

Executive Summary

Act 46 of 2015 required school districts to pursue mergers in order to provide greater educational opportunities to students in the most efficient manner. Section 9 of Act 46 requires that School Districts that have not approved a merger that meets the Act 46 requirements file a report with State Board of Education that sets forth how a school district proposes to move forward to meet the Act 46 goals. This report is filed in order to meet the requirements of Section 9 of Act 46 and to set forth the vision of TUS to improve educational opportunities for our students and meet the goals of Act 46.

Twinfield Union School (TUS) submits this proposal to the Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont State Board of Education to meet its obligations under Section 9 of Act 46. TUS has, since the passage of Act 46 in 2015, taken seriously its obligations under the Act to substantially meet the five stated goals of Act 46. To accomplish this TUS discussed merger with two area school districts, Cabot and Danville, which, if it had been supported in all four communities, would have qualified as a “preferred structure” merger under the terms and conditions of Act 46. That merger proposal was approved by the State Board in May 2017 but the merger was not successful because the communities of Cabot and Danville both voted against the proposal in June. The two towns that comprise Twinfield Union School – Marshfield and Plainfield – both voted in the affirmative for the merger.

Following the failed merger vote, TUS worked diligently to develop an Alternative Governance Structure that would substantially meet the goals of Act 46. This work involved reaching out to a number of nearby Districts and Supervisory Unions to determine their interest in forming a merged District or in collaborating on developing an Alternative Governance Structure proposal. Details of the discussions since the failed merger vote in June are outlined in the following sections of this proposal. Since June 2017, the TUS Board of School Directors has sought out other options that would allow it to meet its obligations under Act 46, including:

- Inquiring about other potential arrangements with Cabot and Danville
- Approaching Montpelier regarding the possibility of merging
- Approaching Orange North SU (now the Central Vermont Supervisory Union) regarding the possibility of joining with their newly merged PK-12 district comprised of Williamstown and Northfield
- Discussing opportunities for merger or partnership with districts in the Barre Supervisory Union
- Soliciting interest in working together with the districts of Washington Central Supervisory Union on an Alternative Governance Structure proposal.

For reasons detailed in the following sections, none of these outreaches were successful, leaving TUS in a position of geographic isolation with no direction in which to turn.

In submitting this proposal, TUS is *not* proposing that TUS should simply be “left alone” to operate as it is now. The current state of TUS as a PK-12 school with a current enrollment of 352 students does not meet the desired operating size for a standalone district of 900 students

as set forth in Act 46. The current enrollment in the high school of 112 students at TUS presents a challenge in terms of offering the fullest possible range of high school programming opportunities. Currently, as a member of a two-school Supervisory Union with Cabot School (Washington Northeast SU), TUS is carrying approximately 66% of the cost for operating the Supervisory Union and its many consolidated functions – Superintendent, Curriculum, business office, special education, transportation, etc. (A significant contribution to the projected overall savings in the failed merger with Danville and Cabot would have resulted from those three districts being moved underneath a larger Supervisory Union.) Were TUS to be placed in a larger Supervisory Union, its proportional share of Supervisory Union fixed overhead costs would be expected to decrease.

The TUS Board wants to clearly convey that TUS currently provides a rich educational opportunity to its students through the creative and innovative application of resources. Students in high school benefit from a program known as Renaissance, a program operated by one teacher and a large pool of volunteers. In Renaissance, students identify areas of personalized study on an almost limitless range of subjects; design learning goals that can be evaluated under the current Proficiency-based Graduation standards; identify (with the help of the teacher) a suitable study mentor; and submit and receive proficiency credit that counts towards graduation. Renaissance studies range from foreign language studies, to engineering, to art studies, etc. all of which are driven by student interest and none of could be met with traditional high school course work. Renaissance is what the Agency had in mind when it promoted Act 77 in 2013. Other aspects of the TUS experience are rich and somewhat unique. TUS benefits from its placement on an 80-acre, environmentally-diverse campus, which allows students to begin their ecology studies in Pre-kindergarten. Students in elementary school all access a Tier-two intervention program called WIN (What I Need) which examines current student performance data and provides a daily intervention block four days a week to address areas where students are struggling academically; WIN also allows for enrichment time for those students who are academically on track and need enhanced exposure to higher grade-level material. TUS is PBIS School of Distinction and has made significant improvements in its social/emotional climate and instruction through its efforts to reward positive behaviors as opposed to simply punishing students who misbehave.

As set forth herein, TUS's proposal describes our vision for moving forward to meet the goals of Act 46. TUS is open to appropriate partnerships with other schools that improve educational opportunities for TUS students, while maintaining and continuing to build upon the school's hard work over the past several years to bring the school up to Agency-directed 21st century learning standards – PBGR, Act 77, Trauma-Informed school environment, etc. – overlooked or ignored by potential partners, and the Board asks the Agency of Education and the State Board of Education to be mindful of how much this small school has accomplished on its own as they think about placement and partnership opportunities.

The Twinfield Union School Board wants to make it abundantly clear to the State Board of Education that we are opposed to the closure of Twinfield Union High School. For the reasons stated herein, we believe Twinfield has a number of unique attributes that should be the

foundation for future change. Accordingly, our vision, based on community input, is that any combining of Twinfield with other districts should be accomplished in a manner that allows Twinfield High School to continue to operate.

Self-Assessment – Who is TUS, and What do the Communities Want?

Statement of Twinfield Values

The Twinfield Union School Board and the Twinfield Union community as a whole recognize that we are in the midst of change, and we are prepared to adapt the way we provide education to our community's students in light of the goals of Act 46. Whatever those changes may be, we will fiercely defend the core values that define us as a holistic community. Those who understand and share these values will instinctively understand what it means to be a member of the Twinfield Union community no matter the role – as a student, a family member, a community taxpayer with no children in school, a community volunteer, a teacher, a member of the support staff, or a school administrator. We ask the Agency and State Board to be mindful of these as you think about alternative structures or potential partnerships with other Districts and Supervisory Unions. A successful blending of TUS into a new Supervisory Union alongside other operating Districts will be successful when we are matched with a partner that shares these core values:

- **A commitment to equity.** The notion of equity is engrained in the DNA of Twinfield Union School. Every school community has its challenges. Those that arise from poverty, lack of previous educational opportunity, learning differences, or childhood trauma are the most difficult to address. We are successful with *all* of our students because we fundamentally believe that *every* child can be successful and it is our number one job to remove impediments that may otherwise prevent that success. The interventions start early, with 3-4 year olds in our early childhood program right through the 12th grade and beyond. TUS is committed to the principles expressed in the concept of cradle-to-career.
- **Expanded Opportunities.** TUS was an early adopter of the principles for expanded opportunities for students as expressed in Act 77. We have students partaking in every available path that leads to success beyond secondary school. Personal learning plans start in grade 7. We offer integrated curriculum opportunities like the 9-10 Synapse program, that allows students to explore their unique passions in areas of math, science and literature in an integrated, co-taught program. We have students exploring new opportunities at our Tech Center partner, Central Vermont Career Center (where TUS has the highest percentage of non-resident enrolled students). We have students enrolled in early college. We help students who are not successful in traditional educational settings to complete their high school diploma at Adult Basic Learning. We have worked closely and successfully with VSAC for years, and just this year were chosen to be a three-year partner in VSAC's Aspirations program, which seeks to inculcate in our younger students that they have a path to life success beyond secondary education.

- **21st Century School Success Measures.** TUS has been a pioneer in understanding, defining, and implementing Proficiency-based Graduation Requirements. In September 2016, TUS started its first 9th grade class that will complete their high school career entirely within the constructs of proficiency-based assessment, and in June 2018 TUS will graduate its first 12th grade class with a proficiency-based diploma and transcript. To be this far ahead of many high schools in the State, TUS has had to “go it alone” on many of the challenges presented by the switch to proficiency-based metrics for school achievement. We implemented a system for tracking student proficiency that secondary students all know how to use, and that this year is available for parents to participate in. TUS has worked diligently with all of the colleges that our students are applying to, in order to ensure that the college will understand how we measure success and to ensure that our students are not impeded in the admission process because we don’t rely on traditional Carnegie Units to report student achievement.

In addition to seeking partners who share our values, we will be most interested in working with those partners who will value the work we have done, see it as a way to advance their own work, and not try to change what we think to be critical core values because our progress towards achieving these values are undervalued by the partner. We have invested a great deal of time, money, and emotional commitment in building a strong and successful school community to risk being slowed down or taken backwards in the name of simple cost savings, or by the lack of matched vision.

TUS and its communities are also sensitive to the challenges of geography in Vermont. At the forefront of all future partnership discussions will be the same concerns expressed when TUS participated in its merger study with Cabot and Danville – we don’t think that excessive time spent on buses is a good use of our students’ time. The Twinfield School physical infrastructure, with a well-maintained school building and incredibly rich and vibrant outside environment, is ripe for growth. We have room for more students, and we have a unique environment for hosting outdoor environmental studies programs. We have a mindset that is open to reconfiguration of programs with a partner so long as it focuses on improving opportunities and does not negatively impact our students.

Whatever happens in the next months and years, what TUS wants most for itself is to not have to go backwards. TUS has a lot to offer partner schools, as an example of child-centered learning, as an example of how a community can wrap itself in a positive way around its school, as an example of what the Agency of Education has been expressing as a model for learning in the 21st century. TUS is open and interested in working with others to achieve these goals.

School Profile

Twinfield Union School, Mark Mooney, Principal

Twinfield Union School is a small unique PK through grade 12 school. We see our small size as an advantage. It has allowed us to build strong relationships with our students and families that help us to meet diverse student needs. We have been able to establish strong

school/community partnerships. Community members serve as mentors to our elementary students while others serve as academic advisors in our Renaissance program. In a time when Vermont is looking to redefine how schools operate, our small dedicated staff has been at the cutting edge of the move toward creating multiple and flexible pathways for students. Starting with the 2017-18 school year, all of our students will be earning a proficiency-based diploma.

Twinfield's 80-acre campus provides our students with a variety of outdoor learning opportunities throughout their school career. Elementary students participate in the ECO Program (Educating Children Outdoors) in conjunction with the North Branch Science Center. At the secondary level, many classes use our grounds to enhance instruction. We have a growing farm-to-school program which produces food for our salad bar. Our science program makes consistent use of our varied topography. There is a variety of trails in our wooded areas, we have a pond, streams and yes, a river runs through it. We have the capacity and the interest in developing an environmental studies program in the future.

In the elementary school the *WIN (What I Need) Block* provides all elementary students with an opportunity for individual or small group instruction in the areas of language arts and math based on student personal needs. We no longer pull students from classrooms to provide supplemental instruction as all students get focused instruction based on their ability whether they are above, below or on grade level.

Our current middle school design continues to effectively meet the needs of our students. The flexible middle school schedule and strong middle school team concept has proven to be very beneficial to all types of learners. Middle school teachers have worked to incorporate the latest in brain research into their instruction and continue to develop meaningful integrated units of study for our middle school students.

Our most popular themed unit is our Survival Unit, which takes place in the spring of students' 8th grade year. The unit provides challenges that build student's skills and confidence in preparation for a 4-day wilderness canoe trip. Students craft individual paddles, collectively build a wood-strip canoe, learn canoe/camping skills, write daily reflections, study local ecology, survey an island, practice wilderness first aid and develop leadership skills along the way.

At the high school level Twinfield has a long history of personalizing student learning experiences using multiple and flexible pathways. Students have personalized and broadened their educational options through the *Renaissance* program. Hundreds of students have designed rigorous studies with community volunteers, interned with experts, shadowed at job sites and audited college courses. The New England Secondary School Consortium and League of Innovative Schools have recognized Twinfield's capacity to personalize and bring relevance to every student's educational experience.

The League of Innovative Schools has also recognized Twinfield's forward-thinking *Synapse* program with its underlying brain-based principle that students learn best when subjects are not taught in isolation, but rather when they are integrated so that students can see and make

their own connections between academic disciplines. Freshmen and sophomores are receiving their English, science and social studies curriculum through an integrated approach with teachers from these three content areas working collaboratively. Working with themed units of study, teachers have created opportunities for their students to better understand the world around them.

Twinfield is a 1-to-1 school. All of our high school students receive a MacBook computer for their use 24/7 during the school year. We believe this move to becoming a 1-to-1 school has helped us to level the playing field for all of our students.

What Does the Community Want?

Prior to Twinfield's involvement in the merger study and 706b committees, there was a concerted effort to gauge the interests and needs of the various stakeholders that make up the TUS community. Separate forums were conducted with students and taxpayers. A vision for TUS in the near- and long-term emerged, and these results informed the work of the study committees, through the participation of the Marshfield and Plainfield committee members.

Student Forum Summary February 2017:

What students need to know and be able to do to become happy and successful adults?

- Structure but space
- Fun
- The knowledge that money can't buy happiness
- Time to explore passions (out of the building opportunities, Renaissance)
- Someone for support

10 Years from now...	
<p>What I would like to be the same</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close community • Staff knows kids and care about them • Renaissance/personalized learning • Community members want to be involved • Tight conversations and relationships with teachers • Mentoring program • No judgment- Respect among HS students • Older students interacting with younger students 	<p>What I would like to be different</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More money for education • More afterschool activities (teen center, clubs) • Less pressure to teach to the test • Budget for travel • More arts, music, theater • More electives, or school day opportunities (allow students to find their passions) • Better, healthy foods in the cafeteria • Abolish private schools • Greater equality between humanities classes and STEM classes • More explanation on the grading system • Take the time to understand the meaning of education • LIFT program • A real performing arts center • More support for those that are lost, or don't know where they want to go with their education
<p>Other Thoughts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the proficiency-based grading system is new it is kind of messy 	<p>Other thoughts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising for field trips can be very stressful for financially struggling families

Community Member Summary October-November 2016:

The following questions were asked of community members to help inform what people in Marshfield and Plainfield value in education. The information has been shared with our Act 46 committee members working with committee members from Cabot and Danville.

The summary of the responses was organized by Sue McCormack from Everyday Democracy and Ken Templeton from Great Schools Partnership. Sue and Ken were able to look at the raw data, and make a summary with an outside perspective. Their summary has been shortened and is given below. There were 41 participants at the in-person events, and 26 online survey responses.

Focus Questions of Community Nights and Survey

What do these young people need to know and be able to do to become happy and successful adults?

1. Knowledge and skills, including basic math and literacy skills, practical life skills (e.g.: balancing a checkbook), and broad, transferable skills, like communication, creativity, critical thinking, and resilience.
2. Experiences and environments, such as safe learning environments in school, exposure to outdoor education, and having creative outlets and opportunities for extracurricular learning.

Ten years from now, what do you hope will be the same?

1. Current academic offerings, especially flexible learning opportunities such as the Renaissance program and outdoor learning.
2. Caring and supportive teachers and adults in students' lives.
3. Small, family like atmosphere in our schools and the close relationships among older and younger students and students and teachers.
4. Extra-curricular opportunities such as mentoring and outdoor learning opportunities

Ten years from now, what do you hope will be different?

1. Interest in higher expectations and more rigor including expanded flexible learning opportunities (such as the Renaissance program), expanded foreign language, and opportunities to be technology and world-literate.
2. Students that are independent and are ready for the world.
3. More collaboration among parents, teachers and schools.
4. Wider variety of learning opportunities, with particular interest in the arts. Survey respondents also mentioned the desire for additional clubs, sports, and activities along with transportation to make participation possible.

What thoughts do you want to share with the Act 46 study committee?

1. There is interest in student choice and opportunities for personalized learning experiences, while also ensuring that students have essential knowledge and skills. Increased academic opportunities for students was consistent feedback.
2. Consistent communication and opportunities for input.
3. Concerns about the impact of transportation on students and the students' sense of belonging.
4. The theme for resource allocation is primarily about transportation, and concerns that students may be unsupervised or that transportation will take away from students' educational experiences.

Our school and community can continue working together by....

Maintaining an inclusive approach, and reaching out to all members of our community, will be critical.

The perspectives of the students and their adult caregivers presented on the previous two pages paint a picture of a larger school community where students care about their own learning, and the adults care about and believe in the school's ability to take care of the students (their children). It is neither a platitude nor an exaggeration to say that TUS is a child-centered learning community. Are there challenges that a small school like TUS faces? Of course – every small school in Vermont struggles to balance the cost of education against the community's capacity to pay the bills. But the TUS community taxpayers continue to support a learning environment that values art – two visual art teachers and two music teachers. A small high school cannot offer the breadth of course offerings that larger neighbors can – so TUS fills in the gaps with a popular Renaissance Program that offers students the opportunity to self-select special interest studies where they learn with the support of community mentors. The Renaissance Program was doing Act 77 Flexible Pathways work before Act 77 was a twinkle in the Legislature's eye. Small rural communities in Vermont seem to be especially challenged by issues related to poverty – TUS has a thriving school mentorship program that pairs needy students with caring community members. While some schools are just starting to come to terms with the effects of childhood trauma, TUS (along with its Washington NE partner school, Cabot) is in its second year of building a Trauma-Informed school environment. Schools are challenged by rising costs for Special Education – at TUS, every student in elementary school gets Tier 2 intervention four blocks each week, intervention that is driven by students needs data. Finally, while many schools are in the early stages of transforming to Proficiency-Based Graduation, TUS will, in 2018, graduate its first senior class with a proficiency-based diploma and transcript; this year's 9th grade class has started its high school years in a complete PBGR format.

Act 46 Activities

Process

The Twinfield Union School District (TUS) has been actively seeking a governance structure that aligns with the five objectives of Act 46 since the act was first passed in 2015. TUS is a Union School District first formed in 1970 to meet the educational needs of Plainfield and Marshfield. The history of the formation of this union school district is out of scope for this submission; suffice it to say here that the two communities have experience with the 706 process for forming a unified district, and therefore we have been open to the merger discussion prompted by Act 46.

Investigation of options began in the summer of 2016 with the formation of an Act 46 Study Committee in partnership with the Cabot School District and the Danville School District. All three districts currently operate a PK-12 school and the joining of these three districts under Act 46 into a preferred-structure, single District, made sense from a geographic, structural and financial perspective. The four communities – Marshfield, Plainfield, Cabot, and Danville-formed a 706b committee (the C-D-T group) in September 2016 and worked for several months to explore preferred merger options and to develop a 706 proposal for review by the State Board. All four communities had active participants in the study committee's work; multiple public forums were held by each town (Marshfield/Plainfield held joint forums under the TUS

structure); all of the communities sought and utilized media opportunities available from local newspapers of record and social media (Front Porch Forum, Facebook, etc.). As the merger votes drew near, there was an increasing level of interest from the community, especially in Cabot, where the 706 committee was considering options that would have affected the operating structure of that community's school, i.e., the closure of Cabot High School.

The 706 committee submitted a proposal and presented to the State Board in May 2017, followed by merger votes in the respective towns on June 20, 2017. The merger was agreed to in Marshfield and Plainfield, but Cabot and Danville both voted 'no' and with all four communities having been designated as 'necessary' under the proposal, the merger failed. Since then, TUS has been exploring its options to meet the obligations of Act 46. Some of the data seen by the State Board when it reviewed the C-D-T proposal can be found in the Appendix to this proposal; this data has not changed substantially since June of 2017. The rest of this proposal outlines what TUS has done since the C-D-T merger failed in June, and outlines what TUS is prepared to do/accept in terms of its obligations to Act 46.

[Act 46 Considerations since June 2017](#)

Because the two communities that comprise the Twinfield Union School District both voted affirmatively for the C-D-T merger, the TUS Board feels first and foremost that a merger with one or more like-structured school districts is in the best interest of TUS. Since June 2017, the TUS Board has pursued the following options:

[A preferred merger with Cabot and/or Danville](#)

In early July, WNESU Superintendent Mark Tucker reached out to Cabot and Danville to test their interest in coming back to the table to explore alternative operational arrangements that might result in a reconsideration by Cabot and/or Danville in a preferred merger with TUS.

Superintendent Tucker contacted CCSU Superintendent Mathew Forest in early July to inquire whether he thought Danville would be interested in meeting to discuss merger opportunities with TUS. Superintendent Forest said he would discuss this inquiry with the Danville Board, and said he would let Superintendent Tucker know if there was interest. No expression of interest by Danville resulted from that conversation, and the combination of Danville's silence along with reports in the press of other Act 46 explorations by Danville (e.g., collaboration with Saint Johnsbury Academy, and a renewal of merger talks with Blue Mountain Union that had started even before the unsuccessful C-D-T merger vote) sent a clear message to the TUS Board that Danville was not interested in further exploration of partnership with TUS.

Separately, Superintendent Tucker arranged a joint meeting of the TUS and Cabot School Boards on July 10, 2017, with the express purpose of restarting dialog between the two Boards to explore alternative merger possibilities following the failed merger vote. The TUS and Cabot Board met in July to discuss the failed merger vote and the possibility of moving forward. At the July meeting both TUS and Cabot raised concerns about how the Act 46 process and vote ended up. Following a difficult discussion where both parties attempted to clear the air, TUS

and Cabot agreed to meet in August to determine if a merger between TUS and Cabot was possible. Cabot ultimately cancelled the August meeting indicating that it had decided to pursue other options in order to comply with Act 46. With Cabot and Danville, the original merger partners, off the table, TUS finds itself with limited partnership alternatives.

Other Opportunities

Superintendent Tucker contacted three other area Supervisory Unions to explore opportunities for merger or joint Alternative Governance proposals:

- **Discussion with Montpelier** - Superintendent Tucker contacted Superintendent Brian Ricca of Montpelier Supervisory District to inquire whether Montpelier would like to meet to explore a merger between Montpelier and TUS. At the time, Montpelier had just completed its merger vote with Roxbury, and inquiries by Brian to his Board indicated no interest in starting up a new round of merger talks.
- **Discussion with Orange North Supervisory Union** – Williamstown had just passed its merger with Northfield (Central Vermont Unified Union School District) that is resulting in the expansion of Orange North (now known as the Central Vermont Supervisory Union) and the dissolution of Washington South SU. Superintendent Susette Bollard reported in an initial conversation with Superintendent Tucker that her communities were fatigued from the effort to achieve the merger that created the Central Vermont Unified Union School District and the separate merger of the Orange and Washington school districts (now, the Orange-Washington Unified Union School District). While TUS would have ‘fit’ the structure of the Central Vermont Unified Union School District, Superintendent Bollard said she doubted the communities had the energy to consider a merger with TUS. She did offer to bring the proposal to her Board, though at the time of the conversation they were awaiting certification of their merger by the Secretary of State, and she didn’t actually have a Board to discuss this idea with. So, similar to the outreach to Danville, there was no further conversation with Orange North.
- **Discussions with Barre Supervisory Union** – Patrick Healy, TUS Board Chair and Mark Tucker, WNESU Superintendent, had a cordial meeting with John Pandolfo, Superintendent; Sonya Spaulding, Chair, Barre City School Board; Chad Allen, Chair, Barre Town School Board; Paul Malone, Chair, Spaulding Union HS Board; and Guy Isabelle, Chair, Barre Supervisory Union Board on July 20, 2017. Purpose of the meeting was to assess interest level and possible configurations for a merger between TUS and some or all parts of the Barre SU.

Barre has their own ongoing struggle with mergers. Barre City voted in favor of a merger with Barre Town, but the Town has twice voted ‘no’ on the proposal. A fair question on their part was, “if we can’t get the town to merge with the city, how can we interest them in a larger merger that includes Twinfield?” We read that as an honest reflection, not a statement of disinterest on their part. Nonetheless, Barre Board Chairs understandably felt that their first responsibility was to resolve their “home issues” between the city and town.

Possible options that were floated were 1) Close TUS High School (TUS would become a PK-8 school) and send TUS High School students to Spaulding; and 2) Continue to operate TUS as a PK-12 school with shared programming opportunities. Both of these alternatives pose different operational structural questions. For example, given that Spaulding High School operates as a union school for Barre Town and Barre City, with each town operating its own PK-8 school, how would we fit the pieces together? If TUS opted to close its high school, would a District merger between TUS, Barre City and Barre Town make sense? Or, is the opportunity with Barre limited to having TUS join the Barre Supervisory Union as a standalone District? On July 20, these were questions that no one felt able to answer.

TUS already sends students to the Central Vermont Career Center at Spaulding High School, and there was a common interest expressed at the July meeting in exploring other partnership opportunities. One idea touched on was to take advantage of the real estate at TUS by operating a “satellite” campus at TUS for eco-studies. TUS has approximately 80 acres of land that includes woods, a stream, a small pond, and access to an adjoining rail trail. TUS already offers Eco programs starting in Pre-kindergarten. We wondered if this could be an extension to or replacement of small program already hosted at the Central Vermont Career Center. Given the slow progress in Barre towards resolving their own merger options, there has been no further conversation between Barre and TUS.

- **Washington Central** – On August 16, 2017, Patrick Healy, TUS Board Chair and Mark Tucker, WNESU Superintendent met with the respective Board Chairs from the communities that comprise the Washington Central Supervisory Union (Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, and Worcester), the Chair of the U-32 Middle/high school District and Superintendent Bill Kimball, to express TUS’s interest in exploring either a merger or in joining Washington Central SU as a member school District. As with Barre, there are some structural differences among and between the member districts that limit opportunities for merger. More to the point, however, is that the member districts in Washington Central have themselves been resistant to the concept of any merger amongst themselves.

The meeting on August 16 was brief, because the SU Board chair made it clear that what he wanted from the meeting was to get agenda items for a full Board meeting sometime in the future, at which time they would give a full airing to the possibility of doing something with TUS. That meeting was subsequently set for August 30, and TUS was given 15 minutes to present their interest to an “all-Boards” meeting of Washington Central SU. TUS Chair Healy presented to suggestions: 1) TUS would join Washington Central as a separate District. This is a possibility because regardless of any Act 46 decisions, Washington NE will be dissolved by July 1 2019; or 2) TUS would join Washington Central’s Alternative Governance Structure (AGS) proposal if they in fact decide to make such a proposal to meet their obligation under Act 46.

Neither suggestion was acted on by Washington Central, and here was no formal follow-up by their Board. At this writing Washington Central has not come to terms with what they will be proposing, but it does not include any districts outside the current Supervisory Union.

Proposed Governance Structure

As can be seen from the previous section, in the face of the failed merger with Cabot and Danville, TUS has limited options for meeting the District's obligations under Act 46. It's not for lack of interest or trying on the part of the TUS Board. Twinfield Union School is geographically surrounded by communities that have either met their obligations under Act 46 (e.g., Central Vermont Supervisory Union and its new unified districts), or are separately challenged to resolve merger/AGS alternatives (e.g., Cabot, Danville, and the member districts of Washington Central).

The Agency has indicated that Washington Northeast Supervisory Union cannot continue to operate as a Supervisory Union due to its small size, and the Secretary set a one to three-year window in 2016 during which WNESU would close down, regardless of the outcome of Act 46 decisions by its two member schools, TUS and Cabot School. The TUS Board has acknowledged this eventually since it first became apparent. Indeed, in considering the merger of Cabot, Danville and TUS, the greatest source of operational savings would have stemmed from the folding of Cabot and TUS into a larger Supervisory Union (Caledonia Central). So, no matter what else the State Board decides to do, TUS knows that it will be landing under the umbrella of a different Supervisory Union in another year or two from now. TUS expects to garner some financial benefit from that reassignment, though there have been no detailed examinations of projected savings (beyond those projected in the C-D-T merger) because TUS doesn't know where it will be placed. At this point in its history, TUS finds itself, through no fault of its own, without a "partner" with which to either merge or to propose an Alternative Governance Structure. That said, TUS is not without an opinion as to its future. The possibilities still before us – in no particular order of preference are:

Reassignment to Washington Central Supervisory Union. At this point in time (December 2017), we have no idea what is going to happen in Washington Central. Press reports say that they are working on an AGS proposal because the member communities do not wish to merge their governance structures into one unified school district. Formal and informal talks with Washington Central resulted in little more than an expression of interest in "maybe doing something with TUS (also Cabot) once we figure out what we are going to do ourselves." If the separate districts of Washington Central were to merge (or be merged by the State Board) then TUS would not match up structurally unless it changed its operating structure to become a PK-8 school (in which case, Twinfield students would go to U-32 or have high school choice). Even then, given the reluctance of the Washington Central member districts to merge on their own, it is highly questionable whether they would then be willing to accept a merger with TUS. And the structure of U-32 as a middle/high school (grades 7-12) is another structural impediment to a merger with TUS.

In the best case, at this point in time TUS would be amenable to a reassignment to Washington Central SU as a standalone district, with the same considerations for potential restructuring and merger as stated with the Barre Supervisory Union option.

Partnership with Cabot and/or Danville. The member communities of TUS – Marshfield and Plainfield – voted in favor of a merge with Cabot and Danville, and the TUS Board respects the communities’ decision by remaining open to the idea of a merger. It is certainly the case that some of the motivation for supporting this merger stemmed from anticipated tax incentives, which will not be available at this point in time if the districts are merged. The Cabot School Board decided not to discuss further merger possibilities with TUS after the failed vote in June, a decision that was disappointing to the TUS Board at the time but well within Cabot’s rights.

The financial impacts of a merger with Cabot or Cabot and Danville together differ from the merger that was approved by the voters in Marshfield and Plainfield last June. Accordingly, the Twinfield School Board strongly requests that the State Board not impose the merger that was approved last June in Marshfield and Plainfield on our communities. However, TUS would be willing to reopen discussions with Cabot and/or Danville to determine if a merger under different terms would be acceptable to all communities if Cabot and Danville express interest in these discussions.

Merger/Reassignment to Barre Supervisory Union. As mentioned before, in its current configuration (PK-12), TUS does not match structurally with any of the Districts in the Barre Supervisory Union, and we presume this limits our ability to form a merged district. As noted, the Twinfield School Board and the community at large are opposed to the closure of Twinfield High School. However, TUS would be open to exploring combining with the Barre Supervisory Union under a structure that would allow Twinfield High School to remain open.

TUS has not had the opportunity to explore the development of academic programming partnership opportunities between Spaulding High School and the high school at Twinfield Union, but TUS is amenable to such a collaboration and we sensed openness to the idea when we met with the Barre Supervisory Union Board Chairs in July. One option to move forward would be for the Agency to reassign TUS to the Barre Supervisory Union, which would not initially change the governance structure of TUS, but would at least make it clear who our partners in education are as we move forward. TUS believes that such an arrangement would move further consolidation out of the realm of imagination and into the realm of possibility.

TUS presents a unique opportunity to *any* nearby school that wishes to collaborate on programming. TUS is a leader in the development of proficiency-based graduation requirements – the class of 2018 will graduate with a proficiency-based transcript. TUS also has something that no other area District has – an 80-acre environmentally-diverse ecosystem surrounding the school building on property that belongs to the District. This available property was an attraction when TUSD was discussing the merger with Danville and Cabot, as a possible site for project-based learning programs in ecology and sustainability. Spaulding High School in Barre City, surrounded by granite plants and paved streets, has nothing like it. Whatever else

happens, TUS welcomes the opportunity to partner with any area school that is looking for programming that takes advantage of our unique real estate. Such programming would have to be planned with consideration of the transportation costs. Transportation in rural districts is trending toward cost prohibitive as there is a limited number of qualified drivers. This impacts schools such as TUS, which operates its own buses with drivers hired by the District, as well as the area busing companies (e.g., First Student) that contract for transportation services for other districts in Washington County.

Moreover, TUS would be amenable to a reassignment to Barre SU as a standalone district, with the same considerations for potential restructuring and merger as stated with the Barre Supervisory Union option.

In conclusion, TUS has worked diligently to comply with Act 46. TUS is committed to continue to work with the potential partners we have identified in this report to pursue viable options that will address the goals of Act 46. TUS will update the State Board of Education of progress that TUS makes in this regard. Moreover, TUS urges the State Board to seriously consider the values and preferences TUS has expressed in this report in any decisions made about the future of TUS under Act 46.

Submitted on behalf of the Twinfield Union Board of School Directors:

Patrick Healy, Chair
Scott Harris, Vice Chair
Chandra Miller
Lauren Cleary
Jill Wilson
Jon Groveman

Mark Tucker, Superintendent
Washington Northeast Supervisory Union

Appendices

Appendix 1: Enrollment Data

Current High School Enrollment (as of 10/1/17)

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total HS Enrollment
23	32	29	28	112

Analysis –Twinfield Enrollment Trends

K-12 Enrollment from FY04 to FY18 (Nov 1, 2017) (14 Years)		
2003-2004	2017-2018	% Change
491	317	-35.4%

Appendix 2: Educational Spending and Equalized Pupil Data

Twinfield - 5 Year Trends in Educational Spending

	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	Total % Change	Ave % Change/yr.
Twinfield	5,260,656	5,625,369	5,916,417	6,028,144	6,242,643	18.66%	3.73%

Twinfield - FY18 Educational Spending

	FY18
Twinfield	6,570,987

Twinfield - Five Year Trend in Total Equalized Pupil Counts

	Equalized Pupil Counts 2012-2013	Equalized Pupil Counts 2016 - 2017	5 Year Average Rate of Yearly Change
Twinfield	426.85	395.91	-1.5%

Twinfield - 5 Year Trends in Education Spending/Equalized Pupil

	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	Total % Change	Ave % Change/yr.
Twinfield	12,326	13,251	14,198	14,882	15,768	27%	5.6%

Twinfield - FY18 Education Spending/Equalized Pupil

	FY18
Twinfield	16,752

Appendix 3: Enrollment Teacher Staffing Data

K		Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3		Grade 4	
# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers
22	2	20	2	23	2	28	3*	26	*

**TUS Grades 3 and 4 are taught by a team of 3 teachers.*

Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers
27	2	22	1	26	4**	25	4**

***TUS Grade 7 and 8 are taught by a team of 4 teachers.*

Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12	
# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers	# Students	# Teachers
36	10*	28	*	31	*	28	*

**HS Staff listed teach all 4 grade levels.*

Note: Current

Appendix 4: Student/Teacher Ratios

K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio
11/1	10/1	12/1	18/1		14/1	22/1	13/1	

Note: Student/Teacher Ratios are not the same as class averages, particularly when looking at multi-age teams

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	9-12
Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio
-	-	-	-	12/1

Total Teacher Staffing in FTE's (Full Time Equivalent) K- 12

Total FTEs	FTEs/# of Students	Students per FTE	FTEs include core teachers and specials. Does not include Paraprofessionals, nurses or guidance.
44.8	342	8/1	

Appendix 5: Allied Arts K-8

Grade Levels	ART	MUSIC	PHYS.ED.	PLP	FOREIGN LANGUAGE	Library/Media	DESIGN TECH ED
K-6	40 min. 1x/wk.	40 min. 1x/wk.	40 min. 2x/wk.	N/A	None	K:45 min. 1x/wk. 1-2 45 min. 2x/wk.* 3-4:45 min. 1x/wk. 5-6:45 min. 1x/wk.	None
7-8	40min 4x/wk. for 10 wks.	40min 4x/wk. for 10 wks.	40min 4x/wk. for 10 wks.		Gr 7: 40min4x/wk. ½ semester French; ½ semester Spanish Gr 8: 40min4x/wk. For 1 semester	Collaboratively planned - No schedule	

Appendix 6. Smarter Balanced Test Results – 2017

English - % Proficient and Above			Math - % Proficient and Above	
Grade	Twinfield	Vermont	Twinfield	Vermont
3	44%	48%	47%	31%
4	45%	48%	36%	29%
5	40%	55%	40%	41%
6	52%	51%	42%	38%
7	57%	55%	36%	42%
8	56%	54%	20%	40%
11	28%	35%	28%	35%

Percentage of Students who are categorized as receiving:

- **Free and Reduced Lunch – 51%**
- **Support Services – 12%**

Appendix 7. Vermont High School Profiles - 2016

AVERAGE SAT TEST SCORES

2016 Average	Free and R	Reading	Math	Writing	Total
Cabot	60%	578	535	512	1625
Danville	38%	475	515	461	1451
Hanover High School	N/A	621	611	613	1845
Hartford High School	24%	509	517	483	1509
Montpelier High School	26%	587	555	559	1587
U-32 (2015)	30%	557	544	525	1626
Twinfield	51%	520	519	515	1554
Woodstock Union HS	28%	563	556	537	1656
Vermont	44%	522	525	507	1554
US (2013)	N/A	496	514	488	1498

COLLEGE MATRICULATION 2016

	Non Free/ R	4 Yr. College	2 Yr. College	Total College
Cabot	40%	63%	8%	71%
Danville	62%	68%	7%	75%
Hanover	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hartford	76%	58%	9%	67%
Montpelier	74%	72%	0 %	72%
Twinfield	49%	44%	4%	48%
U-32 (2015)	70%	56%	12%	68%
Windsor	60%	40%	12%	52%
Woodstock	72%	70%	8%	78%
Vermont	56%			52% (2013)

Appendix 8. Profile of Teacher Corps

Professional Study			Years of Service		
	Number	%	#/Years	Number	%
BA	8	16%	0-5	7	14%
BA +15	4	8%	6-15	16	32%
BA+20			15+	27	54%
BA +30	7	14%			
BA + 45	0	0			
MA	16	32%			
MA +15	7	14%			
MA +30	8	16%			
MA +45	0	0			
PHD	0	0			

Appendix 9: DISTRICT ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Statement of Values (Property, Buildings, Etc.)**Twinfield: \$10,283,223.00**

Name	Property Type	Address 1	Building Value	Business Personal Property	Site Improv. Insurable	BI/EE	Total Insured Value
School House	School	6328 US Rt 2	\$82,309	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000,000	\$1,082,309
Twinfield School	School	106 Nasmith Brook Rd	\$10,260,900	\$766,500	\$306,600	\$0.00	\$11,334,000
Twinfield High Storage	Storage	106 Nasmith Brook Rd	\$22,323	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$22,323

Short and Long Term Reserve FundsTwinfield: **As of FY16 Audit:** \$65,283 Reserve Fund, \$25,000 Capital Projects**Short and Long Term Debt**Twinfield: **As of FY16 Audit:** \$696,201**Short (5 year) and Long (5+ years) Term Capital/Facility Needs (Buildings and Technology)**

Replace panel boxes: \$100,000 (over 4 years)

Paving project: \$90,000 (Partially completed 2017, to be finished 2018)

Boiler replacement: \$ 535,000 (approved- payments over 10 years – completed Nov 1, 2017)

Locker and bathroom renovations: \$50,000 (Partially completed 2017, to be finished 2018)