

CABOT/DANVILLE/TWINFIELD ACT 46 MERGER COMMITTEE

Options Being Considered – January 2017

What are the goals of Act 46?

The primary goals of Act 46 are to increase the quality and variety of educational opportunities for students and improve operational efficiencies of districts. The law aims to accomplish this through the sharing of resources in newly created entities that will benefit from economies of scale.

Why is this important for the Cabot, Danville and Twinfield school communities?

Enrollment at all three schools has declined, resulting in some reductions in staff, limiting some student opportunities. At the same time, all our schools are seeking to expand options for more opportunities for students, particularly in high school, to achieve their individual goals. The hope is that collaboration among schools can help meet all these goals.

How are the school districts structured now?

Twinfield Union and Cabot are school “districts” which each serve grades pre-kindergarten (pre-k) through 12 in the Washington Northeast Supervisory Union. Danville is a pre-k district in the Caledonia Central Supervisory Union, which also includes Barnet and Walden, which serve pre-k through 8 and Peacham, which serves pre-k through 6. These districts provide tuition vouchers for their secondary students above the grades at which their schools operate. Teacher contracts, special education, business functions, transportation and other educational and administrative functions are provided through the respective supervisory unions.

What is happening with Act 46 merger discussions in our communities?

- The three school boards of Cabot, Danville and Twinfield each voted to join a Committee to explore whether the three districts can come together in a way that will benefit the students and residents of all three communities, meeting the goals of the Act.
- Barnet and Walden have joined with Waterford, currently a district of the Essex-Caledonia Supervisory Union, in an Act 46 merger Committee. That Committee is considering forming a district operating three schools at the pre-k – 8 levels while continuing to provide tuition vouchers for grades 9 – 12. They are working on a report and articles of agreement.
- Peacham is considering options with other pre-k – 6 school districts.

What is the status of the Cabot/Danville/Twinfield Committee work now?

The Committee has considered many variations of structural changes that could be considered in a merger. They have voted to present two merger options that they see as most viable to their communities for input as well as the option of not forming a merged district.

• Option One

- The three schools continue to operate pre-k through grade 8 schools as they are now.
- Twinfield Union and Danville High Schools continue to operate, building on the existing strengths of those high schools (more Advanced Placement and college credit bearing courses at Danville High School; more integrated, proficiency based and self-designed courses at Twinfield Union High School).
- Cabot High School, grades 9 – 12, would no longer operate.
- High school students from all three communities/four towns would be able to attend either Danville or Twinfield Union High Schools and could choose to move between the high schools on a semester-by-semester basis.
- Transportation to the schools would be offered in the morning and after school.
- Co-curricular options, such as track, cross-country, skiing, drama, chess could expand.

- **Option Two**
 - The three schools continue to operate pre-k through grade 8 schools as they are now.
 - Twinfield Union and Danville High Schools continue to operate, building on the existing strengths of those high schools.
 - Cabot would offer a Project Based Learning (PBL) program, available to all interested students. This would be a full-day program that would work across disciplines to solve real world problems, building skills in creativity, communication, curiosity and collaboration as well as providing learning opportunities in the performing arts and design technology.
 - High school students from all three communities/ four towns would be able to attend either Twinfield Union or Danville High School or the Cabot PBL program and could choose to move between the schools/program on a semester-by-semester basis.
 - Transportation to the schools would be offered in the morning and after school.
 - Co-curricular options, such as track, cross-country, skiing, drama, chess could expand.
- **Option Three**
 - If the Committee determines that it is inadvisable to form a new district **or** if the proposal is voted down, there are three activities that individual boards are required to fulfill by November 30, 2017 to consider alternative structures:
 1. Conduct a self-evaluation of the district's ability to meet or exceed the goals of Act 46;
 2. Meet with the boards of other districts in and outside of the supervisory union to discuss ways to promote improvement towards the goals throughout the region; and
 3. Submit proposals individually or jointly to merge or work together in an alternative structure.
 - The State Board of Education is charged with issuing a statewide mandatory governance plan by November 30, 2018, based on a proposal created by the Secretary of Education. The Secretary of Education may consider alternative proposals. The plan may merge non-merging districts and cluster them into more unified systems when necessary.

What will happen to the Supervisory Unions?

This merger is proposed to be part of a “side-by-side” supervisory union governance structure. If approved, the pre-k through 12 Cabot/Danville/Twinfield District would be part of a new supervisory union with the newly merged pre-k through 8 Barnet/Walden/Waterford District. It is not clear yet, how Peacham might fit it. The new supervisory union would, by law, share costs for administration, special education, and transportation. Given its small size, the current districts of Washington Northeast Supervisory Union would likely be assigned to a new supervisory union by the State Board of Education within two years if this merger proposal does not move forward.

When will a plan be ready and what are the next steps?

The Act 46 Merger Committee is seeking input during January. The Committee is working to create a plan and Articles of Agreement that would go to the Secretary of the Agency of Education for comment and then on to the State Board of Education for their approval in April. Once approved by the State Board, the proposal and Articles of Agreement will be put before the voters of the three communities. The deadline for approval by voters in order to receive Act 46 incentives is July 1, 2017. The incentives include maintaining an annual \$151,000 Small Schools Grant that Cabot currently receives, a one time \$150,000 transition grant and tax reductions of \$.08, \$.06, \$.04 and \$.02 over the next 4 years. The proposed new district structure would be required to be put into place by July 1, 2019, but would more likely be put in place July 1, 2018.

How can I learn more about Act 46 and our Committee's work?

<https://sites.google.com/a/ccsuvt.net/act46/>

<http://education.vermont.gov/vermont-schools/school-governance/options#act46>