasons enough to close a school? This seems to be extreme and not thinking outside of the box of how positions can be shared amongst schools. I think that one of the priorities is missing is the community aspect and students going to schools that are far from their homes. These to me seem more important than full time nurse and counseling and much much more important than having people working at 2 schools. In fact that again seems like a thinking outside of the box and being creative, however my view is that if community don't want their school to be closed then we should be looking at ways to be creative to keep them open. These goals seem to be in place in order to close schools, they are set up knowing that Calais and Worcester don't meet them. Why is one of the goals not "to keep community school open"? It is also a slap in the face to see that bigger classes are a goal, WHAT?! Families in our community pay to send their kids to private schools and one of the draws is smaller class sizes. I keep seeing all the room these schools have. My assumption is that they took the number of courses (U32) and grade level classes (Elementary schools) and said "each of these should have 25 per class" and then saw how many "free seats" there were and said that was room. So sure, on paper they are not "full", but that is not how schools work in reality. This whole process seems to be an on paper process and not based in the reality of these schools and communities. This is no genuine. An AP class at U32 might have 9 kids in it, is a smaller upperclassmen elective, but does this new format mean that we should no longer run this class? Because i see that we should not have Worcester and Calais open because they are small classes?
- I think those are good priorities.
- I would add these elements: 1) Retain students' sense of place and community. Why? Having a sense of place--feeling connected to the towns we come from—improves learning outcomes and is crucial to social capital and citizenship. 2) Meet or exceed best practice for short length of bus rides / travel time, with special attention to our youngest students. Why? Closing schools means more distance between students and schools, so those who live farthest from the school will have longer bus rides. It will be more difficult for those students to do after-school activities. It will be even harder for these families to attend school events, parent-teacher conferences, and be involved in their children's education. This burden will be heaviest the communities whose schools have closed. 3) Make sure any configuration equitably sustains every town's and neighborhoods' property values. Why? If experience from other states is any clue, towns whose schools are closed will likely bear an unfair burden in the form of lowered property values.
- Sixth graders should NOT be moved to U32
- Increase the teaching of Truth.

- It would be good to articulate cost savings opportunities that would come with consolidation, e.g. personnel currently splitting time between schools will not need to travel during the day; fewer maintenance costs; less redundancy in equipment and materials; simpler logistics.
- I do not think that 6th graders should be going to U-32
- I feel the district schools should be happy with what is offered now, and not always want more. I feel sixth graders are not old enough to go to U32.
- Teach children to have a strong sense of place and care for their community and natural environment. Using pedagogy such as <http://www.susted.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EfS-Benchmarks-1.1a.pdf>. Other things to consider are quality of life for families and children. How will long bus rides impact the wellbeing of children? How will it impact families and communities?
- Lower the middle management employment. How can you justify the yearly tax increase on all the taxpayers when you will do nothing to cut costs on your end. we are not your piggy bank.
- Financial sustainability - the community cannot support double digit spending increases year after year, especially for fewer and fewer students.
- I understand school closures are a real possibility, especially for the smaller schools. I strongly oppose closing Berlin Elementary. Can East Montpelier and Berlin remain open? How would that affect the other communities? I think travel time to and from school should be considered as a priority. If students are spending 2 hours on a bus each day, that has a significant affect on the children.
- Consider consolidating students with high levels of special needs to one campus with specialized instructors that are able to serve them better and not be duplicative of positions/resources across all schools
- I would look for a solution that does not include closing all the elementary schools. There will be a lot of opposition in each of those towns to that. We must develop a model that's financially sustainable which the current tax rates are not. This model has to include declining enrollments over time

- If saving money is a priority, I think it should be listed. There should also be an indication of what amount of savings is considered enough to warrant a change in configuration

- I would increase the elementary and middle school physical education. Currently we do not meet state requirements for middle school physical education.

- I am surprised that there is no additional priority regarding cost savings since this is a finance committee.

- Increased mental health supports in the schools targeted toward minimizing the frequency of aggressive and unsafe behaviors

- Missing -- community buy-in to decision-making; community engagement in the schools day to day; transportation and logistics impacts from any changes; if cost savings are a priority, that should be stated clearly; prioritize classroom staff/resources over administration

- Keep early elementary local. Say, preschool and grades 1-3 or 4. Accept small class sizes or multi-grade classrooms as the norm. Better launch for literacy. Build local community and support for the larger school district by honoring the local community.
- Allowing elementary schools to adapt to the needs of their students, and allowing students to choose the school that best fits their needs

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**What are some ideas for a school configuration that could achieve those priorities? Be specific**

- Closing 2 - 3 schools will allow for better class sizes benefiting students more opportunities.
- I like options 1 and 2. They make sense financially and for quality education. Moving 6th graders to U32 and going to 3 Elementary schools makes sense.
- Combine high schools and middle schools with Montpelier district in the next five years, keep elementary schools open and young children close to their families and communities. Also, developmentally appropriate for older children being bused farther away and spending more time on the bus as opposed to younger children.
- Merge Montpelier and U-32 rather than merge small town schools which are the heart of the communities.
- I think maintaining counseling will be very helpful. I think sometimes trying to maintain the feel of the smaller schools in their supportive environment can help children feel more at ease. I suspect there is an abundance of information available on this topic.
- Lets recognize that our demographic trends will continue into the future and make significant changes
- Keep the preschool kids in the same building with their older sibs. See above.
- Send the 6th graders to U32. But pre-K - 2nd grade students do not need separate enrichment instruction. And I would bet that Doty would give up its enrichment (Art, Language, Library) in order to stay open. I know teachers are pushed to the max, but I suspect there are teachers who already offer "enrichment" as part of their instruction.
- Close Worcester and Calais Elementary Schools and move their students to Rumney and East Montpelier Elementary Schools. Consider moving all or some of the 6th graders to U-32. Consider merging middle and high schools with Montpelier.
- You have many good ideas from the Worcester town meeting. The underlying need, however, is systematic change on a statewide level.
- Utilizing extra space in the building for childcare—district run centers that create programs for u32 students to get training, certifications, generate revenue that can help keep nurses and counselors available. Similar to community connections but a day long program for younger children.
- Foster a Positive School Climate and Culture: Prioritize creating a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment where all students feel valued, respected, and supported. This



includes implementing anti-bullying programs, promoting diversity and inclusion, and encouraging positive relationships among students and staff. Also - the board should bear in mind that the effect of any increase in class size will depend on how such an increase is implemented. For example, a one-student increase in the pupil/teacher ratio in the U.S. would reduce the teaching workforce by about 7 percent. If the teachers to be laid off were chosen in a way largely unrelated to their effectiveness, such as seniority-based layoffs, then the associated increase in class size might well have a negative effect on student achievement. But if schools choose the least effective teachers to let go, then the effect of increased teacher quality could make up for some or all of the possible negative impact of increasing class size.

- Schools become community centers: daycare, pre-k, k-8, senior center, with attached family health center (inclusive of mental health services)
- Keep Doty school open.. PERIOD
- 2-3 elementary schools and 1 middle/high school + merge with Montpelier
- Engaging with the community and asking for more caregiver and townsfolk involvement. Ex: bring in a stay at home parent once a week to teach Spanish or music
- I don't agree with you're priorities at all and our priorities should be set locally for our town period
- U-32 could be the high school for both this district and Montpelier, one if the elementary schools could become the middle school for this district.
- Bringing in more community volunteers to provide enrichment and support services and/or providing contract work opportunities for local community members to support the students needs. With so many aging vermonters in our area it would be beautiful to find ways to support them during this process as well. I don't believe there are any adult day programs in our area, could we establish a part time child/adult program on site that might bring nursing and other services to share with the school children?
- Keep Doty open.
- One home room with one teacher per grade.
- Merge districts, combine U32 and Montpelier high school without closing elementary schools
- Merge districts and combine Montpelier High School and U32 in one building instead of closing elementary schools.
- 3 elementary schools pk-6, 2 community centers with assisted living alongside a pk/ childcare and/ or 2 magnet schools with the 3 traditional schools
- Honestly, I have grave concerns about the conflict of interest inherent in this process. The school configuration proposals are being presented by school administrators who are non-elected officials, and are also not required to be taxpayers to the unions. While I do believe in earnest our school administration wants the best outcome for the students, I also believe our school administration would do anything in their power to ensure job security. Have we considered a third-party consultant to help our union taxpayers receive unbiased proposals? It seems very little is being discussed about our administrative salary base, and how long-term scenarios would look with consolidation of non-classroom faculty. There was a line in the recent slide deck about consolidation



with neighboring school districts. This thought was quickly dismissed as “long-term” and “challenging”. How would we describe the nuclear action of school consolidation if not using the same two adjectives above? It seems to me we are being curated solutions that almost unanimously protect the job security of those making the recommendations. This process would inherently be more valuable if a third party was hired to represent the complete list of solutions that are in the best interest of the students and taxpayers.

- I would like to see the older kids from the smaller schools go to the big ones (Calais to east Montpelier, Doty to rumney). Then, the smaller kids (under 2nd grade perhaps) go to the small schools. The smaller schools could open enrollment to toddlers and babies by adding a daycare element to the school at affordable rate. Pre-k is really expensive. For me it's \$140 more a week to get the same hours of care that I have for daycare. Perhaps this merger could help alleviate the financial burden on families with 3-4 year olds and perhaps younger. The additional income for the daycare portion would help support keeping Calais and Doty open. There could be a negative impact to home daycares and that would need to be addressed. I think we have the opportunity to solve more than one problem with this reconfiguration and give some relief to parents of young children. Did you know that one year of childcare is more expensive than in state tuition at UVM?
- I disagree these priorities that have been created should be priorities.
- I fundamentally disagree with those priorities, both that they are priorities, or that they will achieve the stated goals.
- It is not a school configuration issue in my mind. It is a revenue issue that could be solved through expanding paid usage of our schools in the summer and under utilized parts during the school year.
- Think districtly (yes that's a word) ignore town lines and place the schools where the students are.
- Closing elementary schools- Doty and Calais.
- See last part of above
- Agree with closing Doty and Calais in the short term and moving 6th grade to U-32. In the medium term, merging with Montpelier makes a lot of sense. They have a flood prone High School and U-32 is plenty oversized to absorb the number of students.
- Add Montpelier schools to the discussion. This demographic problem is long term and known. Consolidation will be difficult and if it happens now, won't happen easily again for decades. Be bold, involve Montpelier schools. We are all part of that community and they are shrinking too.
- Possibly birth through gr 1 in one or 2 schools, gr 2 through 5 in others...6th in U32.
- Sixth graders should be moved to U32 as most are ready for the social and educational challenges that move would provide. It's an idea that has been put forth many times before. The extra room at U32 should be utilized now. Elementary school consolidation makes perfect sense to me, but I'm an East Montpelier resident. If you were to reserve Berlin for district-wide pre-K, why not consider offering childcare, for a fee, for grades K-5?

- My vote is for moving 6th graders to U-32 and operating three pre-K to 5th grade schools located in Berlin, East Montpelier, and Middlesex. Then talk about merging with the Montpelier-Roxbury district AFTER that.
- Have centers of academic excellence around the district. For example, Center for the Arts; Physical Sciences; General Ed; etc. Student directed project focused that incorporates language, design, history, music, group dynamics, self-accountability, empathy and emotional intelligence, problem solving and decision making, verbal and written presentations, self-discovery, goal setting and activity management, more relationship skills. Get rid of or greatly reduce traditional classes (severely out of date and don't work well). Teachers support learning process and projects as guides, information sources, and helping students hold themselves accountable. Stop focusing on "behavior". Help students focus on what is influencing and motivating their behavior -- skills that identify specific influences (needs, beliefs, core values, spirituality, biases, mental functions) and motivators (fear and love) of thoughts and behavior. We can only truly change behavior by addressing the influences and motivators. Drop standardized tests -- they don't measure true learning and waste time and money. Have the moral courage to challenge these tests. Professional development for teachers -- broader definition of "normal"; how to adapt to different learning styles and temperament. In doing so, we reduce number of students classified as special education (80-90% of children now classified as special education are not). It would reduce cost of special ed.
- Move 6th graders to U32 and maintain existing schools as K-5. Yes, it is harder for staff to work in more than one building, but increasing the commuting time for a few people is dwarfed by the burden placed on children taking buses and parents driving to a distant school.
- Join with Montpelier and create a joint middle school. Get rid of Doty and EMES.
- More time to make things happen to ensure all students will have needs met, for physical building changes to be done (mostly the middle school).
- The suggestion of three elementary schools and moving 6th grade to U32 makes sense to me
- Moving 6th grade up sounds reasonable although I would like to know a bit more. It is unclear to me how there is enough slack in the existing middle school cores to absorb the extra class sections that would be needed.
- Closing some schools, figuring out transportation, hiring staff with multiple qualifications and skills (an SLP who is also an ML educator and a math interventionist?)
- Don't bring 6th graders up to U32; consider bringing 7th and 8th graders back to their local schools instead. It would be an adjustment, for sure, but these young kids are too impressionable to be in schools with high school age kids. Also, in these spare times, keeping grades pre-K through 8 in their local schools would justify keeping the local schools open, mirroring the way things were in former times when sharing educational resources was more a way of life than it is now. This would enable Montpelier 9-12

grades to fill the space that would result at U32, resulting in a vibrant high school experience for all our HS kids.

- Consolidation of supervisory union and consolidation of all local schools with less than 100 pupils.
- Shifting the population at Rumney to reduce the school size. Re-configuration can ease financial burdens by utilizing any empty school spaces for social programming - think community kitchens on weekends, sheltering where needed, bringing in free community programs like yoga teachers offering free classes to the school and entire community across all the school. It is not unheard of to move certain programs to individual schools and transport grades for that programming monthly.
- This is difficult to answer since your goals state that schools must be closed. I don't think you will entertain any of my suggestions that keep schools open. That said, I understand the board's reluctance to use shared staff and multi-age classes to help solve the "small school" dilemma. But there are ways to do looping with clear intentionality. And there are teachers who are willing to work in more than one school or want to work part time for personal reasons (I was such a teacher 25 years ago). Again, it comes down to money (which you tend to downplay in the name of "equity.") And yet, you can offer no solid evidence of cost savings that would ease the tax burden. I would appreciate more transparency about the fact that so much of the district's budget is out of our control (Special Ed, teacher benefits, the state's funding model). Local education taxes are untenable, but what you propose does not solve that. You are correct that it is not equitable for some students to have enriched programming and some not to have it. Very small class sizes are problematic, but not insurmountable. But again, you never mention the good things about small teacher-student ratios, close community ties, and pride of place that both Worcester and Calais are known for and would be wiped out by your proposed reconfiguration.
- Explore merging Montpelier HS into U-32, and moving middle school students into the elementary schools. Allow variation in class sizes to meet student needs. Provide enrichment programs before and after school. Explore full-day pre-K options. Look beyond WCUUSD and Montpelier for opportunities. Consolidate supervisory union and management staff to reduce expenses.
- Reduce number of elementary schools to increase class size thus being able to offer all students an equitable education
- Given the physical proximity between Doty and Rumney schools, I would combine them. I would also consider the Calais Elementary School students going to Plainfield Elementary School.
- already we are taxed beyond belief, the studies clearly show that it is NOT cost effective to close or combine schools.
- The district is overstaffed and has too many buildings for the number of students. Close buildings to reach 80% capacity use for the remaining ones, instead of current 48%. Increase class sizes to be closer to state limits to reduce staff costs. Pursue merger with Montpelier-Roxbury as a longer-term objective, but don't delay other changes in the meantime.

- Sounds like three elementary schools with 6-12 at U32 is good plan but feel Montpelier should be part of this as it is a obvious solution to both district's financial problems.
- A separate middle school building so that the move to a larger community is not so jarring for our sixth graders.
- Option 1: 2-3 pre K to 5th grade Elementary Schools located at East Montpelier and Berlin (if 3 elementary schools, add Rumney). One 6-8 Middle School & 9-12 High School at U-32. Option 2: same for elementary configuration, but for middle and High combine with Montpelier for 1 combined Middle School at Montpelier High and 1 combined High School at U-32.
- Track students. Some need more help than is offered, other students are just plain bored and not reaching their potential.
- Seriously explore merging with Montpelier so that busing students to a facility dedicated to skills-based curriculum might be feasible. With a larger student population, students can be channeled toward a curriculum they are better suited for.
- I do not feel you need to reconfigure the schools. I think the priorities can be achieved without closing any elementary school or combining middle school grades. Schools are the heart and soul of a town, when you close them, a part of the town dies.
- Train nurses in counseling so you can combine the two positions and keep Doty open. You can also make Doty a magnet school for STEM or international languages, nature studies, etc.
- Keep k-3 in small schools and put 4-8 in bigger schools such as u32. In the small k-3 schools open remained as rentable community space. Such as exercise programs food services, adult education places, stores, post offices. Rent space not needed by k-3 to other community building groups.
- Keep younger children in their communities. Use extra space in schools to have areas of special focus for middle school kids and possibly high school. So one elementary school could focus on arts, one could focus on sciences, etc.
- Retaining small schools in respective villages, but combining after school programming, and / or some instructional time (for example, students bus to another school 1x a week for theater instruction). Or, Community schools that leverage members of the community for instruction on a volunteer or part time basis (for example, for instruction in art, counseling, or nursing). In this model, instruction could be expanded to include more "life skills" (carpentry, cooking, etc) instead of only conventional classes. Or, combining more age groups into one class in small schools.
- Close Doty and Calais. They are too small.
- I like the ideas of teachers and administrators that wear multiple hats and have multiple roles, of maintaining multi-age classrooms, of checking to see what Calais is thinking about their school closure and potentially sending Calais kids to East Montpelier and Worcester, of combining with Montpelier/Roxbury (especially if this gets them a high school out of the floodplain and the Winooski regains a key floodplain), of changing or expanding offerings to better match the size of our schools - - - really, all the ideas BEFORE shutting down a school with nearly 80 students in it.

- Maintain local, community schools.
- I like the idea of sending 6th graders to U-32. My son was beyond ready for a change by 6th grade. I cannot envision sending pre-K or K students on a bus for any extended length of time. The bus rides tend to be filled with unexpected language and conversations from older students. Most behavioral write-ups occur on the bus in my school district. I think reconfiguration of 6th graders or merging Montpelier High with U-32 is a better option than closing Elementary Schools.
- I've heard a lot of interesting configuration ideas floated publicly: more shared administrative positions, multi-role teachers/administrators, mergers with Montpelier/Roxbury, the formation of a Board of Cooperative Educational Services with another district (e.g. Montpelier/Roxbury), turning to a Community School model for small schools like Doty, etc. My hope in supporting some or all of these ideas is not to find a silver bullet that seamlessly address all of the identified criteria, but to instead encourage the board to expand their definition of a successful configuration to include models with significant community support and buy in.
- Keeping all schools open, but bridging Doty and Calais with some school choice and maybe turning Doty into the upper elementary grades? If we can't populate the whole school (seems like we do just fine with that given that we've had some low numbers from year to year), can the school building offer something else for the community that would complement the school? We all know taxes are going up regardless, so let's keep the school going.
- Agree with investigating ideas already raised such as high school consolidation, etc.
- Focus on the objective which is to provide the best education in the most effective and efficient way
- Merge schools that make sense. Maybe East Montpelier and Calais. Don't be the next Roxbury fiasco, where they should have merged with Northfield but didn't.
- This question assumes one agrees with these priorities and is, therefore, flawed.
- You're not ready to proceed with reconfiguring schools until you have that long-range plan, which will provide durable guidance for moving around students, grades, and schools. Work out the plan first. The rest will follow.
- The best idea I can think of would be to close all the elementary schools, build another building to fit kids across the district to one location ( near U32 ) with a middle school 6 to 8 . Consolidate the bussing to this one central location
- Form a Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) to share services and programs across multiple Supervisory Unions and/or Supervisory Districts (e.g., with Montpelier/Roxbury). Act 168 of 2024 created the BOCES concept as a way for larger consolidated supervisory districts like WCUUSD to achieve even greater cost savings and economies of scale by sharing services across multiple SU's or SD's using a community school model. The Board is legally mandated to consider and vote on whether to pursue the BOCES model anyway (see Act 168 of 2024), so it makes sense to do that now as part of configuration proposals. 2. Merge with Montpelier/Roxbury, have Montpelier/Roxbury 6th-12th graders go to U32 and their pre-k through 5th graders go to Doty and or Calais and keep those smaller schools open.



- I think we should merge with Montpelier schools. My kids felt that their schools were too small, with too few social, academic and other-enrichment options. Also so small that it was hard to avoid the impacts of cliques, gossip and a few really lousy/incompetent faculty and staff members. Having a larger school district and fewer elementary schools, each with more students would be more fiscally appropriate and would improve the school experience for our kids in my opinion. This is probably a really unpopular idea
- close Doty and Calais elementary / keep Berlin due to location in a large district for family convenience. 6th grades to U32.
- I am also okay with sending 6th grade students to u-32 and consolidating elementary students to Middlesex, East Montpelier and Berlin. I am not okay with converting Berlin to an early education center. It is one of the larger schools in the district. Why bus all those kiddos somewhere else? Does that really accomplish the goals as stated?
- Combine schools where possible.
- Continue to talk with Montpelier schools about merger
- We clearly need to consolidate and Calais and Doty are most likely. I do want to look at all our school buildings and understand if any have significant maintenance concerns - like known PCBs, deferred maintenance - that should be considered when selecting structures to house our merged student body.
- See above. More fully utilize community expertise to discuss these issues.
- Streamline administrative positions and share some of this workload to free up funding for the priorities. Reconsider the benefits of sharing some position duties/specialties. Look for other funding, such as the Dept of Health for support.
- Hiring a qualified EMT instead of a nurse (less expensive), part-time counseling, some shared positions. Note: I am in favor of enrichment opportunities.
- Coordinate with CVCC, which currently needs more space and provides educational opportunities for our students. If rolling in preschool kids (ages 0-4) helps meet our overall goal, this could be added in each of our five existing elementary schools rather than consolidating such a program at Berlin. Consider uses/purpose of ALL of our buildings. This includes 5 current elementary schools, 1 current Junior HS/HS, and a current supervisory union building (any others?).
- Closing Doty and Calais and having those students go to Rumney and E. Montpelier, respectively, so reducing our elementary schools from 5 to 3. Also, consolidation of Montpelier HS and U-32 HS should be considered, allowing for MSMS to close and go into the existing MHS. These are the tough decisions, but we are in a critical time of change. I am at the upper income bracket and am older and can afford the incredibly high taxes, but many of my neighbors can't, and I get it. New families will not be able to move into this area anymore unless we do some transformative, risky, and effective things. Many positives can come from school consolidation. PLEASE consider this instead of cutting excellent, existing programs like Spanish, Music, Theater, the Arts, etc. Another idea for the leaders...be frank with people. We're all in this together. These are the financial constraints we are dealing with. No one is going to get exactly

what they want, and we have to compromise to come to the best solution that works for everyone.

- I don't agree with the priorities and they are so vague that I'm having a hard time supporting them. I do not see these goals as a way to improve education for students in this district. I see this goals as a pathway to close schools. I have failed to see the problem that these small schools bring. What is the problem? When asked the board just goes back to these priorities, but I don't hear the people in these communities saying there is a problem? Why is there this disconnect? So to answer this question, I see these priorities as the problem and I don't want to give ideas on how to reach them. I don't see small schools as a problem, the board does. Honestly the board is not made up of educational experts and it is shocking to see them making decisions like this that don't seem to be educationally sound.
- I like the idea of 3-4 elementary schools and the 6th graders heading to the middle school. I also think that including Montpelier HS in the discussion might make some good sense though that may be a much longer discussion.
- --Place-Based Education is a thriving field. It has proven results in improving educational outcomes (see models at Shelburne Farms, Antioch New England, and elsewhere). Whatever the configuration, celebrate and invest in expertise from this field. It helps schools work together with students, families, and residents to experience what it means to be a citizen. Rather than attempt to invent a new "identity" for merged schools, respect and invest in our towns' existing identities, community traditions, local knowledge, history, landscapes, and landmarks. These are the places the students come from. This can be done in a joined, celebratory manner. --Keep youngest students (especially pre-K and K) in their hometowns, allowing some part of each school to stay open. This allows for an age-appropriate scale of socializing, and a place-based, community start for young families emerging into parenting and adult community life.
- There should be a grading system on the teachers each year. For there ability to teach our children.
- At least combine Middlesex and Worcester elementary schools, they're geographically close anyway and this wouldn't generate too much angst over bus times. That would allow for FT nursing and counseling at both schools. Only one principal would be needed allowing FTE for language. The school board will need to come up with a business plan that includes staffing changes and specific plans for how students are to be best served in any new configuration.
- Fully engage with The Montpelier-Roxbury School Board and explore bringing MHS to U-32. This would possibly allow grade 6 to remain in the elementary schools. However, fully explore closing the two smaller schools and bringing those students to nearby elementary schools.
- I like the idea of moving 6th grades to U32, I think it makes sense both financially and from a social/developmental/educational standpoint.
- I would like each school to go back to having their own board and budget. Local control. I feel that consolidation is not working.



- Organize the district so that students attend the school that is closest to their home where there is less driving or transporting of students. For example, bring children who live in Calais, but closer to Doty, to Doty.
- Cut middle management jobs. Give the tax payers a break for a change. we are not your piggy bank.
- We need to close two of our elementary schools and reconfigure how the district's elementary and middle school instruction is delivered.
- Could Montpelier high school and U-32 merge? Montpelier's school is located in a flood zone and U-32 is not at capacity. Could a merge solve a lot of downstream problems? Could Berlin elementary move 6th grade to U-32? Would this make a difference?
- Consolidate Worcester and Calais elementary schools to Rumney and East Montpelier. Maintain Berlin, Rumney and East Montpelier Schools. They have all had recent up grades and should be more efficient buildings. Keep preschools at these locations so younger children are with their elementary school siblings. If schools will be at capacity move 6th grade to U32.

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider consolidating students with high levels of special needs to one campus with specialized instructors that are able to serve them better and not be duplicative of positions/resources across all schools</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would look for a solution that does not include closing all the elementary schools. There will be a lot of opposition in each of those towns to that. We must develop a model that's financially sustainable which the current tax rates are not. This model has to include declining enrollments over time</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If saving money is a priority, I think it should be listed. There should also be an indication of what amount of savings is considered enough to warrant a change in configuration</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would increase the elementary and middle school physical education. Currently we do not meet state requirements for middle school physical education.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am surprised that there is no additional priority regarding cost savings since this is a finance committee.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased mental health supports in the schools targeted toward minimizing the frequency if aggressive and unsafe behaviors</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing -- community buy-in to decision-making; community engagement in the schools day to day; transportation and logistics impacts from any changes; if cost savings are a priority, that should be stated clearly; prioritize classroom staff/resources over administration</li> </ul>                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep early elementary local. Say, preschool and grades 1-3 or 4. Accept small class sizes or multi-grade classrooms as the norm. Better launch for literacy. Build local community and support for the larger school district by honoring the local community.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing elementary schools to adapt to the needs of their students, and allowing students to choose the school that best fits their needs</li> </ul>  |

### **What is exciting about this process?**

- Nothing
- NOTHING
- Nothing. Closing smaller schools primarily if efficiency is short-sighted.
- Creating more enrichment opportunities for students and stable classroom sizes for children and staff.
- Having our say and remembering what is important to our community and it's children.
- Cost saving?
- Norah would love to have Spanish lessons again. Additionally, a lot of parents in the area have expressed stress related to lack of Pre-K child care. Providing more access has potential to improve the community workforce in much needed areas such as healthcare.
- That there is opportunity to improve our educational offerings while reducing costs
- There is ABSOLUTELY NOTHING exciting about this process. This survey question is without empathy. Shame on you.
- Important for both educational and financial reasons to close schools with very small enrollment.
- The opportunity to consolidate supervisory unions and to shift their role into more of a resource-provision, advisory-one. This is bigger than can be done in the SU, because it needs to be -- the problems are systematic and statewide if not nation-wide
- Very little having been through it as an employee. As a resident, the only thing mildly interesting to me is other ways to use the building that benefit the community.
- I am excited about the potential for expanded arts and language programs in our schools. Offering more opportunities for students to engage in creative and diverse subjects can greatly enrich their educational experience. Additionally, children in the smallest schools will benefit from having a larger pool of peers, increasing their chances of finding good friends.
- The ability to not only save money, but to allow our students a full and enriching education. I think consolidation and restructuring will also allow for future benefits/additional services potentially.
- Equitable and protected access to needed opportunities be it core education, art, extracurriculars, or mental health and nursing
- Addressing deficiencies in the district + high taxes
- A true 6-8 middle school is a great idea and honestly necessary- 6th graders should not be lumped in with 1st graders and 7th graders should not be lumped in with high schoolers. More funding going to less schools may mean more opportunities for students.
- Our numbers have been dropping for years and we have basically hidden our heads in the sand. I am glad we are facing up to the reality. Kids and parents need good schools but taxes cannot keep going up.
- having a chance to problem solve with the community

- The possibility that the community will triumph over bureaucrats
- Nothing is exciting about closing Doty
- No comment
- I agree all students should receive the same opportunities, resources and staffing. It could be an opportunity to switch things up without any of the towns losing their school. Maybe it becomes something else but it remains a community connection. I often thought it would have been wonderful to have a school for kids who needed extra support. So many kids get pushed along when they need more than a regular small school can provide. Early intervention, that sometimes doesn't exist in smaller schools with less resources.
- Lowering taxes, meeting the need of our whole community and re thinking the normal.
- We have the chance to define what are communities will look like for the coming half century. It's a once in a lifetime decision for our beloved central VT communities. Public pre-K and early child care services are also exciting. We have two kiddos in this age range. We currently are sending them to partial week daycare in Randolph due to affordability and availability of early child care. Having the union provide care at this age will offer more young families opportunities for full time employment whilst also allowing for downward pressure on private tuition rates.
- The opportunity to solve more than one problem for the community. Make childcare more affordable and show other schools in Vermont how to be creative in solving problems.
- The involvement of the Worcester community shows how important Doty is.
- How involved the Worcester community is. It is clear that people care enough
- Being from Worcester, nothing is "Exciting" about this incredibly unfair process. Exactly how did we get to this place where the stiff recommendation is to close the heartbeat of our town? Who is demanding this must be part of a new configuration for our town. It's a horrible idea and greatly unwanted. I find this question offensive and totally clueless of the damage this would do to Worcester.
- Nothing short of a 25% reduction in my property taxes
- Fewer elementary schools with more full-time staff will better serve our students.
- Giving children equal opportunity in their education. Providing greater class size and interaction with more students.
- The opportunity to revitalize all educational environments by opening minds and making things better for students and the community
- Gives an opportunity to get kids in the right places (6th graders should be in middle school) and to get enough students in the elementary schools for more energy and more opportunities.
- While small schools are quaint and parents love the concept, slightly larger school populations add value for students socially, academically, and in extra curricular activities.
- Larger groups of similar age kids for all students in our district.
- Larger class sizes with more collaborative opportunities for the kids and the ability to expand educational offerings in art, music, language, etc.

- Expanded specials opportunities, extracurriculars, ECO, Spanish, avoiding mixed age classrooms that don't make sense (and maybe still doing some that do), more kids that my kids can be friends with!
- Letting go of the past and creating a new education system is tremendously exciting and super fun! Let the children lead the way!
- Moving 6th graders to U32 might have some educational advantages
- The opportunity to possibly come up with a great, detailed, extensive plan that can be worked on the next 2-3 years before starting the merge and 6th graders at U32.
- It's not
- Better Allied Arts opportunities for all kids.
- It is good that we have started a conversation, but I do think we are focused on the wrong things.
- The idea that we could get to a point where our school funding is stable
- Exciting: taking this once-in-a-generation opportunity to reconfigure BOTH our districts into one. Save on the administration. Decommission the current MHS building as it is flood-prone anyway. Share the costs across a broader population base. Talk is great, but let's have the two districts collaborate on hiring an independent analysis of the question. We taxpayers deserve to learn the findings of such research.
- Nothing. The bloated and self serving bureaucracy that is the supervisory union is tragic. It is the same across the state. Student per supervisory union ratio is out of line while academic performance continues to decline.
- Very little, I'm afraid. I have favored top-down consolidation of district administration for many years. Montpelier, Barre, U32 (and even more?) could/should be overseen by a single superintendent. At the time of Act 46, many (including me) spoke about this in hearings and were callously dismissed. Oddly enough, much of that law was informed by input from the VT Superintendents' Assn. It would be laughable if the situation weren't so dire. Like every Education law passed in recent memory, lip service is paid to easing the tax burden while residents bite the bullet on structural changes that wrest local control from our hands, promising economic efficiency that never materializes.
- That there are opportunities to add educational value to our schools and revitalize/improve Doty and Calais Elementary Schools. That the Board can still take a hard look with a more open mind to explore creative options for serving our students better in the long term. That some really good ideas are coming out of this public process, and that the Board may do the work needed to examine them carefully and push back on the pressures to "reconfigure" in this manner.
- Students have access to a better education and hopefully reduction in costs thus saving tax payers!
- It's not exciting. There are hard decisions to make that will have significant impact on people's lives.
- NOTHING!!!!
- Better ways to control cost and keep a high quality education
- It would be really exciting if it cut the budget. Expenses ate out of control especially for a school population that is declining.

- Not much honestly
- Refreshing our educational system and resources to better serve our students in a changing demographic. Stronger programs and more students in each grade to allow for more social diversity and different friendships.
- A chance to enrich the education depth. Foreign language at the ES level.
- Nothing.
- Nothing. Your assumptions pre-decide your options.
- There is an opportunity here for the school board to listen to the ideas of community members and get creative about the way to solve the problem of small schools and difficult budgets, without just shutting down schools.
- Being able to keep offerings for our kids if we right-size.
- It's been amazing to see Worcester residents come together around the project of supporting and exploring the future of Doty. I've met people I haven't met before, connected with other Doty parents in new ways, come to appreciate aspects of Doty's role in our community in new ways, and felt a true sense of community. I was excited to see so many people wearing red in support of Doty at Worcester's 4th of July celebration, and appreciated the calls of "We love Doty!" as we marched. I actually marched just behind the Doty crew, with the young kiddos in Vanessa Weinstein's Worcester Sprouts daycare and preschool program - - all wearing Doty red, because those kids are literally the future of Doty. I've been excited to see local and statewide news media pick up the story of our community's support for Doty. I've been excited to meet some of our school board members and learn the history of Doty and education in Worcester.
- Considerations for enhancing educational opportunities are always exciting. The Educational System needs an overhaul, and this is not what I mean by that. This is hauling us into another problem down the road.
- I am heartened by the community engagement I have seen among my neighbors in Worcester. I think this conversation has re-ignited people's passion for high quality, community-based education. I am confident that no matter the outcome, my neighbors will work to make sure our children are getting the best possible education.
- Change, things evolve, hopefully for the better.
- Although many residents (including myself) were surprised that the conversation to potentially close Doty was occurring, over the past month or so it seems to have gained strong community engagement as more residents became aware of the topic and the timeline.
- The trend lines driving this process have been around for many years. Good to finally begin to deal with it.
- An opportunity to tune the good work schools are doing even further. More Art, Music, Language opportunities.
- The only thing exciting about this process is the fact that it has brought Worcester residents together in what I perceive as our determination to keep our village school open and to help it – and our children and our community – thrive.

- Not much. One feels one is being hustled rather than being seriously consulted on the range of difficult, interrelated questions that involve the organization and funding of our schools.
- That kids may have more opportunities and experiences than many are currently getting.
- I like the opportunity to engage with my immediate community in my small town and talk about how we want to educate our children collectively.
- The opportunity to bring the cost of education in line with the available resources
- a more equitable education for all kids in district. Students in the very small schools have more opportunities in all areas, including socially
- Nothing. I find it full of anxiety.
- More diversity and community.
- Good to see the outreach to community, hope you listen
- 6th grade should be moved to U32 ASAP. 9 years in these small schools is too long. Consolidation gives our students more consistent opportunities - in classrooms and beyond. Teams, clubs, even friendships. This consolidation also primes our district to consider other merger opportunities. Perhaps with Montpelier to allow for a real middle school apart from high school.
- Nothing. Outrageous tax increases have been proposed, school closures, and the loss of local control via consolidation. Act 46 has resulted in no significant changes. The conversation is really about reducing human and physical resources, not about making changes that will enhance services. Beneath the smoke and mirrors the focus is negative and reductionist.
- We are finally having the discussion about how to move forward.
- I appreciate being asked about the process
- Collaboration and problem-solving-new directions-responsiveness
- What's exciting is that, because we are at a critical moment, we can stop thinking like we have always thought and try and be innovative and build something new. You simply cannot make everyone happy. Change is hard. There may be low morale when you go through change. And that is hard for any leaders and stakeholders to sustain....it feels icky. But it just might turn out to be that great solutions are realized, and that people slowly see that these were important changes that were made with everyone in mind.
- Honestly nothing, I have been so disappointed by the board, they just keep repeating talking points, but actually don't seem to have any plan, or are able to express what the problem is other than "small schools are bad". The break out sessions are honestly insulting, so many community members have expressed they don't like these and they want to be in a whole group listening to what others have to say. Please listen to the community on this and not Great Schools. You are talking about closing schools, this is a massive deal. The break out groups are anti democratic, each of these towns manages to have a town meeting every year, with a moderator please run these meetings like that (and not a Great Schools moderator , they are not part of our community, they are a consulting firm which does not have the best interest of our



community at heart). I was happy to hear that East Montpelier and Worcester pushed against this format and demanded the group stay together.

- That's a good one;)
- I appreciate your efforts, but I strongly believe we need to take the time to be more creative in our thinking. WCUUSD could break the mold and find a better way to deal with the issues Vermont's schools are facing, possibly based on decentralized models in places like Scandinavia.
- Exciting would be to keep our young kids in our school here in Worcester.
- Opportunities for students to get to know more peers at an earlier age; the ability to keep (or add) language, music, and other remedial and enrichment opportunities; lower costs to maintain fewer schools over time.
- Looking forward to finding courageous and responsible solutions.
- I find nothing exciting about this progress. I find it very stressful for parents and for tax payers that do not have children in school.
- That the state will take funding our schools seriously and devise a better system.
- It's an opportunity to deliver better quality instruction at a more affordable cost.
- Nothing is exciting about this process. Parents of young children are reasonably very worried and anxious about the possibility of losing elementary schools within our towns. Every solution should be considered before closing school, though if that does have to happen, how can the district lower the burden this would create on students?
- Level setting and cost containment
- Opportunity to build a future that people can financially support as well as educationally support
- We can allow those students more appropriately supervised and structured physical activity. It will also allow them more opportunities for success in high school physical education which is focused on lifetime physical activity.
- input is solicited
- Finding a solution that is the best for our students and giving all of the students a chance to have allied arts and other opportunities
- Very little, except that people are pushing back against some of the bad ideas that have been offered as suggestions at this point in the process.
- Changing the status quo. School choice

### **What are your fears of this process?**

- Native residents are not being heard. Instead transplants want to change the small school community these towns are built on.
- Loss of local community. Financial outlook based on short term incomplete assumptions and envisioned savings rarely pan out in the long run.
- I worry that the towns losing their schools will see a decrease in property values and a decrease in new families wanting to move to town. In Calais, we have been known for decades as having a wonderful school, that's always been a reason young families



decide to settle in town. Our shrinking enrollment shows that has shifted some, and I fear closing the school will further expedite that process and we'll gradually lose more and more of our younger community members.

- Nothing will happen and all kids will suffer because of the cuts which will be needed to pass a budget next year.
- The communities that lose their schools lose big.
- That option 3 would be approved. 2 Elementary schools is too few, families that live on the edges of Berlin would have terrible transportation options for their children. Berlin Elementary is one of the biggest elem schools and should remain so. Going to 2 Elem make classroom sizes too large in the upper Elementary classes.
- Our children losing - their ties to their community, their right to smaller class sizes and more time with their teacher. Our town losing an asset like a school to encourage new families to settle in our town and keep it growing.
- Our kids in the "middle" will get lost in larger classes and having a 1-2 hour bus ride is depressing...it disconnects students with their community which should be one of the priorities of the board.
- I fear decisions will be made by the board with incomplete information. I fear that the community members will not have the information to make an informed decision. The two school board members at my meeting did not know the answers to the community members questions. That was troubling. I fear we will merge with Montpelier. Montpelier has a school in a flood plain. They are looking at us to bail them out. If we merge will have more administration, more school board members no one knows, and a more distanced and uninformed community. Perhaps Montpelier should close their high school and tuition their students. Montpelier already participates in exchanges with Spaulding, Harwood, and U32, I would imagine many kids would come to U32.
- Commute, commute, commute. Living in Middlesex, it looks like the problems would be limited, but I assume somebody will be hurting. I would assume after school programs would not be impacted? Unfortunately due to my job, we have no one home in the afternoons to pick Norah up off the bus.
- That minority of loud voices will persuade the board not vote for change
- We lose our school.
- Refer to the previous question. Boards tend to focus too much on jargon and process and forget that we are real people and there are real 3- 10 year olds.
- the communities with the least bandwidth to engage end up getting the least services and have the highest cost in time and expenses to participate in their children's education, exacerbating the economic divide between haves and have nots.
- That there will be angry backlash from Worcester and/or Calais residents if their schools are closed.
- That the school board will close schools in the false hope that it will save money. Please read the research. History has shown that this never happens: instead new administrative positions are added, maybe there's a new art class, and there is no savings. At the same time, lower-income kids spend hours on the bus, their families are disconnected from the schools, and poorer towns are further hollowed out.

- Loss of value to homes, loss of sense of community, loss of student center
- I have significant concerns about the potential overcrowding of schools. With more children in each school, there is a real risk that my child's personal and learning needs may not be adequately noticed or supported. Additionally, my child will be starting kindergarten at Berlin Elementary School the same year this consolidation is proposed to go into effect. I am particularly worried about the potential for a chaotic transition, which could lead to poor outcomes and experiences for my child. Especially since there is very little time between when you want to make a decision vs the implementation of the change itself. This is very worrisome. It is crucial that the administration and staff put in extra effort to ensure that each school is thoroughly prepared for this change. This preparation should not only focus on logistics but also on supporting and nurturing the students throughout the transition period. Having some kind of plan prepared and available to show parent would probably help those parents feel more confident in voting yes for any changes. I am VERY hesitant to blindly trust, especially as a parent of an incoming elementary school child. I also hope that we prioritize providing safe and welcoming facilities. It is essential to ensure that school facilities are safe, clean, and conducive to learning for the larger number of kids in the facilities. This includes maintaining well-equipped classrooms, libraries, playgrounds, and other spaces where students can learn and thrive. Or improving these spaces overall.
- That process will be delayed by litigation, blockage by a vocal minority of residents/families
- Loss of community. Loss of reason pursued living in Middlesex.
- That students will not receive the needs they need to learn!!
- We won't address HR costs
- It only looks at what's best for children rather than full community picture. If scenario A is "best" for kids and horrible for the community, that's what the school board will advance rather than scenario B, which may be more of a compromise for all parties.
- Losing our school
- that there will not be a true middle school and 6th grade will be lumped in with highschool. I worry about their exposure on busses, in the cafeteria etc. I fear that closing any elementary school will be such a devastating loss to any town's sense of community. In Berlin, we don't have spirit days, celebrations or a town square like some other communities. In Berlin, our elementary school is the true heart of our town and a lot of what makes our identity. Community members in other towns may feel the same way about their schools. Every town should have the right to their own school, if that's what they choose. I fear that the choice of school closure will some how be taken away with a loophole (such as if Berlin were to change to a pre-K center). I fear the emotional loss and turbulence that school closures will cause many of the students. 3 months is not enough time to collaborate with other towns and districts nor to make true projections. Many of the conversations being had are without data... the cart is being put before the horse.

- It will end up being more expensive and less efficient. I was very disappointed about the decisions that were made in the E Montpelier building expansion. Nice things but not all necessary. Once things are opened up to take a look at, they can sometimes get a life of their own and good sense is lost.
- that the community won't be listened to
- This over-focus the goals that reflect current educational trends and the money will harm the Worcester community. It will undo a generational school and it will be near impossible to get it back
- Doty cannot be lossed, or forced to comply with a state saturated in new age gentrification. Gross
- Decisions are emotional instead of logical. The financial benefits are weighed more than quality of life.
- An option will be put to vote without the full disclosure of the finances of different options and without the input from town residents being considered.
- Sixth graders being in the same building with Seventh and eighth graders. That Doty School would no longer be the hub of the community. Young families won't move here due to no elementary school. We will lose our sense of place and community building. Worcester students will have long bus rides and the less fortunate will be the ones hurt the most by this. Have you seen a young child ride a bus, unattended, with emotional disturbances? You know how long it takes to regulate his/her behavior after they get off the bus?
- That the connection to community will be lost for our youngest citizens - the connection to where we "live"
- Our solutions are not abstract enough to meet the problem statements. Our solutions are for the next FY instead of for FY 2074. We need to think about long-term goals: childhood education, teacher turnover/retention, resilient financial forecasts to taxpayers, best-in-state education which attracts, rather than dissuades, future growth of tax base in our townships.
- Losing jobs.
- That this survey is useless, that no one will listen anyway, that our town will get bulldozed into whatever is deemed a 'financial priority'
- That Worcester will lose it's identity, and likely \*also\* lose out financially. I have seen exactly this play out in other towns. I fear that this process is actually about making us feel heard, not about hearing us... again because I've seen it before.
- My fears are that our school will be closed. My fears are that 6th graders will be moved in with the older children instead of keeping them in the elementary school where they belong. My fears are that there will be an early childhood center in Berlin to serve our youngest community members. These are all non starters for me.
- You increase my taxes again
- Taxes are high. This year's budget process was hard. If our board doesn't move some hard decisions forward, our schools will see cuts that have negative impacts on our students.
- None. It's important that children have access and opportunities to learn.

- Random decision making without data, residents voting on school closure which can be divisive
- Nostalgic optimism will hinder the progress our students need.
- That our emotions will hold us back from innovative change. I fear that we will find a financial model that shows it doesn't matter, but it does. Having super small class sizes doesn't allow for greater diversity of people or thought.
- Calais and Worcester will vote no and we'll be stuck.
- That there will be push back from Calais and Worcester residents because they don't want their little ones riding busses for too long.
- That school closures are rejected by some towns causing a real decrease in the quality of education that we can provide to all of our students or a continuing increase in costs and probably both.
- My greatest fear is that you will continue to use your current method believing that you'll be able to reduce taxpayer costs while doing the things your goals set out to do. I've been working with education for 30 years from birth to higher ed. You're moving things around on a floundering, old ship. Have the moral courage to dare to reimagine a new education ship.
- Closing schools will destroy a sense of community within the schools and within the effected towns themselves. Yes, as your board chair said, town lines were drawn arbitrarily, but that was more than 250 years ago. Communities grow organically and they grow very slowly. In these communities, we have the equivalent of old growth forests that, for the sake of supposedly large (but yet to be revealed) economic savings and the current educational fad, we are talking about clearcutting. PLEASE take your time with this. Have ironclad data behind whatever proposal you end up putting forward. This plan can not be voted on until we know by what percent our tax bills will go down. And please put in a provision that if the projected savings fail to materialize, then the schools will be reopened. Seems only fair and honest.
- Things are way too rushed. There is not a true middle school for 6th graders. 6th graders are too young and this current cohort that would be 6th graders in the fall of 2026 already missed out at time in elementary school due to the pandemic. They would not be the best class to start with. Loss of community for towns where schools may close.
- There is a huge maturity difference between 6th and 8th graders that I would not feel comfortable exposing my child to. Also when it comes to sports what are you going to do with the 6th graders as most schools in our local area have all 5/6 grade teams.
- Long bus rides for the very young. Loss of newer, engaged teachers.
- I am afraid that we are focused on consolidation as a short cut to improving quality. I have two kids who have been in schools in the district for over five years and I am very unhappy with the quality of the education they are receiving so much so that we are now exploring other options. And this is at one of the "best" elementary schools and now at U32. Both are consistently praised for their work ethic in report cards and yet they are not even or barely proficient in math or ELA. They grasp concepts readily when tutored outside of school so that is not the issue. Equity sounds good, but the

reality is that the curriculum has been watered down for everyone and the neediest students get the lion's share of attention and resources. Even the most seasoned teachers do not have the bandwidth to offer differentiated instruction. I could not even get a teacher this year to keep me in the loop on diagnostic results periodically so we knew where to focus our efforts at home. And this is a teacher I think highly of. She is just being asked to do too much. Students with behavioral issues hijack the classrooms on a regular basis. My youngest in upper elementary had a classmate repeatedly spitting on other students. To my knowledge, this classmate will once again be in a regular classroom come fall. My oldest worked on a big project in an assigned group. They did two-thirds of the work, the second student did one-third and the third student (who is learning disabled) was on Pinterest the entire time. More homogenous groups would have been more challenging for everyone. The 1 to 1 Chromebooks are horrendous. There is way too much time spent on them. I believe that one of the biggest reasons students are struggling to do multi step math problems because they are trying to avoid writing by hand. I have seen this with my own child. They then make silly mistakes trying to do problems entirely in their head. By middle school, the laptop is being used inappropriately during class or being vandalized. There is strong evidence of the deleterious effects of phones. The no phones during class policy needs to be enforced at U32. Take it one step further and mandate that they be in lockers for the entire school day as research has shown that every time it is picked up it takes upwards of 20 minutes to return to task. It would also take the burden off the teachers if the policy were enforced consistently so they could focus on teaching.

- People will lose faith in the education system; towns with schools that close will lose community
- Fear: that due to extreme pressures, we are gutting resources in the wrong place at the wrong time. Look at the demographics. Look at the flooding regularity now upon us. Make decisions that can bring our region to a new level of educational benefit for our kids while making more sense monetarily for taxpayers.
- Nothing will happen.
- My concerns weigh heavily that removing schooling from Doty will disrupt the Worcester community. I would rather see divergence within Rumney which does not hold the same internal community space and would cause less disruption.
- my fear is that salaries of administrators continue to grow and that the supervisory staff become more and more and take up such a high percentage of the budget while student services flail
- See above, I guess!
- That the Board will propose closing both elementary schools without exploring better options, and will not extend the timeline to allow further exploration, including on actual costs and benefits of the alternatives over time. That using terms like "reconfiguration" is misleading to the public, and masks the actual proposal to close two schools. It's hard to serve on a Board, and doing a deeper dive will make it harder. That said, our Board should be serving the public. Not the Administration. That asking

us what our fears are is intended to use survey results to characterize public concerns and resistance as fear.

- NA
- our children will spend more time in being bussed to school, parents unable to attend school functions because too far away.
- That inertia and fear of change will block efforts to make the district educationally and financially sensible.
- That to many people will try and stop it happening the way it should and everyone will suffer for it. It just needs to happen for the better good of everyone not for the minority of the nay sayers
- That it will take too long and that it WILL NOT be a cost saver!!
- I don't want my child attending U32 as a sixth grader. It is far too young in my opinion to be in the same building as seniors at that age. I'm also concerned about our schools being overwhelmed. As it is class sizes are already maxed out in my opinion. I fear losing some of the individual attention and the community feel of our town-based schools.
- That we will keep an outmoded configuration and not do what we need to, so we end up with too many schools with too few students, cutting classes and programs and killing our communities with poor quality education and ever increasing taxes.
- Only financial cuts will be considered at the expense of overall education.
- Having a larger population of students opens better opportunities to address all levels of ability and academic need and achievement.
- People will not feel invested in their schools. The powers that be will continue to consolidate at every opportunity. Student transportation will become an even larger issue.
- You will destroy community for Worcester and Calais and require long rides on the bus for young children. You will disrupt schedules for parents who have no flexibility for work. You will prejudice the process to favor higher income communities like Middlesex, which doesn't want to welcome Worcester children anyway according to rumors.
- Teachers losing jobs in the district.
- That we will lose our school and our community will dwindle and become less vibrant. That we will have not only to pay the same school taxes we have always paid, but will have to pay for our share of spending by other towns (when we have been frugal), which has already happened. That we will, in addition, need to pay for the upkeep on an empty school building and struggle to find an appropriate buyer or tenant. Our taxes, which have already gone up with the unified school district, will go up even more. We are not a wealthy town, and somehow it always seems like the poorer towns get hit the hardest.
- I am concerned that schools are going to be closed as a quick way to save money, but that this will cause serious harm to the region over time as a vicious cycle is created where the character of small towns is degraded, causing further drops in population and a decrease in property values, which will translate into even less tax revenue for



schools, and ultimately either no financial benefits to citizens or additional school closures. I am worried that consolidated schools will offer no greater enrichment for our children or financial benefits, and will only result in a logistical hassle for families, loss of connection between students and their communities, and gutted out villages.

- Dividing the community.
- I am afraid that the board will make decisions too early. By this I both mean too fast, as the timeline outlined by the board does not give time to gather and understand the type of data, information, and resources we need. By this I also mean too fast in terms of statewide public school funding reform, which is underway and is clearly needed. Let's not make decisions that will close schools when in a few years we may be looking at a very different system.
- I fear that little attention is being given to Doty's stable school population numbers. Our numbers have barely declined, if at all. This is not a failing school by any means. It's not even a small school for Vermont. I fear that too much attention is being given to the schools' "capacities," numbers that seem arbitrary, way too high for our region of Vermont, mathematically impossible if you calculate class size using any logical metric, and largely meaningless.
- I fear answering my kids' questions when they ask, "why do you keep talking about closing Doty?" Have you tried answering that question, when a 1st grader who just had an amazing kindergarten experience asks it? My son was sad when the school year ended, because kindergarten was so great. He can't wait to go to first grade with all of his neighbors - - he's not nervous at all, "because I know everyone so well." To be clear, we just moved to Worcester 2 years ago, so we are relative newcomers. Doty has been key to our community integration. This is what small schools at the hearts of their communities do.
- I fear that no one is paying attention to the fact that we're not the only family with young kids that just moved to Worcester. In fact, most of the folks I know in Worcester have young kids and moved to Vermont recently, either as a move back home (as it was for me) or as a climate change refuge. This is reflected across the state, if you look at the most recent census numbers, and is only going to increase. Closing Doty will ensure that none of these families move to Worcester - - keeping Doty open, especially with increased community support sure to come out of this process - - will bring them here.
- I fear that the voices of our district's poorer, smaller towns are going to be lost in this process. Are you listening? Or are you wishing we'd go away? Because we're worried that you're wishing we'd go away, and we're trying as hard as we can to raise our voices in effective, productive, community-minded ways. I fear that Middlesex (and maybe East Montpelier, too) doesn't want Worcester kids and that there will be integration issues, socio-economic divides, and exacerbated inequities. I don't have academic fears with the configurations - - but I do fear what losing Doty will mean for the town of Worcester, even beyond what I've already mentioned about attracting new young families. Gone will be our community hub, our weekend playground spot, our evening meetup spot, our parades, our pancake breakfast, our town meeting spot, and



the list goes on. I hear some voices in Worcester calling for a community hub of some sort, to fill the building if we were to buy it for \$1. We could offer classes, community groups, education, food for those who need it - - in short, I hear people recreating a school, which we already have. Let's stick with what we have.

- I fear that any cost savings will disappear within a few years, leaving us right back where we started with taxes and budget cuts, but without a school. I fear that passing school budgets in the future will be much harder if we consolidate, close schools, and still are faced with tax increases every year. I think the board should very much fear this outcome as well.
- Your proposals do not really represent student or community interests . . . .
- If Doty is closed so students have larger class sizes with peers and to save taxpayers, what happens when the other Elementary Schools need an addition? What about increasing transportation costs and fuel costs? I don't believe my taxes will stabilize with this move and the towns are losing a major asset having a local school. It will actually hurt taxpayers if they want to sell their home.
- I fear that the stated priorities of this process are superficial and incomplete. I think the Core Beliefs of this district are admirable and ambitious, but not being adequately considered in this discussion. I also fear that the process is being driven (at least partially) by fears of increasing costs and more contentious budget fights in the future. I don't think those fears have been honestly voiced and I worry that in basing decisions on them we may allow some of our most vulnerable communities to lose their most valuable assets, only to discover that the fears were either misplaced (i.e. school funding will change) or not addressed (closing schools does not, in the medium to long term, save money).
- Loss of community for our young people primarily, but for all ages who enjoy the school events. I fear that Worcester will be at a major loss without the school.
- Closing Doty will negatively impact the social, educational and personal development of young children from the least economically advantaged communities. Also, it will impact the viability of our community, costs in the form of taxes, and home values (again of an already less economically advantaged community) as new families/potential residents prefer to move to towns where their 6 year old, for example, won't be spending hours on the bus.
- Politics will conflict with the objective and reduce or eliminate benefits.
- Long bus rides, closing schools that are currently community centers. Creating the next Roxbury fiasco.
- I fear we will lose our village school, which many have identified as the heartbeat of Worcester.
- That the board's drive to close schools will alienate voters in the two towns most affected, which account for 25% of the district's population, who may then turn their ire into perennial votes against school budgets. 2. That the board will use school closings to avoid having to adopt desperately needed discipline into the customary budget process.
- That if we don't do something we will have to move because VT is unaffordable

- I fear that the Board will make a decision about reconfiguration without all the necessary data available to it (in particular, the long- and short-term net financial costs of closing Doty and Calais Elementary and the net impact on taxpayers in each town). I also fear that the Board will make decisions without having fully considered all of its available options, such as merger or forming a Board of Cooperative Education Services with another supervisory district.
- An even higher tax burden, lack of substantive change for the better (or lack of change at all)
- difficulty for parents making changes
- I am afraid that Berlin will be converted to a child care center simply because it doesn't require a vote from citizens which makes this the path of least resistance.
- That nothing will happen to resolve the issues.
- it will end up -- Business as Usual -- because that's the easiest, sorry for being cynical but that's what I've seen for years
- Too little of our population has students impacted by these too-small schools to understand their limitations. They falsely believe the school is a town center or its loss will damage property values. We still have the same high school! And, at least in Calais, the school could become a real community center for residents and business folks of all ages. One with a commercial kitchen that is open year-round!
- Lack of data-informed decision-making (see below). A lack of responsiveness and transparency.
- As a long-time Calais resident who does not have children but pays taxes I feel left out of this conversation. I'm a former educator and believe larger classes, opportunities for a variety of specials, and access to a larger friend group are beneficial for all students. I have never, in 30 years, been to the Calais elementary school. It is not the hub of our community. We are hanging on to an idealized past that no longer exists. We are doing a disservice to our students. They need opportunities Calais alone can no longer provide.
- Funding, equity, outside support
- Cost, taxes, decisions...Thank you for your community outreach
- Reconfiguration strategies are moving forward but will likely be rejected by voters (because they may not meet and we have not defined the overall goal) and meanwhile no other plans besides reconfiguration are being evaluated to meet the overall goal.
- We are not acknowledging the primary problem that we are trying to solve which is financial sustainability. If maintaining our current education program/model meant annual budget increases of 3-5% then we wouldn't even be talking about this. My fear is that we aren't being honest and transparent about the problem so the proposed solutions may not solve the problem.
- Change is hard. People may vilify good leaders, and those leaders will leave because the pitchfork-holding screamers just bring you down. It's hard to be vilified day after day and still feel good and that you are doing the best for the community. My fear is that SDP, who is an amazing leader, will also get beat down by the process and leave, even though he is a fantastic person for what is an almost impossible job. Remember

that you can't make everyone happy! I will do my best as a community member to start going to more meetings and reminding people of that. I think that while the priorities are laudable, they may need to be reduced for financial reasons.

### **What questions do you have ?**

- I moved back to this district because I hated the big school feel. What are you going to do to maintain residents like myself? A parent of 5. I have an infant that will be a future student.
- Could the early education center end up being a source of revenue which would further help the school budget?
- In option 3 what is the reasoning behind the 2 Elementary school locations? Where would Berlin kids(1st grade-5th) have to go to school, East Montpelier or Middlesex?
- With option 3, was the Berlin town development plans for a city center and proximity to hospital taken into account? As Berlin develops the area, my understanding with housing and business, more families means keeping Berlin Elementary a prek-5 makes more sense.
- Where are the numbers that make this financially the best option supposedly? We need more information!
- What savings will moving the 6th graders to U-32 generate and is it worth the disruption? Could it be optional?
- What would the costs, if any, of renovations that may need to be done at U32 to accommodate moving 6th graders to U32? Be specific.
- What would be the costs, if any, of renovations that would need to be done to East Montpelier Elem. to accommodate the Calais students? Be specific.
- What would be the costs, if any, of renovations that would need to be done to Rumney Elem. To accommodate the Worcester students? Be specific.
- Does our school district have a policy regarding the maximum and minimum number of students in grades K through 6 and for U32? If so, what is the policy? What are the maximum and minimum numbers the policy states? Be specific.
- Do the Educational Quality Standards of the Agency of Education suggest a maximum and minimum number of students for grades K-6 and U32? If so, what are the maximum and the minimum that the AOE states? Be specific.
- What is the size of the smallest class at U32? Is this too small? If it isn't too small for U32, why is it too small for an elementary school?
- How long will PK kids be on busses to attend PK in Berlin?
- Are there any increased bussing costs?
- Is there time in the school day to add World Language in the elementary schools? Has there been a time study? What other subjects will be reduced to accommodate World Language? Will the school day be increased? Be specific.
- Just those addressed above for now. Thank you all for being so thoughtful through this process.

- Which scenarios set us up best for merger with Montpelier and potentially other districts? Why?
- One comment: Doty is the ONLY elementary school that shows an INCREASE in FY25 enrollment.
- What are the specific tax savings that Worcester residents would see with this consolidation? What is the five year projection of savings? What is the 10 year projection?
- What are your sources of information? Where are you obtaining the facts and data that inform your conclusions? I've noticed that the FAQs do not cite any sources.
- Are you reviewing reports from the Department of Education? Is your decision-making process informed by reports and recommendations from the Department of Education?
- What evidence supports your decisions? Everything I've read so far seems to lack substantive backup. Can you provide more transparency regarding the evidence and research underpinning your proposals?
- Are you gathering feedback from teachers? How are you incorporating the insights and feedback from teachers and other educational staff into your planning?
- None at this time
- How can you better address that this problem didn't arrive overnight to all the folks who are so opposed to ongoingly increasing school budget (which is needed!). This is the result of years of lack of increase and support and loss of pandemic era funds.
- Who comes up with this craziness???
- Is there fear in addressing HR salary + benefit costs?
- Where are the numbers, the metrics, the empirical evidence that warrants the radical idea of closing community schools?
- None
- Is it a guarantee that 6-8 would have a truly separate middle school if 6 moves to u32? What would that look like? Would they bus together?
- If class size doubles at Berlin, will resources double as well? Teachers are overwhelmed with behaviors; students who want to learn are overwhelmed with behaviors...I fear that adding students and not staff would be detrimental. Guidance counselors are extremely busy, many students have the serious need for accessible counselors; will another be added to the payroll if our school size doubles?
- What is the plan to help ease and guide students through this transition? Teachers? Administrators? Will there be a team to help each group through transitions?
- What will happen with the empty buildings?
- How much will it cost to totally rebrand a combined school?
- what's next
- Why are you not looking at how to keep Doty open.
- Where is the data that proves the quantity numbers of students at Doty is likely to drop in the future years? More people are moving to Vermont and small towns like Worcester now more than ever, and with lots of money! Give it two years and the school will see a boom, I'm sure!

- Has a robust, professional, peer reviewed assessment of the financial benefits for each option been performed? Has this study from Yale been considered and used as an example for how to do this analysis? <https://vtdigger.org/2024/06/05/a-yale-grad-from-newport-studied-vermonts-school-mergers-she-found-they-dont-save-much/>
- How will you ensure input from residents goes into the final plan that goes to voters? Has this study been used as an example for assessing proposed changes?  
<https://vtdigger.org/2024/06/05/a-yale-grad-from-newport-studied-vermonts-school-mergers-she-found-they-dont-save-much/#:~:text=Vermont's%20school%20mergers.-,She%20found%20they%20don't%20save%20much.,school%20districts%20across%20the%20ste.>
- Is this set in stone or is their flexibility?
- Why were only 6 months allocated in the process for the reveal to the public and their feedback before it would be voted on?
- How do we help ensure that what we do as an education system does not negatively impact the communities our children live in?
- Is selling the closed schools for \$1 to the town where the school is located the best and only approach? Is that a form of quid pro quo that needs to be reviewed as such?
- Is selling for \$1 best for the current financial picture of the union? Couldn't the union do better short term on salvage value of these assets?
- Would the towns in our union potentially benefit more if a private buyer, able to afford the overhead to run the facility, be a better suited buyer for such a large building?
- The nightmare scenario would be having Doty and Calais turn into scary and dangerous, blights of a past generation left to disintegrate into our collective memories of what raising a family in central VT used to be.
- If you would like to talk more about this idea reach out [Kyle.Beckett.lewis@gmail.com](mailto:Kyle.Beckett.lewis@gmail.com) (kyle Opuszynski)
- What is the actual breakdown of the financial cost of closing doty vs keeping it open?
- I would like to see a document spelling out exactly why these priorities matter, including financial models with citations of similar situations in other school systems to back the predictions... signed by the teachers and lower level administrators who understand the current operation of Doty.
- Who's bad brainchild is the idea to close Doty? Why is this being pushed as the solution instead of taking the time to come up with a better solution? Why have we been forced on to this extremely fast paced time table?
- What are the financial projections?
- Will this save money as well as be beneficial for the students?
- Why has this taken so long when the writing has been on the wall for years?
- Will you consider changing the articles of agreement if school closure votes fail?
- When will we know how much closing these schools will save us? Will you promise to reopen any school that was closed if promised tax savings turn out to be mythical?
- Is it possible that this could all happen in 2-3 years after many plans are in place rather than jumping in too fast before there are solutions for EVERYTHING.

- What will happen if the board decides to go through with everything and Worcester and/or Calais doesn't vote to close the school?
- If the middle school will be made into a true middle school will they have their own cafeteria?
- How will 6th grade sports run? There are not many (if any) 6th grade teams. Most are 5/6. It wouldn't be fair to the 5th or 6th graders. And if the 6th graders were to join sports with 7th it wouldn't be fair to either in those grades as well.
- According to the capacity information and the enrollment information it appears schools could merge without moving 6th graders. Why is this not an option to consider?
- I think this is being rushed and I don't think having 6th graders move over to a middle high school is what's best for them.
- Can you add links to the FAQ to the messages in FPF? (If they are there already, I apologize.)
- Can we please focus on things that will actually improve quality? And please stop hiring consultants to generate these ideas. The goals that were also generated by consultants are not good goals. They are more like mission statements. They are not specific, measurable, achievable, realistic or time bound. A goal would be "increase assessment scores by 5% in math for fifth graders by 2027". "Build and nurture a community of wellness and inclusivity" sounds nice, but a goal it is not.
- When are we going to decide?
- Why are drastic "fixes" (i.e., school closures) being considered BEFORE commissioning an independent study that fully explores the question of the possible merger of U32 and Montpelier districts? We are talking about pulling the plug before we have done the work.
- Thank you.
- None.
- Is there any chance that the board will postpone this process and instead pursue top-down consolidation first? I feel that should be a state-wide priority before we decimate towns by closing schools.
- Can you extend the timeline for talks with Montpelier and more research into options, costs and benefits? This slide deck is very nice, but lacking in substance and cites. Prioritized modeling was to close at least one school? Why? What are ideal class sizes, and how were they determined? Aren't there some benefits to slightly smaller classes? Will busing students around the district ensure that they have more enrichment opportunities, top-notch teachers and enough of them, good special education and other support services, and really vibrant and vital school communities? Will moving pre-K to Berlin reduce accessibility for families? Is this part of the cost-cutting plan? Why did our SU & Board let things get so bad in terms of over-small class sizes and lack of enrichment opportunities? Don't we look at that sort of thing and address it to better serve our students? No disrespect intended, but it seems unfair to say now, look how bad it is when really it's the Board's/admin's job to ensure good educational experiences district-wide. Wasn't that a key goal of Act 46? Did specials teachers leave because they were small



FTE, or because the writing was on the wall that these smaller elementary schools were slated to close? So many questions.

- Why haven't the costs simulations been completed for possible reconfiguration options? And why hasn't the board moved faster seeing as the "cliff" of declined enrollment has been known for over 5 years now?
- So when there are more "bubbles" of kids, what do you do, add on the schools? What is to become of the closed schools?
- Other than why has it not been done already no
- Is this really going to happen or change anything??
- Why hasn't this information been shared with the school parent community directly??? For those who are not on FPF or read the signpost, they may have no idea that this is happening. I think it's highly irresponsible the way this has been handled.
- Finally, I would like to know if it's possible for a separate building to be used for grades 6-8? That would ease my fears substantially regarding the early transition to middle school,
- When will a decision be presented to the communities and how will a final choice be made?
- Greater financial disclosure of the cuts and their impact.
- How can we save on administrative costs? Include savings at the supervisory union level please. Can we have more transparency with the staffing and budget for the central office? What savings could be afforded through a merger with Montpelier?
- Will the district representatives really take into account the citizen's desires? I just see the same talking points over and over. I feel like they have already made their decision.
- How much money will you actually save once you factor in transportation costs and "enrichment" activities? Why aren't there any options that keep Doty open?
- A suggestion: if towns lose a school, the district takes on the upkeep for a specified period of time, as well as assisting in finding a buyer or alternate (income-producing) use for the school. If we lose the school to benefit the rest of the district, it is only fair that the rest of the district shares the cost of the building with us.
- What enrichment opportunities will my child receive after consolidation, that aren't available now? What will the cost of the additional load on consolidated schools be (for example in increased transportation needs, increased staff, increased maintenance, etc), and taking that into account, what will the net cost savings be? What is being done to address state funding shortages and the rising cost of health insurance for teachers?
- I'd love to hear more from younger people who actually have kids in the schools rather than those age 70+. Yes, their kids went to Doty in the 1980s and they loved it. But Doty was twice the size then. These folks are well-intentioned but do not understand school financing in 2024, the budget pressures, or the size of our student body. How can we engage with parents? Actual parents of kids in school.
- I'd like to ask you to please consider moving forward with filling the vacant Worcester seat on the school board. Julia Hewitt has submitted her materials. I'd encourage the board

to take a look at your bylaws and figure out how to fill that seat as immediately as possible.

- What will the household tax savings be for the various configurations, at various property values, in years 1? 3? 5? 10?
- What expanded allied arts are we talking about? If we don't close Doty, what will be cut?
- Can we speed up the conversations with the Montpelier/Roxbury district so that we can better understand those options?
- What if the town doesn't buy the school for \$1? Then what would happen to the building?
- How much will Worcester residents' water costs increase if Doty is no longer on the water line?
- Have the schools across the district been tested for PFAS yet?
- What are the educational outcomes across the schools? How are our students doing? How are their assessments and evaluations and reading and writing and social-emotional learning?
- How are students from Worcester and Calais performing academically in comparison to students of the other district schools?
- I really wonder why we cannot pause. I understand wanting to put it to taxpayers when they would be voting already, yet it feels rushed and irreversible. And based on money really. And I don't believe my taxes will be stable with this move after the first few years anyway.
- My first question is how the board plans to adequately assess the ideas and suggestions that have come out of this community engagement process. The current timeline allows two months between seeking the community's input and identifying a preferred configuration. I see no way, given the board's summer meeting schedule, for the ideas we have come up with and the priorities we have asked to be considered to be assessed in a thoughtful way in such a short time. I also want the Board to present more specific data supporting their configuration alternatives. What specific increased enrichment opportunities do you see as being made possible by closing schools? How do current per pupil spending levels differ between schools? What would closing schools do to those spending levels? How would those savings affect taxes?
- If we aren't saving money (we still have to pay for our Worcester student's education), then what is the major goal of closing 2 schools? If the answer is equity, then I challenge that because equity does not equal. Within one classroom, some will push themselves to achieve and some won't. How do we support the ones who aren't achieving and/or thriving? This is what I mean when I say equity doesn't mean equal. What else can we do rather than combining more kids for a less authentic experience? Small schools offer authenticity.
- Would appreciate the modeling/analytics work on how consolidation is projected to impact the district and Worcester, specifically, over the next 10 years, or so, in terms of cost savings, taxes, etc. once that is available. Additionally, would like to know what thought has been given to an unexpected surge in student population. Prior to living in Worcester, I lived in a town that had a decline in the student population and similarly

closed down an elementary school. Just a couple years later they had to re-open that school as the student population had increased. You can imagine the frustration and economic consequences.

- How would this change sports and rec programs? For example, 5/6 teams, vs 6-8 teams, little league vs middle school teams, etc.
- 1. Why was it the finance committee that determined the board and committee priorities? 2. If the board represents the residents of the five towns in the district, why was community input not sought in establishing these board and committee priorities? 3. What will the financial impact of closing Doty (and Calais) be? 4. What is your plan to share the results of this survey with respondents? 5. What is your plan to ensure that Worcester is fully represented on the unified board and to appoint a third member to the board before the planned August retreat? 6 . Why is this document called "World Cafe"?
- Is this the best idea you have? What about preparing for and prioritizing talks with Montpelier? Isn't this where the real opportunities and challenges lie?
- What are the long-term and short-term net savings, if any, of the configurations the board has proposed? In calculating those figures, what inputs has the Board considered? Have they considered the increase in bussing costs from closing Doty and Calais Elementary, the increased maintenance and wear-and-tear costs on the other school buildings from increased use and capacity, or the decrease in property values and decreased demand for housing that would likely result from closing Doty and Calais Elementary?
- Has the Board considered forming a Board of Cooperative Education Services as provided in Act 168 of 2024?
- Buses go by my home to both elementary and U32 mostly empty/ the lines of cars dropping off and picking up kids are amazing. What could be done to save money on transportation?
- How can we make it clear that the numbers just don't work. Highlight our under 50% capacity and beyond! Including the bussing debate. The same routes run to U32, then back to the depot. For some riders, these consolidations will result in shorter bus rides.
- Not only do we already merge by 7th grade, our high school teams are already rostered with students beyond the U32 district. Even this Fall's Stage32 production will draw performers from Montpelier. We are already consolidating in youth sports well beyond our district to field teams. We need to take advantage of those numbers for our education too.
- I have never been able to get a response from the Board about the work that needs to be done in order to make an intelligent decision about school closures. Has the board undertaken a longitudinal enrollment study? Ones that currently exist are old, many terminating in 2025. None take into account changes brought about by COVID and better access to broadband, which may continue to shift population into our communities, Has there been a study done on the potential impact on ratables in communities that no longer have a local school? Has the board determined what it might cost to reopen a closed school? If they need to be brought up to current code to house students if reopened, that could be prohibitively expensive.

- What do the parents of current students attending Calais elementary want for their children?
- To the residents who don't think our students can handle larger class sizes and a bit longer on the bus - what happens when they go to middle school? high school? college?
- Seems like a very small sliver of the issues/concerns for our schools
- Please stay in touch with the community.
- Is anyone seriously looking into consolidation of elementary schools or consolidation of U32 and Montpelier? Do we know what the savings might be?
- Honestly this whole thing is so bungled, what questions do I not have.
- None right now.
- Can you please provide data on the increase in students' transportation time for any scenario that closes schools? How will we remediate students' and families' limitations on engaging in school activities due to increased distances?
- What research has been done to predict the impact on property values in towns where schools have closed?
- Has the board done any research into how place-based culture (not some invented "school identity") can be strengthened, especially if there are school closures?
- We lose home family put to much on our young to handle. Bring back the 7&8 graders back to our town!
- I would really like to know what the statutory, CBA, and other legal requirements are that will provide the parameters for any changes. I assume there are rules regarding staffing, bussing, facilities, etc. that are non-negotiable, but without knowing that it's hard to know what the actual options are. Presenting pre-packaged options to the electorate without setting out where the options came from can lead people to think that any decisions are arbitrary or worse, the result of self-dealing. A simple one-pager setting out that basic info would go a long way.
- Does the school board have the guts to think outside the box?
- Why are we paying more taxes for education while the plan is to eliminate schools? Paying more for less does not make sense
- Can the district hold off on any decisions until the committee set up from H 887 makes it final findings in December 2025? I feel it is important to see their final findings.
- Why do you refuse to cut out middle management and help the tax payers?. It is common knowledge that the teacher's union runs Vermont and, you refuse to help out us who pay for all your pie in the sky, liberal ideas. A 26% tax increase this year was beyond reasonable.
- I have attended the virtual meetings and find the lack of organization and communication frustrating. These are HUGE decisions that are being made for hundreds of families. The district needs to do a better job about taking this as seriously as it needs to be and start running these meetings/discussions better. Communication is key and I don't feel that this committee has delivered on that.
- Why can't Berlin leave the district and join Montpelier? Most residents have to drive through Montpelier to get to the elementary school or u32

- Particulars of how the consolidation could work
- To what extent do you think that the Board has a responsibility to consider impacts on the communities where schools are closed like decreased property values and changes in age demographics as fewer families with children are interested in moving to the town?
- What art, music, physical education and world language classes are currently offered at each of the five elementary schools and how many FTE staff positions exist for each subject at each school? What is the cost of these services for each subject at each school?
- What allied arts classes would be offered if the configuration models being considered by the Board are implemented? What would the cost of services at each school be under the new configuration models?
- What is the current system for and cost of special education and Multi-tiered System of Supports services at the five elementary schools?
- What changes in this system would be made if the configuration models being considered by the Board are implemented? How would this affect the cost of these services in the district?
- What is the per pupil cost for each of the elementary schools under the current district budget?
- How many children in each of the five elementary schools are counted toward the weighted pupil enrollment as opposed to the number of students who attend?
- For example, Doty is shown as having 78 students, how many weighted pupils are there?
- Are resources for the elementary schools adjusted based on the number of weighted pupils per school? If so what adjustments are made? If not, why not?
- Will the decision to move all 6th grade students to U32 be made independently of the decision/vote to close elementary schools?
- When will detailed financial modeling be available to show anticipated savings and anticipated extra costs (transportation, new "enrichment opportunities") for the consolidation proposals?
- What steps will the Board take if schools are closed and the affected towns do not exercise the option of buying the schools for \$1?
- How would this configuration impact our class grade arrangement? Would we possibly have split grade classes in middle school?
- Since the legislature started this process as a way to save money/decrease school taxes, what state or local multi-year data (at least more than one year's data) exists that consolidation actually saves money? Why are central office administrators never cut? Why is it only teacher's position face cuts? If schools are closed what will be done with the buildings and property?
- There is talk of merging our 5 schools, but there is also talk of Montpelier merging with U32...are both of these things happening?
- Thank you for setting up this survey.
- Can we just eliminate the district and give all families school choice











\*\*\*All notes have been received as of 7.25.24. This document reflects notes received and are up to date for 7.31.24.\*\*\*

Administrators and Board Members:

- Alicia, Ursula, Natasha, Daniel, Patrick, Chris, Zach
- Link to the PDF Document: <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1718995122/wcsu32org/qobnzvrxbvftbjmfu0ej/62624Packet.pdf>

**Question 1:** Here are the priorities our finance committee identified. What would you add or change, and why? (Page 19)  
[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1z5cVFjc\\_a8uHxV3lrdzFTu9JlLhZQtLNjs0smzndN4/edit#slide=id.g1efa333a3ad\\_0\\_665](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1z5cVFjc_a8uHxV3lrdzFTu9JlLhZQtLNjs0smzndN4/edit#slide=id.g1efa333a3ad_0_665)

Question Notes:	Parking lot notes:
<p>Breakout 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Closing a school has implications for the entire community, not just the students / Children. Need a priority that speaks to the community (Children, elderly, middle agers, all)</li> <li>● Saving tax dollars x2</li> <li>● Minimize bus time - maximize bus efficiency (size, fuel) x2</li> <li>● Optimum class size (25 seems too large for k-3). Is there a minimum? Is the EQS the wrong metric? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The capacity numbers don't seem to add up</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Keep to our pre-K-12 mandate</li> <li>● Quality education</li> <li>● No double digit tax increases</li> <li>● Minimize pitting towns against each other (it's not town against town)</li> <li>● Make the priorities the 5 core beliefs, and hold the board to them in decision making , budgeting and all</li> <li>● Equity in providing a school in kids community rather than in another town. And, towns get to self determine if they close a school to achieve some new service (given cost savings)</li> <li>● Lead with financially sustainability and good education outcomes before discussing closing schools</li> <li>● Be honest that this conversation is about money. If we close a school we'll have more money for services, and show the proof that we will have cost savings.</li> <li>● Keep kids from their town together. Don't split up kids from the same towns.</li> <li>● That every town in the supervisory unit has a school</li> </ul>	<p>Breakout 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Read the 4 priorities to breakout group of 12 people</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Breakout room 3 (Ursula's Notes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Has there been consideration of keeping schools open for the youngest learners (PreK - 3) in each town? [fits with Question #2]</li> <li>● Classes that are too small can be just as bad as classes that are too big</li> <li>● Acknowledgement of declining population/ enrollment, and a request that we are gentle with our approach/ solution</li> <li>● There are difficult decisions they should be buttressed with facts and figures. - Bus times, Pupil #'s &amp; Where the pupil numbers are coming from.</li> <li>● Some of our communication out is hard to understand and we should work to make it more accessible.</li> <li>●</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain vibrant communities</li> <li>• Maximizing use of existing resources before closing schools</li> <li>• Limit tax increases</li> </ul> <p><b>Breakout room 3 (Ursula's Notes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Question 2:</b> What are some ideas for a school configuration that could achieve those priorities? Please be specific!</p>	
<p><b>Question Notes:</b></p>	<p><b>Parking Lot Notes:</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ teachers with multiple hats. 1 FTE, half in library, half in art (or something). Be creative.</li> <li>• Merge schools by grade: p-k to 3 in doty, 4-6 in rumney.</li> <li>• Close and sell admin building and house admin in U32</li> <li>• Move Calas kids to Doty, keep Doty open</li> <li>• Evaluate all school buildings for toxic materials, flood hazard, and longevity</li> <li>• Keep class size near 15, 20 max.</li> <li>• Full time counselor / nurse</li> <li>• Principal / guidance counselor (dual hat)</li> <li>• Combine administrations across multiple schools</li> <li>• Get teachers on the state health care system to save money, it would be a larger pool.</li> <li>• Merge with Montpieler</li> </ul> <p><b>Breakout room 3 (Ursula's Notes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have Magnet schools been considered?</li> <li>• 6th grade moved to U32</li> <li>• In regards to bussing times - consider focusing on pupil distribution to school by proximity and not just town lines</li> </ul>	<p><b>Breakout room 3 (Ursula's Notes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnet schools might not be a “now” solution but something to consider in the future - but usure if it should be a future consideration or if it could work concurrently with our current work/ discussions</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 3:</b> What is exciting about this process?</p>	
<p><b>Question Notes:</b></p>	<p><b>Parking Lot Notes:</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our community is engaged. (12 people in this breakout room!)</li> <li>• 6th grade opportunities by sending them to U32 (Sports, theater foreign languages)</li> </ul> <b>Breakout room 3 (Ursula's Notes)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education isn't one size fits all, having more students in in school/ class, allows for more ways/ approaches to teaching to groups of students</li> <li>• Ability to provide consistent high-level education</li> </ul>	<b>Breakout room 3 (Ursula's Notes)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the enrollment numbers for private school and homeschool? What are the trends?</li> <li>• Each community has its economic situations</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Question 4: What are your fears about this process?</b>	
<b>Question Notes:</b>	<b>Parking Lot Notes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are wasting our time because worcester and callias are not going to vote to close their schools</li> <li>• Poor communication or the perception of poor communication</li> <li>• That the community forums do not affect the process. That the board does not take the community input in mind</li> <li>• That my community loses our school and the town becomes an aging community with less kids.</li> </ul> <b>Breakout room 3 (Ursula's Notes)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will having no school in a town result in limited development/ housing growth</li> <li>• Fear of rushing the process</li> <li>• That the expected monetary saving may not be what the public anticipated</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<b>Breakout room 3 (Ursula's Notes)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At small schools with small class sizes teachers are often in a position to teach split grade levels (eg 3 / 4 math) simultaneously, which ultimately means less lesson time for each grade</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Question 5: What questions do you have?</b>	
<b>Question Notes:</b>	



- What do I get with the property tax increase?
- Are we considering bus cost with the bus time modeling? Need to see cost, time (max and average) for each configuration model.
- Can the board expedite the process for appointing a board member?
- Is there a way that folks that are not online can get involved and have their voices heard?
- Would the Board please communicate how we find ourselves in a reconfiguration conversation?
- How do we evaluate if our kids are getting a good education?
- Please be transparent about the details for the July 17th meeting.

Closing meeting comments (Ursula's notes):

- Please offer school choice when/if we reconfigure. Please be clear about this process.
- Having materials at Town Clerk Offices and perhaps stores is helpful, getting out information for people to know to look for it is important - a postcard or other mailing (sounds like it's too late to mail the survey), letters to the editor, asking people to talk with their friends and neighbors who may not be connected up with the internet and specifically Front Porch Forum - even people on FPF don't all read it daily. I've found it's the older folks who are the voters.
- Thank you everyone for the civil discourse we all participated in tonight. I am disappointed that reconfiguration has even been proposed without first convincing our communities it is necessary, either from a qualitative (i.e. current educational level is sub-par) or financial (too expensive).
- A request that a "last updated" date be added to the online FAQ document each time it is updated.
- Have a stated financial goal [example given was a % increase limit] (fits with Question #1)
- Why does the system need fixing
-

## **Doty Elementary School Notes**

### **Leslie Sabo**

Potential cost savings

What are the savings?

Suggestion for adding our priorities is: Community connection. (We can add that)

**Shawn:** Wonder if we are aware is under 100 year lease

We have recent articles of agreement. That will trump the lease agreement.

Kids question authority and she shares slides about branching out.

He based it all on relationships.

**Anya:** Hopes and dreams. Consider the developmental frame of all of this. What is appropriate for all the kids? (The little kids stay closer)

What is happening with buses and transportation?

What can our kids do?

Social justice lense: Who is going to be bused. The poorest kids.

**Joe:** specific things that we can do to achieve these priorities.

A weird way that we can address the priorities.. Subjective value it is not..we can just change our minds in what is an optimal class size. Expand offering at the cost of what.

I don't think there is any better reason. Saving costs is not a priority we should work on. Rain school(a true story of a very poor rural community in Chad) How to make mud bricks... They are so poor. People living in poverty but they are able to have bricks to build a school. What are the priorities you think we should be looking at?

Contribute to share your creative ideas.

How would we evaluate the ideas? Not fair that we are just being asked now. How can you include those ideas and how are you going to evaluate the ideas?

### **Jaiel Pulskamp**

Climate justice issues. Having small schools is important because of climate change. People are going to be here. Affordable housing.

Change is coming and we need to take it into consideration. Look at the future more than just now. Building community. Connection to their schools. If we lose that we lose the school.

She is afraid of Vermont. She can't leave Vermont without medical care. We need to get rid of Montpelier High school . We have chronic problems with transportation and our roads. We need to think about everything.

### **Michelle Hill**

She went to Montpelier High school and her kids went to U-32. Combining the high schools.

### **Mckensy? (not sure I have it right)**

She said that smaller classes do better. The entire core beliefs are about community and we are not doing

### **Amy Saunders**

The elementary schools don't have the same respect that the high school has. What happened to Roxbury.... We preserve the course. We have been here and we have supported these kids. They get no respect and do the hardest job. She wants the best for all the kids and she wants to continue to teach at Doty forever.

**Allen Gilbert:** (we can change articles of agreement if we want so this is just the beginning you guys better prepare....) I have some other notes on him....

**Chani**

thanks us for coming

**Chani's mom Dale**

She said we should not forget we can do things better and differently in smaller schools. She knows we have been working out...on hearing us all. But she was taken by surprise. She said we need to make time and extend the timeline. Keep our community vibrant as it has been for so long.

**Bo:**

We have two Doty alumni. I think affordability is a huge thing that has to be thought about. His friend moved here but they can afford to live in central Vermont. Talk of equity. Is it equitable to close the smallest schools. What does it do the community if they don't get . Class size in the elementary in the schools. How could U32 be re-structured to be more efficient. Perhaps through retirement. The new principal is coming from Cabot. They have the lowest cost per pupil. It also seems that we have a lot of hard decisions.

**Will Baker:**

There are pro-cons to doing anything. We talked about just the cons. We have to look at the pros too. I want to have day care before and after. If we had critical mass we can have benefits. The numbers go down and down. The taxes we pay are for all the districts. There will be more cuts... and more cuts. We don't have an efficient building now. If the vote fails in November... we will face a large upper pressure. Doty is a great school but we need to have an open mind. There is no magic. I could hug you WILL!! Thank you!! They want quality and a larger group of kids. Even combining Doty and Romney are not particularly big schools. He fears the cuts that will be coming ...

**Heather:** resident and alumni and works in our district. We need to slow down. We don't have the big picture yet. Will they save us money or not save us money? It would be wonderful to have better data. Before we say yes or no. For a lot of us this place is really important.

Hard to have clarity she wants to know in General: Are we out of whack with Act46? Money is not what is pushing it? Is it going to save us any money to close our small schools?

We can't guarantee the savings. She keeps thinking that enrichment is what we want or are using to justify it. We have things already and it is the hub of our communities. Relationships are what make our towns.

The invisible

Can we have a budget per school shared? More conversation about the community school idea. Using the building for other purposes that would be great. Yoga... We have the space. WE can better utilize it and keep it as a school. It is not an easy job and the pressure. Thank you for listening to us. Please take our voices into consideration. Thank you.

School fairs do not go by town lines.. each school specialized by learning style. Her boys wouldn't survive in big schools.

The community turnout is exciting about this process

### **Transparent & Responsible Leadership**

- Why isn't the board considering "community schools" as an option, given the high interest among board and community members.
- What is the projected net cost savings of closing the schools in the first year and over the next 5-10 years
- How would the projected cost savings impact tax burdens over 5-10 years ?
- What is the cost per student breakdown by school ?
- Is there data to suggest smaller schools cost significantly more?
- Is there data to suggest closing schools saves significant \$ over time?

### **Rigorous Curriculum & Instruction**

- What does data show about educational impacts of school closures, especially for kids who are most vulnerable ?
- Will absorbing kids into other schools really increase opportunities ? How do you know?
- How have Doty students performed compared to other schools over the past 5 years , especially kids who face the biggest learning challenges?
- What are the class size recommendations for pre-K -5 and is Doty meeting them ?

### **Well-Being**

- What does the research say about the potential impacts of sending our youngest kids to schools outside their immediate communities vs. protective factors of keeping younger kids within their local community?
- How have similar school closures impacted social/emotional learning& connectedness/community connectedness?

### **Community Engagement & Relationships**

- When other schools have closed, what have been the impacts overall, and on community connectedness, which is an important protective factor ?

### **Humanity, Justice, and Belonging**

- What is lost/gained in moving from multi-age to single-grade classes?
- How does Doty's school climate compare to other schools?
- Equity is a core value of our district: How does bussing kids from one of the lowest income towns in the district to one of the highest income towns reflect and impact equity? ( not equality/consistency)

### **Questions for the Board**

- How did we get here? Why is the board looking at closing schools?
- What enrichment opportunities would we lose if school closed ?
- What about mostly empty buses and long bus rides? Transportation Study?
- What will be additional/new costs and how will they offset savings?
- How does the board define enrichment ?
- What is the plan for 2024-25 transportation?
- Does U-32 adhere to EQS for class sizes?
- What's happening to kids "in the middle" and how would larger class sizes impact those kids ? ( Kids who benefit from 1-1 support but not on IEP)
- What are long-term maintenance needs of the 5 schools? Which ones will cost more/less to maintain?
- Prior studies have not found significant cost savings from combining schools , what makes us believe this would be different?
- Is Middlesex ready to welcome and include our kids?
- What happens if Worcester votes NO? What happens to the buildings? Do they become white elephants for the town? Or school district? Does not seem that there will be financial savings.

### **Reconfiguration Ideas**

- Each school specializes in something (e.g. outdoor education) and kids can attend any school
- Community school , bring services into Worcester /bring adult volunteers into school to enrich learning /adult education
- Some schools specialize in different age groups e.g. pre-k - 2 @ Worcester , 3-5 @ Rumney
- Merge high school/middle school w/ Montpelier . Provide middle school at a WCUUSD elementary school building

### **What People Value**

- Multi-age education
- Connected community-parents sharing knowledge , community lunch, connection w/elders, relationships
- Shorter length of time on the bus
- School is at the heart of this community, in the center . Only one in our 5 town district
- Early childhood education especially for families w/2 working parents
- If we lose the school, the town starts to die
- Opportunities for kids w/least access
- School helps connect community
- Proximity-kids walking/biking to school
- Affordable housing is needed to allow more families to move in
- Opportunities that are unique to small community schools
- cost/tax burden . decrease costs of education
- This is the centerpiece of the town

- Multigenerational connections to the school

### **Parking Lot**

- Feels misleading to present consolidation as both saving money and enriching opportunities
- Will the schools combining save the towns/residents a significant reduction in taxes-town and/or school taxes ? Percentage per town?
- Follow Act 46 (2015) intent : not to close small schools but ensure they take advantage of “larger” more flexible governance structures i.e., admin reform and reconfiguration
- Redraw the lines of elementary schools “catchment basins” so that they correspond naturally to settlement patterns more broadly , not to town lines
- Fund schools with cannabis tax
- Early learning/problem solving relationships can not be taught later in life : math , english, science can be
- Strategic planning : maintain capacity to educate 16.5% of the population of the district (pop. 10k) so 1650 students = norm in the U.S. at this time
- Exploit the small school advantage - relationships ( who are the people in your neighborhood) Amish-style capital formation and upkeep
- If it ain't broke Don't fix it
- Early childcare and pre-k is needed in the small towns more than in the population centers where most options are already
- How about hire 2-3 doctors, 2-3 nurses FT and do not offer insurance to employees at the primary level but have free medical care
- Spanish/languages : thinking being up to speed with globalization imperial/metric both
- Raising money in a business created by kids for the profit of the learning curve and the school
- Headstart/early headstart where are they located ? Are they in schools ?
- The board says annual savings on the building but the building is still there and still cost money so no savings .

### **Middlesex Notes**

#### **Attendees: Elliot Burg, Ela Chapin, Sarah Seidman, John Demeter.**

- Equity vs. equality Each school needs to be the same
- Consolidating the elementary schools ; will it actually save money ? Lots of reps are under the impression that the high schools yes, elementary no
- Before merging with Montpelier (which might be multi-year) we don't want to go through all the budget drama then more cutting. If there's a way to address that without cutting schools that's great but, if not..
- How long does it take to consolidate schools?



- Older people can't afford this budget will be voted down again and we will just keep shaving services.
- What is Montpelier's capacity?
- How much would we save if we merged administrator funding for 5 schools ?
- How much money would we save by reconfiguration in order to have 4-5 elementary schools ?
- We're kind of out of line for the budget. This is taking an emotional toll
- Priorities: these tools feel a little backwards. Goal on increase in % budget
- This is a statewide problem : declining enrollment, increasing health care costs. Would like to see a comprehensive statewide solution.
- The admin is taking too much money from student services, like world languages
- Financial priorities have not been well enough articulated through the options. Budget and services
- School district can't wait for the state
- Small schools are generally very small numbers of people which is a disservice to the kids
- Information out that consolidating elementary schools is not financially viable. The savings only comes at middle/high school
- Would merging with Montpelier be a path? Is there an interim path short of merger ?
- Two philosophies equal quality education 1. Every student that arrives at U-32 has the same educational experiences 2. Allow for creativity
- Statewide solution to change the system
- Shared educational community will bring creativity, wisdom, knowledge
- Are there efficiencies to be had at the central office function? Including schoolboard
- U-32 is 60% used What is MHS %
- Don't close schools
- Need to reduce schools for financials and education
- Merge w/ Montpelier
- How much \$ do we need to save to keep 5 elementary schools
- Concerns with increasing costs, how do we address servicing less or rising costs w/out closing schools ?
- Montpelier 7-12 capacity, 5-12? 9-12?
- Consider merging with Montpelier even in the interim
- Equal & quality education: every student arriving at U-32 w/ same education experience , creative district contribution from each school : world language opportunity
- Administrative costs: Montpelier Merger
- Financials & people understand it
- Nationally , financially not seeing savings w/elementary schools. Need to learn more

## **#1**

- Add financial priorities
- Statewide problem -statewide solution
- Why so many central offices ?
- Act 46 consolidation of board less public involvement

- New funding models @ state level
- Wait and lobby the legislature
- Can't wait for the state
- Not prioritize less than 5 schools
- Pursue other districts
- Reducing admin costs and prioritize student facing
- Equity over equality
- Remove strategies vs priorities
- Avoid single class rooms
- Need to educate our communities
- Prioritize innovation, cutting edge, experimentation, garden, eco
- Time on tablets
- Models that expand opportunities
- Why are we starting with less than 5 elementary schools ?
- Preserve /prioritize models that can accommodate w/ multi age grades/classrooms
- Prioritize reducing administrative costs and prioritize student facing positions
- Reframe limit FTE to provide good full time jobs to make a strategic workforce
- Why is cost not one of the criteria /

## # 2

- Tuition Montpelier while consider merger
- Reducing administrative budget
- (VOCES) pilot program on the state
- Word smith
- Magnet schools (different themed schools) : STEM, Art, Outdoor School
- Endorsement for options 1 and 2?
- 6th grade to U-32 ASAP
- Doty would add creativity to Rumney
- Full childcare in our schools - integrated childcare 0-Pre-K
- Montpelier merge w/high schools
- Consolidate administrative roles , less principals, teaching principals
- Bus ride lengths , bus routes based on time vs. town lines
- Ride their bikes to school but w/ reconfiguration they can't ride
- Lose ability
- Combine Solons & Raiders : Solars
- Fear: reduce community control of schools : if we fix (bandaid) the problems it would allow the state to kick the can down the road
- Consolidate principals sometimes Doty principles covers at middlesex , teaching principal
- Schools are part of the town center -lose ability to walk/ride
- Full childcare programs in each of our schools , look into federal funds infant to pre-K

### **# 3**

- If we make changes that fix problems the legislature can continue to kick the can down the road
- Reduced community control

## **East Montpelier**

### **# 1**

- Closing a school for not having a nurse seems extreme
- We feel we can't make a decision on the change if we don't know the date (EQS)
- Keep the tax increases below double digit
- Don't create polarization w/in the community ( It feels like Worcester/Calais against all else and Berlin , families split if Berlin closes
- Quality of life for our families in this large geographic area bussing or going to school far away. Quality of life in the towns where school changes are happening
- Logistics and quality of life , bussing is huge
- Communication : easy to read , fliers in local places
- Communication was on fpf but it was long, wordy and eduspeak , can you make it clearer?
- Schools need a no cell phone policy
- Push out communication via schools , not just district , people are tied to school

### **#2**

- Schools with a focus (arts or tech for example)
- Child care center de-centrally located : Berlin is not central to all. Where do we need child care centers or might it not work for all?
- How is CVCC included in this process?
- Focus on regional rather than town , this does not seem to be the focus right now
- Is there any situation where 6th graders would not transition to U-32
- Is it a traditional middle school if they are in the same building as 9-12. Could we have a 6-8 or 5-8 in one of the buildings?
- Worry that not all 6th graders are ready for U-32
- Can CVCC rent out some of this space since they need the space?

### **# 3**

- Nothing
- We might be able to make something better

- Opportunity
- Utilization of space , if the right things can happen
- People having hard conversations
- For the board to hear the ideas of people they represent
- All the things being written down will be read and not just put in a parking lot
- Kids might meet more kids earlier
- People might want to come to the schools
- Capitalize on the skills and resources of current employees
- Save on non classroom costs
- More enrichment can be possible

#### **# 4**

- Very worried that closing schools will hit people at the bottom of the privilege scale
- 6th graders at U-32 : many are not ready
- Bad feelings about schools being closed
- Loss of sense of place/community
- May not be saving the \$ , the savings that are presented
- This is posted too fast w/ few answers and being creative
- There does not seem to be a plan from the school board and the talk on the board is not clear. This feedback will go nowhere . It seems the board has an agenda
- Feels like Calais and Worcester will never meet the standards by the board
- Feels like we are being told what to do , this does not feel good or how it should be
- More motivated by \$ than best interests
- If we don't do this people might not vote for the budget
- Not saving \$ we are closing schools . this is huge and it might be a huge cost
- Decisions made w/out enough information , there are not answers to questions , people in the community can't get answers
- Once a school closes , it will not reopen
- East Montpelier being more influential over other schools , being small should not be a small voice , worry about quality of student experience rather than collective whole
- In November, we will be right back here in the same place what are the plans if it does not pass?
- People who have kids are not here, their voice is not heard
- The lack of communication will turn people out of this conversation
- We might lose more kids to private schools w/ this reconfiguration
- Communication: Board priorities are not clear, people can't make informed decisions if the communication is not clear.
- This sounds like Act 46, we need to save \$ and it didn't save any money , focus has changed from \$ to quality, seems like the purpose has changed

- Closing schools might not actually save \$ and it will potentially hurt communities
- There are not details about cost and savings
- Not all voters are being reached. Communication from the board is an issue
- How does this reflect what people value ?
- Moving 6th graders to middle school , so many are not ready . Elementary schools are a place where they can grow into leaders . The elementary schools are safe for them and we value that
- Covid has impacted students , this does not seem to address that
- This needs to be solved at the state level , they created this \$ mess , they need to fix it
- Class sizes will be too big and we will not have room to move
- Middle school plan has no model , what is the plan ?
- We will join w/ Montpelier (this is a fear) , board will be too big and not accessible. They ( Montpelier ) should close their school and tuition their kids
- Class sizes do not reflect what kids need for post COVID proficiency based instruction, 25 kids is what is used to be
- Is climate change included in this ?
- Is there a plan for a true middle school or are we just adding 6th graders to U-32
- Many fears , this lacks a plan beyond chart paper
- Fear for filling staff positions w/this chaos, we will not attract teachers , noone will apply if they know there will be cuts

## #5

- Who has the final say? Town has to approve
- Who has the say about what option is chosen ? the board?
- How do we measure community success?
- What is the plan if those 2 towns say no ?
- What are the next steps ?
- How are we getting what Calais/Worcester want out to the other towns ?
- Do we know if the people in Calais/Worcester are upset about the quality of education?
- How do we make this better ? Get better communication out?
- How do we get the FAQ's out to more people?
- How do we get the retired community into the conversation?
- Have we thought about how to attract those who send kids to private schools?
- What are the actual costs of all this ? That needs to be shared.
- What is the problem in those schools that we are trying to solve? Do the people who send their kids their see a problem ?
- Why are we not talking as a district ?
- Have we looked at case studies of other small schools ?

- If this has been on the radar why is there not more of a plan ?
- How will the community get community support ?
- What is the plan for adding new programs to the elementary school day.

What subjects and programs are coming out? Has there been a time study for what to add and where ?

- Why are we seeing reactive (which this seems) and why are we not seeing proactive ? . This seems reactive , we need to get creative and this does not seem that .

- How do we get schools to engage with the community , we seem to have taken away the voice and the involvement of the people in the town. Do we have the people who care ?

- Why are we having a meeting in the summer and on the week of July 4th?

- How do we generate the community needed to support a school?

- What cuts are there to admin? Is there cost savings there ?

- What is wrong with a small school ? Why are we not celebrating small schools ?

- How does this support teacher flexibility to meet the needs of kids?

- Why are we worried about what montpelier needs?

- How do we get the board to give questions?

- How do kids in 5th and 6th play sports ?

- What is the plan to support small class cohorts in the schools ?

- Have we tried to work with outside programs to engage holes that are identified ?

- Why can't we slow it down ? Why are we putting \$ as the answer to this? It is the first answer to this question. Money as the answer seems not in the spirit of what we need to do for kids

## **Berlin**

### **Priorities: What is Missing ?**

- Community sense of what is happening /acceptance and value in decision making

- Community importance w/ school sense of connection w/ school and community

- Lack of volunteer engagement (coaching etc. )

- Parental education /school capabilities -engage w/ school

- Expanding opportunities through consolidation /language , music, art , academics

- Proximity to schools /transportation

- Reshape boundaries for students

- transportation/logistics , length of bus rides

- Specific numbers of costs if consolidation occurs by building

- Maintenance needs /current condition of facilities/deferred maintenance

- Long term financial sustainability impact to taxpayers
- Cost savings as priorities (name it)
- Direct service staff vs. admin staff (teachers, paras , etc. )

### **Ideas**

- Merge w/ Montpelier/Roxbury
- School choice w/in districts
- Creation of magnet schools (tech, science , art)
- Schools designated by age , grade, number of schools
- One central campus for all grades/schools on U-32 campus
- Community groups /rent district facilities generate revenue
- Maintain current configuration
- Repurpose facility /school (1 year) for community use/revenue
- Data to show consolidation will save \$ to taxpayers/district

### **Fears**

- Self determination/voluntary non-cohesive /losing local control
- Changes to school without voter approval
- Lack of transparency
- Decisions made without data to support decisions
- Too big given present timeline : variables not enough time to explore other options
- Change too slow in coming
- Failure of future budgets /now it impacts recruitment/retention
- Missing opportunity to merge w/ Montpelier/Roxbury

### **Excitement**

- Possible merging w/ Montpelier/Roxbury
- 6th grade to U-32
- Explore other possibilities /options
- Establishing benchmarks to measure success of specific timeframes (2, 5, 10 years)
- Hearing from community in identifying priorities for district/board

### **Questions**

- When will we see the cost savings of the various configurations
- Minimal \$ to close schools - data shows
- Kids should be able to stay in their towns
- Act 60 - wealthy are whining about not wanting to share
- Smaller schools are already combining sports as an example because there are not enough kids or coaches
- What is the standard class size ?



- Are we losing students to home schooling or private schools ? Is that data we are collecting

## **Calais**

June 26 Community Forum - Report

Attendance: ~18

General Description & Tenor of the Conversation:

A lot of skepticism was initially communicated around what people felt was inadequate detail in our study. People are skeptical that mergers save money. People believe enrollment will eventually come back up and we won't have the capacity to support it anymore. People ask why we think all of our class size problems will be solved with this? One asked why we were talking about arts/music/language as 'enrichment' when it's really a core of the curriculum?

All the current parents in the room with school-age kids were in support of the closure, with the assumption that opportunities will be expanded in a larger better resourced school. These people emphasized their 'lived experience' of multiple years struggling with inadequate class size, as compared to the demographic speculation of 'what might happen' 10+ years down the line.

Some voiced Concerns:

Enrollment / Demographic assumptions. We don't necessarily doubt the projected decline in enrollment but it's not clear what long term effects (climate change etc.) will do to our local enrollment and we are locking ourselves into a smaller district capacity.

Class size assumptions. The administration & board hasn't clearly demonstrated that (a) larger class sizes are better or (b) that the new configuration would effectively modulate class size fluctuation.

Toxic materials assumptions. What if we close the wrong schools and those we keep open end up having significant remediation needs.

We doubt there will be decreased taxes.

The school is too small now? Social dynamics are harmful, we don't have sports teams, we don't have enough of ANYTHING

Split grade classrooms will ALWAYS exist, and we are talking about giving up all the physical space that makes our school work for a lot of students with individualized needs

We remember the forced merger still and it was not, and is not, fair that we absorbed the debt of other schools, we didn't realize the benefit of those investments, and now those towns are being rewarded with being schools kept open because their school facilities have so much capacity.

When we close schools, we give up physical space that is necessary for many neurodivergent learners and other learners on personalized learning plans. This will harm the flexibility of our schools and our teachers to accommodate these students.

Some articulated Questions:

Will there be layoffs? (where will savings come from)?

What is the impact on the value of our town's grand list?

What will school bus ride times be like?

Why aren't we doing a full-cost accounting of the reconfiguration? Classroom teachers and 5-year facility costs are only one layer of costs? What about the enrichment opportunities we are adding back in? What about environmental remediation of schools, or expansion of infrastructure that we might need to do if we experience increased enrollment? The additional cost of busing, in dollars, in time on the bus, in increased fuel and road miles on our fragile town roads?

Some Excitement: (maybe too strong a word?)

Reuse of the school would be an exciting opportunity for Calais community—hosting lots of different services, programs, businesses, etc.

Ideas included physical therapists, a rec league rotation of adult sports, child care, summer camp, space for pilot students, space for special ed students (within district and from elsewhere)

Opportunity to bring a bigger learning community together under a new school name could be an exciting opportunity.

We could lease space to an independent school such as a forest school or nature-based school that might make their curriculum available to our district's students.

Some Requests:

A guarantee that there will be more enrichment opportunities (world languages, art, music, etc.). These benefits must be explicitly described as plans, not as possibilities. For some their support of closure would be contingent on this.

If Calais is being considered for closure due to a need for centralization, why not consider taking this further and building new central facilities for elementary schools on U-32's campus

Can we model K-8 schools and community schools?

More than one person wrote, asking that we consider consolidating lower grades (PreK-2) at one school and upper grades (3-5 or 3-6) at another school.

We'd like enhanced school choice to come out of any closure, including choice to attend Montpelier schools.

We'd like any plans or studies considering merging with Montpelier to be expedited.

Use our school facility in meaningful ways (negotiated with town) like early childhood ed (with HeadStart), special ed support, flexible pathways 'studio' space, community center, senior activity center, expanded town offices. "If we do have to lose the Calais Elementary School, what replaces it should be an extraordinarily good and useful facility, and in particular, it should help take some of the stress off of young families, offer them more choice, help build community, and help attract more families to Calais."

More research into how cost savings will LAST for more than 2-3 years

A toxic materials study of all facilities we're considering investing in or ceasing use of. (make the right choice because we can't go back)

Noah Weinstein  
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(401)743-9387

July 11th, 2024

Dear WCUUSD School Board,

Thank you for taking the time to read my previous letter, which I sent as a survey response on July 7th. Since sending the letter, I have received additional information that I would like to submit as an addendum to my letter/survey response regarding question 5 about alternative ideas/reconfiguration possibilities.

I recently learned of a new law, [Act 168 of 2024](#), which just became effective last week on July 1st, 2024. As I understand it, Act 168 allows two or more supervisory unions (or supervisory districts like WCUUSD) to form what is called a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide educational services at a larger scale and thus lower cost across entire regions. My basic understanding is that this process would facilitate a lot of the shared services and cost savings achieved by merger (e.g., with Montpelier/Roxbury, CVCC, etc.) without fully merging districts. The process of creating one of these cooperative boards appears much more streamlined and quicker than a full merger. The law also supports the establishment of community schools in Vermont through financial and logistical support.

Other key points from this new law:

- The WCUUSD board is legally mandated to consider this option.
  - By July 1, 2026, WCUUSD and all other supervisory unions and districts MUST consider and vote on the prospect of forming a BOCES.
- Early adopters get money.
  - There's a BOCES Start-Up Grant Program offering \$10,000 to newly formed BOCES to help with start-up costs. But there's only \$70,000 in the fund, so it will surely run out.
- \$1,000,000 is appropriated from the Education Fund to support community schools.
  - I realize this is a drop in the bucket, but maybe WCUUSD can get some of this money if we move quickly enough. This allocation also demonstrates that the Vermont Legislature is supportive of community schools, particularly when services are shared regionally, and the State will encourage and facilitate the formation of community schools through a BOCES.

As the Act 164 text is quite lengthy, here is an excerpt from Section 1, specifically related to community schools:

(9) According to the Learning Policy Institute, “establishing community schools” is one of 10 recommended strategies for restarting and rethinking the role of public education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community schools serve as resource hubs that provide a broad range of easily accessed, well-coordinated supports and services that help students and families with increasingly complex needs. These schools, at their core, are about investing in children, through quality teaching; challenging, engaging, and culturally responsive curricula; wrap around supports; safe, just, and equitable school climate; strong ties to family and community; and a clear focus on student achievement and well-being.

(10) Community schools are important centers for building community connection and resilience. When learning extends beyond the walls of the school through active engagement with community partners as with place-based learning, relationships expand and deepen, community strengths are highlighted, and opportunities for building vitality surface through shared learning.

(11) Community schools provide another framework to encourage and support supervisory unions to be creative as they develop learning communities that integrate student supports, expand and enrich learning opportunities, engage families and communities, develop collaborative leadership, and ensure safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments.

As one of the primary intents of reconfiguration is to enhance the learning environment and improve enrichment opportunities of our students, I wonder if the formation of a BOCES with other local school districts could be explored as another potential avenue to maintain enrichment opportunities and full-time counseling/nursing by utilizing the potential cost savings of the BOCES system. Additionally, establishing Doty Memorial School as a community school could support the goals of increased enrichment opportunities, enhanced student and community well-being, increased equity across the district, and strengthened community engagement. If we explore this possibility sooner than later, we might be able to take advantage of the current financial and logistical support offered by the State.

Thank you again for your efforts, time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Noah Weinstein, MA, LCMHC  
Worcester, VT

## **A letter to the WCUUSD School Board from our community – Submitted to the Board July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

July, 2024

Dear WCUUSD School Board;

We are members of the WCUUSD community who care about our kids, the future of Doty, and the future of all our schools. We thank the Board for all your time and effort looking for ways to make education better for our kids and keep costs under control. We also thank you for asking for and listening to community input. This letter responds to the important questions in your [Configuration Conversation survey](#). Please include these responses in the survey data you consider, including at the July 17th Configuration / Finance Committee meeting.

### **WORCESTER REPRESENTATION ON SCHOOL BOARD**

**We ask the Board to prioritize appointing a third Worcester representative by holding a special meeting in early August.** Julia Hewitt is interested in joining the Board, has many years of experience in education, and is well connected within Worcester and our five-town community. We encourage the Board to appoint Julia to fill Worcester's vacant seat.

We appreciate that all Board members represent all of our towns, communities, and kids. At the same time, we hope the Board recognizes the importance of Worcester being fully represented for the Board's August retreat and meeting, when such important discussions are happening about the future of Doty.

### **PRIORITIES**

At a community meeting on June 26th, members of the Worcester community shared what we value most for our kids and our community. We submit these responses here as strong indications of our community's priorities.

**“This [school] is the centerpiece of our town.”** Unlike some of the other schools in our district, Doty is located in the heart of Worcester Village. We see a high value in having an elementary school in our town, whether or not we have kids, or whether our kids currently attend. We appreciate that our school is close to where our families live, and that many kids walk and bike to school.

**Connected community.** Doty students have strong bonds with their community. Students help out with town events including the Community Lunch, building lasting relationships with their neighbors and community volunteers. Parents connect with teachers, counselors, school nurses, and each other at drop-off and pick-up. Kids benefit from the connectedness of our community, and the school helps make our community more connected.

**Small-school opportunities** like multi-age education, all-school meetings, theater productions, and more. Doty has specialized in small-school and multi-age education for many years due to our small and stable student population. Research shows that multi-age classrooms lead to increased [empathy](#), [leadership](#), and [problem-solving skills](#).

**Equity.** Worcester has the lowest income and the highest proportion of students on free and reduced lunch of the five towns in WCUUSD. We have not seen data that Doty students are underperforming academically or socially compared to their peers in other elementary schools. Doty students participate in afterschool sports and activities in high numbers. We are not

confident that the best thing for our most vulnerable kids is a longer bus ride to a school in a wealthier community, and we worry that participation in enrichment activities could decline.

**Cost of education and tax impact.** We want our town to be affordable for all members of our community. At this time, we have more questions than answers when it comes to how much money would be saved by closing Doty and how taxes would be impacted. We understand that the Board expects savings, especially in the first year. We would like to understand how closing Doty would impact per-pupil spending and property taxes over the next five to ten years. We wonder if taxes could actually go up in Worcester if our town took on the cost of maintaining the school building. We wonder how our community would change over time without a school, and whether a future Worcester population might feel less connected to our schools and be more likely to vote down school budgets.

### **IDEAS FOR SCHOOL CONFIGURATION**

We appreciate the Board's invitation to suggest other ideas for how to configure our schools. Here are ideas that have been suggested in our community conversations.

**Doty becomes a "Community School."** *"Community Schools are public schools that provide services and support that fit each neighborhood's needs, created and run by the people who know our children best—all working together."* - National Education Association

A Community School model could allow our community to identify its strengths and needs and integrate them into our school. Potential community services that could be integrated into a community school include health care, tutoring and/or adult education, mental health counseling, and other services that could be available before, during, and after school.

**Merge with Montpelier: offer high school at U32, middle school at one of the elementary schools (perhaps Berlin or EMES due to their size and facilities), prek-4 elementary schools in the other towns.** This model could keep a school in each town. Merging in this way seems like it has high potential for long term cost savings for our communities.

**Staff "wearing multiple hats".** For example, a principal could also serve as a Guidance Counselor, EST Coordinator, or specials teacher. A single educator could teach PE and music.

**Specialized schools.** Schools could specialize in different age groups or educational approaches (eg: outdoor education).

We all share the common goal of making sure our kids get a great education. We'll make the best decisions when we all understand the pros and cons of different options for our five-town community and school district. To date, we do not have all the information, data, or resources we need to understand our options and prepare for the future of our schools and towns.

Our community is ready to work productively with the Board. Thank you for hearing our voices.

Sincerely,

1. Deborah Bloom, Worcester
2. Jordan Nobler, Worcester
3. Lisa Hanna, Worcester

4. Lila Richardson, Worcester
5. Noah Weinstein, Worcester
6. Naomi Heindel, Worcester
7. Chani Waterhouse, Worcester
8. Catherine Coteus, Worcester
9. Steven Coteus, Worcester
10. Sarah Davis, Worcester
11. Julia Hewitt, Worcester
12. Neha Shukla, Worcester
13. J. David Book, Worcester
14. Angelica Romero, Worcester
15. Allen Gilbert, Worcester
16. Caitlin Howansky, Worcester
17. Toni Kaeding, Worcester
18. Marilyn Martin, Worcester
19. Bailey Nicholas, Worcester
20. Robert Martin, Worcester
21. Kathleen Meninger, Worcester
22. Mike Meninger, Worcester
23. Paul Hanlon, Worcester
24. Thomas R. Lang, Worcester
25. Meredith Strobbridge Crandall, Worcester
26. Terry Padilla, Worcester
27. Frank White, Worcester
28. Rep. Avram Patt, Worcester
29. Doug Darrow, Worcester
30. Vanessa Weinstein, Worcester
31. Kathy Barrows, Worcester
32. Steve Barrows, Worcester
33. Nancy Gore, Worcester
34. Erin Ryan, Worcester
35. Nancy Weinstein, East Montpelier
36. Max Barrows, Worcester
37. Elena Esteban, Worcester
38. Larraby Fellows, Worcester
39. Michael Close, Worcester
40. Matthew Wooliever, Worcester
41. Roberta Melnick, Worcester
42. Michael Lizzari
43. Nadya Beck, Worcester
44. Jim McWilliam, Worcester
45. Joe Howansky, Worcester
46. Toni Clithero, Worcester
47. Doug Clithero, Worcester
48. Woden Teachout, Middlesex
49. Dell Waterhouse, Worcester
50. Iris Gardner, Worcester
51. Katie O'Rourke, Worcester
52. Leslie Sabo, Worcester
53. Kris Gruen, Worcester
54. Michelle Salvador, Worcester



55. Susan Premo, Worcester
56. Philip Etter, Worcester
57. Daniel Hollister, Worcester
58. Laura Atkinson, Worcester
59. Danielle Bousquet, Worcester
60. Jeffrey Bousquet, Worcester
61. Hanna Howard, Worcester
62. Al Johnson-Kurts, Montpelier
63. Gary Johnson, Worcester
64. Jim Shea, Worcester
65. Kyle Landis-Marinello, Middlesex
66. Dunja Carlson-Moeller, Worcester
67. Robert Carlson-Moeller, Worcester
68. Melanie Webster, Worcester
69. Michael Webster, Worcester
70. Carter Stowell, Worcester
71. Carolyn Peduzzi, Worcester
72. Elvin Stowell, Worcester
73. Marcia Hill, Worcester
74. Megan McLane, Worcester
75. Michael Gore, Worcester
76. Cameron Scott Thompson, Calais
77. Jamie Shaw, Worcester
78. Ryan Humke, Worcester
79. Jennifer Chambers, Worcester
80. Jeannine Bradeen, Worcester
81. Veda Lyon, Worcester
82. Donna Pollard, Worcester
83. Marianne R. Book, Worcester
84. Taylore Grymonnt, East Montpelier
85. Adam French, Worcester
86. Elise Bennett, Worcester
87. Laura Macieira, Worcester
88. Carrie Riker, Worcester
89. Laurel Barbieri, Worcester
90. Chris Barbieri, Worcester
91. Patricia Occhipinti, Worcester
92. Josh Ledwith, Worcester
93. Sarah Gallagher, Calais
94. Kathleen Bookchin, Worcester
95. Sarah Bell, Worcester
96. Chris Eaton, Worcester
97. Mark Powell, Worcester
98. Christina Pollard, Worcester
99. Christopher Pollard, Worcester
100. Ellen Barton, Worcester
101. Karen Hoskey, Calais
102. Celia Cerulli-Johnson, Worcester
103. Katie Back, Worcester
104. Vivienne Adair, Worcester
105. Marla J Edson, Worcester

106. Bodo Carey, Worcester
107. Dakota Helton, Worcester
108. Katelyn Buchanon, Worcester
109. Anya Skibbie, Worcester
110. Tim Newcomb, Worcester
111. Sharon Newcomb, Worcester
112. Sophia Emigh, Worcester
113. David Bookchin, Worcester
114. Jasmine Gruen, Worcester
115. Susan Peterson, Worcester
116. Aaron Libbey, Worcester
117. Emmeline Sevette, Worcester
118. Leslie London, Worcester
119. Benjamin Whitney, Worcester
120. Judith Whitney, Worcester
121. Leigh McKay Garrity, Worcester
122. Dave Bennett, Worcester
123. Megan French, Worcester
124. John Meninger, Worcester
125. Joanne Puente, Worcester
126. John Kaeding, Worcester
127. Eileen Hee, Worcester
128. Corinne D Cooper, Berlin
129. Emily Sloan, Worcester
130. Lori Chater, Worcester
131. Deborah Bogart, Worcester
132. Colleen Kutin, Worcester
133. Genevieve Drutchas, Worcester
134. Freedom Mauran, Worcester
135. Jaiel Pulskamp, Worcester
136. Stephanie Kaplan, Worcester
137. Rosemary Leach, Worcester
138. Linda Fisher, Worcester
139. Nancy Reilly, Middlesex
140. Doug Darrow, Worcester
141. Paul Hanlon, Worcester
142. Katie Spring, Worcester
143. Edge Fuentes, Worcester
144. Francette Cerulli, Worcester
145. Leslie Haines, Worcester
146. Katherine Boudreau, Worcester
147. Rebekah Mandell, Middlesex
148. Maggie Ericksen, Worcester
149. Kurt Ericksen, Worcester
150. Andrew Callahan, Worcester
151. Matt Delligatti
152. Tracy Curtin
153. Greg Bauman
154. Ayden LaPoint
155. Deanna Hawk
156. Stewart Clark, Worcester

157. Fran Rousseau, Worcester
158. Shawn McMannis, Worcester
159. Shawn Powers, Worcester
160. Corey Wiseman, Worcester
161. Brenda Vernile, Worcester
162. Jeffrey DeForge, Worcester
163. Matt McCarthy, Worcester
164. John Kiddee, Worcester
165. Renata Wheeler, Worcester
166. Anne Darrow, Worcester
167. Ethan Tyrell, Worcester
168. Barbara Blanchard, Worcester
169. Peter Bogart, Worcester
170. Marie Russ, Worcester
171. Daniel Bolduc, Worcester
172. Jake Graves, Worcester
173. Krista Harness, Montpelier / Worcester
174. Bill Sargent, Worcester
175. Harold Richardson, Worcester
176. Brian Wiseman, Worcester
177. Bill Tyrell, Worcester
178. Tara Bolduc, Worcester
179. Jacob French, Worcester
180. Ryan Leclerc, Worcester
181. Randall Miller, Worcester
182. Justin Bador, Worcester
183. Kaiden Vernile, Worcester
184. Jan Cameron, Worcester
185. Ashley Whalen, Worcester
186. Tyler Whalen, Worcester

July 25th, 2024

Dear Members of the Washington Central Unified Union School District Board,

We are a group of Worcester residents who care about Doty Memorial School and share concerns about the WCUUSD School Board's process for bringing a proposal to close our school to a vote. We believe that crucial information necessary for making an informed decision on such a significant matter has not been provided either to the Board or to our five-town community. We are interested in dialogue and collaboration to find solutions to help make our schools better places to learn and work as well as pathways to long-term sustainability. Thank you for reading and considering our requests.

**We encourage the Board to accelerate conversations with Montpelier Roxbury.** We hope these conversations will be transparent and consider long term planning for flood resilience and climate change, as well as plans for the elementary schools that take into account communities' needs and wishes. While we understand that these conversations will take time, we encourage the Board to share even very rough models of how merging these districts - and potentially the high schools - might impact education and per-pupil spending.

**At the same time, we request that the Board model additional configuration options for the WCUUSD schools beyond those the board already identified.** In order for our communities to understand the pros and cons of any options, we need to know what the Board expects for educational, per-pupil spending, tax, and other impacts. At this time we understand the priorities the board has set, however they do not include per-pupil spending, tax and other economic and community impacts. As a group we are concerned that the only two options the board is considering involve closing Doty. To do that, the town has to vote to close the school. Our intuition is that our town will not vote to close the school, and Worcester will be the fall for the board's potential struggles passing a FY budget. We believe it would be helpful and instructive to be able to compare these options with those the board already identified:

1. Maintaining four elementary schools (closing either Calais or Doty); otherwise status quo.
2. Merging two elementary schools (eg: Doty and Rumney) by offering pre-k through 2 at one school and grades 3-6 at the other.
3. Pathways for single staff members to fulfill multiple roles - eg: incentivizing teachers to obtain an additional credential so, for example, one person could teach art and music.
4. Moving 6th grade to U32 Middle School; otherwise status quo. *Note: We have serious concerns about this option because we believe educational best practice would not support having 6th graders learning in a building with 12th graders where there are many shared facilities. Because we know the Board is considering this option, we believe our communities deserve to know what the Board believes will be the educational, per pupil spending and other impacts, and what is the rationale beyond facilitating the closure of elementary schools.*
5. Creating a middle school at one of the elementary schools and sending those elementary students to neighboring schools.

**Please share per-pupil costs per school.** We believe this is a crucial piece of information that all voters in our towns should be able to consider. Pre-merger, Doty had the lowest or second-lowest per-pupil spending for many years. If this situation has changed, it would be beneficial for our community to understand the reasons behind increased per-pupil spending at Doty. Additionally, we ask the Board to explain how per-pupil spending factored into the decisions regarding which schools to propose to close.

**Please hold another Community Forum after models have been run that concretely project educational, per-pupil spending and other impacts.** Our communities will be able to provide better input and make better decisions when we all understand more about the pros and cons of various configuration models.

**Please slow down the current timeline** and share data and modeling so that our communities can better understand the justification for the Board's proposals and decisions. Closing Doty would have enormous and long-lasting impacts on Worcester's kids - over half of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch, the highest percentage of any school in our district - and on our local Worcester community. A decision of this magnitude needs to be made with a high level of confidence that it is the best path forward. At this point we all lack crucial information that would allow for the best thinking and decision-making. Let's take the time to do this right.

Thank you for the care and time you invest in our kids and our five town community. We appreciate the work you do and look forward to more conversations.

Sincerely,

Catherine Coteus, Worcester  
Stephen Coteus, Worcester  
Toni Kaeding, Worcester  
Lila Richardson, Worcester  
Noah Weinstein, Worcester  
Allen Gilbert, Worcester  
Naomi Heindel, Worcester  
Chani Waterhouse, Worcester  
Deborah Bloom, Worcester  
Caitlin Howansky, Worcester

**Question 1:** Here are the priorities the finance committee identified. What would you add or change, and why?

**Question 2:** What are some ideas for a school configuration that could achieve those priorities? Be specific.

**Question 3:** What is exciting about this process?

**Question 4:** What are your fears about this process?

**Question 5:** What questions do you have?

## **Question 1: What would you add or change, and why?**

The survey responses reflect a community deeply concerned with the implications of school reconfigurations. Key themes include the need for financial transparency, the preservation of community identity, equitable access to quality education, and a call for genuine community engagement in the decision-making process. These concerns underscore the complexity of balancing financial sustainability with maintaining a high quality of education and strong community ties. Here are the primary themes identified from the feedback:

### **1. Financial Concerns and Transparency**

**Cost Savings and Budgeting:** Respondents frequently mentioned the need for clear financial data to justify school closures or reconfigurations. There is a strong demand for transparency regarding potential savings and the financial impacts on taxes.

- Example: Requests for specific numbers on cost savings from merging schools and concerns about the financial sustainability of the current school configuration.

**Administrative Costs:** Some participants suggested that administrative expenses are disproportionately high and should be reduced before considering closing schools.

- Example: Calls for evaluating administrative positions, particularly those that do not directly impact student education.

### **2. Community Impact and Engagement**

**Community Identity and School Role:** Many responses emphasized the role of schools in maintaining community cohesion and identity, particularly in smaller towns. There is concern that closing schools would harm local communities socially and economically.

- Example: Concerns about the potential loss of a school leading to a decline in property values and reduced community engagement.

**Genuine Community Engagement:** Respondents expressed a need for more authentic engagement with the community, criticizing what they perceive as top-down decisions and the use of jargon that alienates community members.

- Example: Calls for conversations that genuinely incorporate community feedback and are not dominated by technical language or external consultants.

### **3. Educational Quality and Student Experience**

**Equity and Student Well-being:** The importance of equitable access to education and the impact of potential changes on students' well-being were recurring themes. Concerns were raised about longer bus rides, larger class sizes, and the inclusion of special needs students.

- Worries about the negative effects of long bus commutes on young children and questions about maintaining quality education amidst changes.

**Specific Program and Grade-Level Considerations:** There is debate over the benefits of having 6th graders in middle schools versus keeping them in elementary schools. Additionally, the importance of maintaining or expanding enrichment programs was highlighted.

- Example: Concerns about the maturity of 6th graders being exposed to older students and the desire for comprehensive enrichment programs.

#### **4. Operational and Logistical Concerns**

**Building Utilization and Reconfiguration:** Some responses suggested creative uses for school buildings that might otherwise be closed, such as converting spaces for community use or housing.

- Example: Ideas about turning unused school spaces into affordable housing or community centers.

**Shared Resources and Staffing:** There is a discussion around the efficiency of shared positions across schools versus the benefits of full-time staff in each school.

- Example: The debate over whether shared nursing and counseling positions are adequate or if full-time positions are necessary.

#### **5. Concerns about the Process and Decision-Making**

**Data and Analysis:** There is skepticism about the data being used to support proposed changes, with some respondents requesting clearer and more robust analyses.

- Example: Calls for detailed financial modeling and longitudinal studies to justify school closures.

**Timing and Pace of Changes:** Some participants are concerned that the process is being rushed without adequate time for consideration and community input.

- Example: Suggestions to extend the timeline for decisions to ensure thorough analysis and community involvement.



**Question 2: What are some ideas for a school configuration that could achieve those priorities ? Be specific.**

The survey responses reveal a community grappling with the balance between maintaining local, community-focused education and the financial realities of declining enrollments and rising costs. There is considerable support for school consolidation and district mergers, particularly with Montpelier, as well as for innovative uses of school facilities to serve broader community needs. However, concerns about preserving community identity, ensuring equitable access, and maintaining transparency in the decision-making process are also prominent. The responses underscore the need for a thoughtful, inclusive, and data-driven approach to any proposed changes. Here are the primary themes identified from the feedback:

**1. School Consolidation and Merging of Schools**

**School Closures:** Many respondents support closing smaller elementary schools, particularly Doty and Calais, and consolidating students into fewer, larger schools to improve class sizes and resource allocation.

- Example: Proposals include consolidating elementary schools from five to two or three, and moving students to schools with better facilities or more capacity, such as Berlin and East Montpelier.

**District and Regional Mergers:** There is significant support for merging with nearby districts, particularly Montpelier, to create a larger, more efficient school system.

- Example: Suggestions include merging U-32 High School with Montpelier High School, and utilizing Montpelier's facilities for middle school grades to reduce redundancy and costs.

**2. Reconfiguration of Grade Levels**

**Moving 6th Graders to Middle School:** Many participants suggest moving 6th-grade students to U-32 to better align educational stages and potentially free up space in elementary schools.

- Example: The idea is seen as developmentally appropriate and as a way to optimize the use of facilities at U-32, which may have excess capacity.

**Creating Specialized Centers:** There is interest in establishing specialized educational centers or community hubs within schools, such as daycare facilities, vocational training centers, or magnet schools focused on arts or sciences.

- Example: Ideas include using school buildings for community services, like childcare or senior centers, which could also generate revenue and provide intergenerational learning opportunities.

### **3. Community and Equity Considerations**

**Community Schools and Local Identity:** Respondents emphasize the importance of maintaining small, local schools to preserve community identity and provide a sense of place for young children. This is often coupled with a call to avoid overly long bus rides for young students.

- Example: Proposals include keeping younger children in local schools while centralizing older students, or maintaining community engagement through school-based events and volunteer opportunities.

**Equitable Access and Financial Transparency:** There are calls for equitable access to education, ensuring that all students, regardless of their community's wealth, have access to high-quality educational resources. This includes concerns about the transparency of financial decisions and the real cost savings of proposed changes.

- Example: Suggestions for transparent financial reporting and analysis, as well as equitable resource distribution across the district.

### **4. Innovative Uses of School Facilities**

**Multifunctional School Buildings:** Ideas include utilizing school facilities for multiple purposes beyond traditional K-12 education, such as community education, adult day programs, or shared spaces with other community services.

- Example: Suggestions for creating multifunctional hubs that offer services like health care, counseling, and adult education alongside traditional schooling.

**Specialized Educational Programs:** Respondents propose introducing specialized programs or magnet schools within the district to attract students and improve educational outcomes.

- Example: Ideas include establishing schools with a focus on arts, sciences, or vocational training to better cater to diverse student interests and needs.

### **5. Concerns About the Process and Decision-Making**

**Third-Party Involvement and Transparency:** Some respondents advocate for the involvement of third-party consultants to ensure unbiased decision-making and to provide a broader range of options.

- Example: Concerns about potential conflicts of interest among current decision-makers and a desire for a more open and transparent process.

**Long-term Planning and Consideration:** There is a call for comprehensive long-term planning that takes into account demographic trends, community needs, and potential future changes, such as environmental concerns related to building locations.

- Example: Suggestions include evaluating all school buildings for long-term viability, considering environmental risks, and planning for future educational needs.

### **Question 3: What is exciting about this process?**

The responses to the third question reveal a mix of skepticism and hope. While many respondents are concerned about the potential negative impacts of the proposed changes, particularly on small community schools, there is also recognition of the opportunity to improve educational offerings, achieve cost savings, and involve the community in meaningful ways. The process has sparked significant community engagement, but there are calls for greater transparency and a more inclusive decision-making process. Here are the primary themes identified from the feedback:

#### **1. Skepticism and Concern**

**General Negativity:** Many respondents express a lack of excitement or positive feelings about the process, reflecting concerns about the potential impact on their communities, schools, and students.

- Example: Responses include phrases like "NOTHING," "There is ABSOLUTELY NOTHING exciting about this process," and "I find nothing exciting about this progress."

#### **2. Community Engagement and Involvement**

**Increased Community Engagement:** Some respondents highlight the positive aspect of increased community engagement and dialogue, despite the difficult nature of the discussions.

- Example: Comments mention how the process has brought communities together, increased awareness, and encouraged more involvement in school-related decisions.

**Opportunity for Input:** Respondents appreciate being given a voice in the process and the opportunity to contribute ideas and perspectives.

- Example: Statements like "having a chance to problem solve with the community" and "input is solicited" reflect this sentiment.

#### **3. Potential for Educational Improvements**

**Enhanced Educational Opportunities:** Several responses mention the potential for improved educational offerings, including expanded arts, language programs, and more diverse extracurricular activities.

- Example: Excitement about opportunities to "expand educational offerings in art, music, language, etc." and "offer more opportunities for students to engage in creative and diverse subjects."

**Focus on Equitable Education:** Some respondents are optimistic about the potential for more equitable access to educational resources, particularly for students in smaller schools.

- Example: Statements such as "equitable and protected access to needed opportunities" and "giving children equal opportunity in their education."

#### **4. Cost Savings and Efficiency**

**Financial Benefits:** A number of respondents are hopeful about the potential for cost savings and more efficient use of resources, which could help stabilize or reduce taxes.

- Example: Comments like "cost containment," "lowering taxes," and "deliver better quality instruction at a more affordable cost."

#### **5. Structural Changes and Modernization**

**Reconfiguring the School System:** Some respondents find the potential structural changes, such as reconfiguring grade levels or consolidating schools, to be a necessary and forward-looking approach.

- Example: Statements supporting "moving 6th graders to U32" and creating a "true 6-8 middle school."

**Innovation and New Models:** There is some excitement about the possibility of implementing innovative educational models or rethinking traditional approaches to schooling.

- Example: Comments include "opportunity to build a future that people can financially support as well as educationally support" and "break the mold and find a better way to deal with the issues."

#### **6. Concerns About Process and Decision-Making**

**Distrust of Process:** A recurring theme is distrust or dissatisfaction with the process, including concerns about predetermined outcomes and lack of transparency.

- Example: Comments like "the stiff recommendation is to close the heartbeat of our town" and "not being seriously consulted."

**Desire for Thorough Analysis and Careful Decision-Making:** Respondents express a need for more thorough analysis, careful consideration of all options, and a balanced approach that takes into account the long-term impact on communities.

- Example: Statements such as "students have access to a better education and hopefully reduction in costs" and "finding courageous and responsible solutions."

#### **Question 4: What are your fears about this process?**

The responses to the fourth question reveal deep concerns about the potential negative impacts of school closures and consolidations. Key fears include the loss of community identity, negative economic consequences, diminished educational quality, and insufficient transparency and data in the decision-making process. These concerns underscore the importance of thorough planning, transparent communication, and meaningful community involvement in the decision-making process. The responses highlight the complexity and sensitivity surrounding the potential reconfiguration of the school district, with significant implications for students, families, and communities. Here are the primary themes identified from the feedback:

##### **1. Loss of Community and Identity**

**Fear of Losing Community Hubs:** Many respondents fear that closing local schools will erode the sense of community and identity, particularly in small towns where schools often serve as community centers.

- Example: Comments like "Loss of local community," "the heartbeat of our town", "Our town losing an asset like a school," and "Doty is the center of our town" highlight this concern.

**Impact on Local Identity:** There's a strong sentiment that schools are integral to the town's identity and that their closure would lead to a loss of community spirit and cohesion.

- Example: Phrases like "loss of sense of place and community" and "town becomes an aging community with less kids" illustrate this fear.

##### **2. Economic and Property Value Concerns**

**Decreased Property Values:** Respondents are concerned that closing schools will decrease property values and make towns less attractive to new families, leading to further economic decline.

- Example: Comments include fears about "a decrease in property values" and "less attractive to families with children."

**Economic Viability and Costs:** There is concern that the expected financial savings from school closures may not materialize, and that costs could shift to the community, including maintenance of unused school buildings.

- Example: "The financial benefits are weighed more than quality of life," "we will lose our school and our community will dwindle," and "cost savings will disappear within a few years."

### **3. Educational and Social Impact on Students**

**Concerns About Student Well-Being:** Many fear that larger class sizes, longer commutes, and integrating younger students with older ones will negatively impact students' educational and social experiences.

- Example: "Our kids in the 'middle' will get lost," "increased class sizes may not be adequately noticed or supported," and "sixth graders being in the same building with high schoolers."

**Quality of Education:** Respondents are worried that the consolidation process may compromise the quality of education, particularly in terms of personalized attention and access to diverse learning opportunities.

- Example: "Fear that my child will get lost in the newness" and "loss of student-centered education."

### **4. Process and Decision-Making Concerns**

**Lack of Transparency and Data:** There is a significant fear that decisions are being made without sufficient transparency, data, or community input, potentially leading to poorly informed outcomes.

- Example: "Decisions are emotional instead of logical," "lack of data-informed decision-making," and "fear of rushing the process."

**Skepticism Towards Authority:** Some respondents express distrust in the process and decision-makers, fearing that their voices will not be heard or that decisions are being driven by financial motives rather than educational or community well-being.

- Example: "Fear that the Board will not listen to the community," "process will be driven by financial concerns rather than educational quality," and "unchecked power of the superintendent."

### **5. Logistical and Practical Concerns**

**Transportation and Accessibility:** Concerns about long bus rides and accessibility to schools for both students and parents are common, particularly regarding the impact on younger students.

- Example: "Long bus rides for the very young," "commuting challenges," and "difficult for parents making changes."

**Impact on Special Programs and Facilities:** Some respondents worry that school closures will reduce access to specialized programs or facilities, such as arts, sports, or mental health services.

- Example: "Concern about overcrowding in schools" and "impact on special programs."

## **Question 5: What questions do you have?**

The responses to the final question reveal a strong demand for more detailed information, transparency, and consideration of alternative solutions. Respondents are particularly concerned with understanding the financial and logistical impacts of the proposed changes, ensuring meaningful community involvement in the decision-making process, and exploring broader strategic options, such as mergers with other districts. These questions underscore the importance of clear communication, thorough planning, and inclusive decision-making in addressing the complex issues facing the school district. Here are the primary themes identified from the questions posed:

### **1. Concerns about Specific Proposals**

**Impact on Specific Schools and Locations:** There are multiple inquiries about why specific schools, such as Berlin Elementary, are targeted in certain reconfiguration scenarios and how these decisions align with local development plans and demographics.

- Example: Questions about the rationale for selecting specific elementary schools for closure and concerns about future housing developments and their impact on school populations.

**Moving 6th Graders to U-32:** Several respondents are focused on the implications of moving 6th graders to U-32, questioning the educational, social, and logistical impacts, including the necessity and potential disruptions of such a move.

- Example: Inquiries about the potential cost savings of this move, whether it could be optional, and the readiness of U-32 to accommodate younger students.

### **2. Desire for Transparency and Data**

**Requests for Detailed Financial Analysis:** Many respondents are seeking more information about the financial implications of different options, including the costs of potential renovations, projected savings, and the impact on taxes.

- Example: Questions like "What are the financial projections?" and "What is the actual breakdown of the financial cost of closing Doty vs keeping it open?" indicate a need for clear financial data.

**Need for Evidence and Sources:** Respondents are asking for the sources of information and evidence that support the proposed changes, including data from the Department of Education and studies on the impact of school mergers.

- Example: "Where are the numbers that make this financially the best option supposedly?" and "What evidence supports your decisions?"

### **3. Concerns About Process and Decision-Making**

**Questions on Timeline and Process:** There are concerns about the speed of the process and the adequacy of community input, with calls for extending the timeline to allow for more thorough discussion and planning.

- Example: "Is this set in stone or is there flexibility?" and "Why was only 6 months allocated in the process for the reveal to the public?"

**Role of Community Feedback:** Respondents are questioning how their input will be incorporated into the final decisions and whether their concerns are being adequately addressed.

- Example: "How will you ensure input from residents goes into the final plan?" and "Will the district representatives really take into account the citizen's desires?"

#### **4. Educational and Logistical Concerns**

**Impact on Students and Staff:** Questions focus on how the proposed changes will affect students, including concerns about class sizes, access to enrichment opportunities, and the handling of transitions.

- Example: "What will the cost of the additional load on consolidated schools be?" and "What is the plan to help ease and guide students through this transition?"

**Logistics of School Closures and Mergers:** Respondents are concerned about practical aspects such as the future use of closed school buildings, transportation logistics, and the integration of students from different schools.

- Example: "What will happen with the empty buildings?" and "How will this change sports and rec programs?"

#### **5. Questions on Broader Strategic Considerations**

**Consideration of Mergers with Other Districts:** Some questions explore the potential for mergers with other districts, such as Montpelier, and how these could impact the overall strategy.

- Example: "Which scenarios set us up best for merger with Montpelier and potentially other districts?" and "Can we speed up the conversations with the Montpelier/Roxbury district?"

**Concerns About Long-Term Community Impact:** There are questions about the broader implications of school closures on community dynamics, property values, and demographic changes.

- Example: "To what extent do you think that the Board has a responsibility to consider impacts on the communities where schools are closed?" and "How would this change impact our class grade arrangement?"

#### **6. Calls for Alternative Solutions**

**Interest in Exploring Other Options:** Several respondents suggest exploring alternative solutions to school closures, such as top-down administrative consolidation or seeking new funding sources.

- Example: ""Why not address HR salary + benefit costs first?" and "Is this the best idea you have? What about preparing for and prioritizing talks with Montpelier?"



## DRAFT CRITERIA synthesized from the 7/31/24 Finance Committee Meeting

Practices and processes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate clearly and with greater detail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share data</li> <li>Elaborate on costs AND benefits</li> <li>Share proposals with credible arguments</li> <li>Define equity</li> <li>Provide more information on options</li> </ul> </li> <li>Answer specific questions from the community data (FAQ)</li> <li>Acknowledge when data is inconclusive</li> <li>Communicate process, timeline, and opportunities for community input</li> </ul>

Criteria	Core Belief
Impact on student well-being	Well-Being
Travel time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Length of bus rides for various age groups</li> <li>Travel time for families to school</li> </ul>	Well-Being Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging
Implications of moving 6th grades to U-32 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student impacts: social, emotional, academic</li> <li>System impacts</li> </ul>	Well-Being Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction
Sustainability and fiscal responsibility	Transparent and Responsible Leadership
Does this configuration set us up to enter a merger conversation with other districts?	Transparent and Responsible Leadership
Implications of different proposals on specific communities/towns and the community as a whole <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Per pupil spending (we can't control taxes)</li> <li>Community viability</li> <li>Property values</li> <li>Community well-being</li> <li>Pros/Cons for all scenarios/options</li> <li>Impact of closures on towns (center towns most impacted)</li> </ul>	Community Engagement and Relationships Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging
Specific educational improvements and opportunities for students	Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging
Allow class sizes that meet Education Quality Standards and are sufficient to provide rich instruction	Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction Transparent and Responsible Leadership
Maintain full time nursing and counseling	Well-Being Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging

Maintain or expand enrichment opportunities that are consistent across the system (music, art, world language, etc.)	Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging
Limit (or eliminate) shared positions across schools and very small FTE	Humanity, Justice, Community, and Belonging