



SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR ACT 73 REDISTRICTING TASK FORCE

DUE October 6, 2025; submitted October 3, 2025.

1. **What is the full name of your school district or supervisory union?** Windham Northeast Supervisory Union (WNESU)

2. **Have you discussed redistricting as a school board? Yes. If yes,**
 - a. **What information, insights or details have those conversations included?** The WNESU Board has discussed the implications of Act 73. At a warned meeting held on June 18, the board unanimously passed a motion expressing our intent to remain a part of a supervisory union while also expressing the board's willingness to explore the possibility of helping to create a larger supervisory union with contiguous cooperating districts and supervisory unions. Subsequently, each of the member districts of the WNESU voted at warned public meetings to express their intent to remain part of a supervisory union model. The intent of the WNESU and member districts was transmitted to the Act 73 Redistricting Task Force in an emailed letter sent by the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union (WNESU) superintendent of schools and board chair on September 4.

This is the language of the motion approved on June 18 by the WNESU board:

MOTION The Windham Northeast Supervisory Union (WNESU), being composed of the member districts of Athens-Grafton, Rockingham Town School District, Westminster Town School District, and the Bellows Falls Union High School, moves to remain a supervisory union, within a larger governance region to the extent practical, under the terms of H.454 as approved on June 16, 2025 by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Vermont. The WNESU will submit our statement of intent to the new Redistricting Task Force when it is established and will reach out to contiguous school districts and supervisory unions to explore combining into a larger supervisory union. In addition, we will continue to develop the Board of Cooperative Education Services proposal the WNESU, with other supervisory unions in our region, has submitted to the Vermont Agency of Education. Our purpose is to optimize cost-savings and efficiencies where possible while maintaining local democratic engagement, oversight and accountability in order to achieve excellent educational outcomes for our communities' children and youth at a cost Vermonters can afford.

3. **Has your school board taken, or do you plan to take, a formal position on redistricting? Yes. See the statement above. If yes,**
 - a. **How is your school board engaging with the community on this issue?** The school board includes updates about the work of the Redistricting Task Force as part of updates from Superintendent of Schools as well as the Rural School Community

Alliance at each of its regularly warned public meetings, and has done so since the passage of Act 73. Further, the WNESU website includes a section on Act 73 to help inform the community. The site includes legislator contact information.

- b. **How will your board share its formal position and with whom?** To date, the WNESU School Board has shared its formal position via school board meetings and the WNESU website.
 - c. **What data or information is your board requesting, using or accessing to inform its position?** The school board is considering data and information from a variety of sources, including and not limited to minutes of the deliberations of and public comments submitted to the Act 73 Redistricting Task Force; research, public comment and position papers developed or compiled by the Rural School Community Alliance; WNESU data about student performance and attitudes; WNESU data about engagement of students, families and community members; budget information; historical data and information from Town Meetings, public votes and documents developed during implementation of Vermont's Act 46; as well as current national dynamics affecting performance and funding at state and local levels.
4. **How does the current structure of your supervisory union/supervisory district support improved student outcomes for all students preK-12?** We begin with the overall dedication and qualifications of talented and dedicated teachers and staff throughout the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union and its member districts. The townspeople of the WNESU member districts tend to be engaged, supportive and vocal in their support. With those as foundations, at a practical level, the WNESU and each of its member districts have instituted instructional leadership teams (ILTs) within the overall WNESU and at each member school district. **Through the combined instructional leadership provided at the SU level and the strength of the local principals and school-based ILT and school communities, WNESU member districts are seeing tangible improvements in students' academic performance, attitudes and behaviors.** The WNESU has a coordinated curriculum in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics as well as a coordinated Responsive Classroom initiative in grades K-8. The WNESU Restorative Practices coordinator supports K-12 students. The WNESU's Farm-to-School Foods Nutrition Program ensures students have high quality food which contributes to higher attendance and engagement, while also helping to support local farmers.
5. **What are the strengths of your current district/system?** The WNESU has seen the strengths first-hand from a supervisory union model. **The model allows for strong community engagement and oversight, with curricular opportunities that reflect the various towns' character and values, while benefiting from student services and cost-based efficiencies made possible through the supervisory union.** Tangible examples include:
- enhanced quality and cost savings throughout the member districts when the SU adopted a nutrition services farm-to-school model described above, first developed by member school district, Westminster, with the help of local farmers;
 - collaboration to achieve efficiencies in the areas of professional development, financial and administrative services, technology, special education, and transportation;

- collective bargaining agreements with both teachers and support staff that provide for a consistent salary schedule and benefits throughout the member districts of the supervisory union;
- policies within both the teacher and support staff collective bargaining agreements that allow those employees to retain seniority and credit for years of service no matter which SU member school district employs them;
- highly qualified central office staff and strong leadership that had already worked with our member school districts to implement evidence-based literacy curricula consistent with the science of reading and math curricula before those were required by the state;
- individualized student monitoring expertise among central office curriculum specialists who have established improved systems to assist each school district in measuring student progress; and
- place-based programs in our largely rural schools that make significant use of school and community outdoor spaces for high-quality, experiential, nature-based and outdoor learning;

The SU model allows for coherence, shared commitment to equitable academic and social outcomes, while maintaining local town members' agency, accountability and engagement.

6. **What are the challenges or weaknesses of your current district/system?** Most of the challenges within the current system are tied to factors out of the control of the member town school boards; examples include annual double-digit increases in health care premiums for educators covered with collective bargaining agreements and lack of affordable and available housing for young families with school-aged children.
7. **What opportunities do you see as a member of a bigger district?** We see no appreciable benefits as part of a larger school district or supervisory union; however, we are committed to working collaboratively with contiguous and other districts to improve student outcomes and achieve cost efficiencies, such as through the WNESU Board's recent approval to join a southeast Vermont Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).
8. **What resources, support or policy changes would you need to seize those opportunities?** We are currently working to seize those opportunities via the BOCES model.
9. **What risks or concerns do you see as a member of a bigger district?** A major risk is that massive disruption will occur without any cost savings, and associated negative impacts will occur. Examples are the significant risks to student well-being, academic achievement, community viability, spiralling costs without transparency, and to democracy and community engagement. There are real risks associated with the high potential for school closures, increased time on school buses, and diminished economic viability in the WNESU's rural communities. Loss of qualified personnel, transition costs, diminished morale, and reduced community participation are significant risks. When students are bused greater distances, their after-school enrichment opportunities are diminished. When local businesses and community services are no longer visited by students and their families, those communities' economic and social resilience are impacted. When Act 46 was first proposed with its similar efforts at school district consolidation, the WNESU proposed an

alternative governance structure. Consolidation was not recommended by the acting Secretary of Education at the time; however, the alternative governance structure was not approved and the Vermont State Board of Education forced the consolidation of non-contiguous WNESU school districts, Athens-Grafton and Westminster. Administration and school boards found no appreciable cost savings would occur from consolidation. However, the forced consolidation occurred. During the three years following that consolidation in 2018, there was diminished participation in annual school district meetings among the townspeople in the three affected towns and no benefits in terms of student opportunities or cost efficiencies. As a result of townspeople's efforts in the three towns, Westminster was reinstated as a town school district by the Vermont State Board of Education in 2021, to begin services again effective July 1, 2022. Since that time, community engagement, oversight and accountability has again increased.

10. Are there other districts that you believe would make good partners for consolidation or collaboration to expand opportunities for students?

Board members and administration have been having informal conversations with contiguous school districts and supervisory unions. The WNESU board voted on September 17 to participate as a member of the new southeast Vermont BOCES. The BOCES model provides means to expand opportunities for students that also benefit taxpayers. **If yes,**

- a. **Please list the districts and provide any supporting information.** The following are considering membership (or have already voted to join) in the Southeast Vermont BOCES: Mountain Views Supervisory Union (**joined**), Springfield School District (**joined**), Two Rivers Supervisory Union, Windham Central Supervisory Union, Windham Northeast Supervisory Union (**joined**), Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (**joined**), Windham Southwest Supervisory Union, Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union (**joined**). That is five to date.
- b. **Has your district had conversations with these neighbors about potential collaboration or consolidation?** Yes. **If yes,**
- c. **Please specify the potential collaboration and/or consolidation discussed.** Currently, **the most promising collaboration is through the BOCES model.** It allows for improved student services as well as cost efficiencies, consistent with the intent of Act 73, without disrupting the current governance model which is appropriately scaled for the geography and characteristics of the WNESU's largely rural towns and villages.

11. **Additional comments.** None at this time. We are happy to respond to questions.

12. **Please provide your name and email address.** Cheryl Charles, Board Chair, WNESU, Cheryl.charles@wnesu.com.