

Orange Windsor Supervisory Union

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**Superintendent's Report
November 9, 2007**

Two topics dominated the most recent Administrative Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, November 7. They were inter-district cooperation and enrollment histories.

Inter-district cooperation

Notwithstanding the fact that OWSU is more of a confederation of local schools than it is a school 'district,' there are many opportunities to share resources, knowledge, and expertise that can have an enriching, if not cost saving, impact on all member town schools. For example, over the past weeks, I have been sharing the message with school boards that five years from now the schools in this valley will not look of function like they do today or like they did in the past. Although there is no single, agreed upon 'vision' about what they will look like, there are some things we could do to give us a glimpse of the possibilities. In addition, they could provide some organizational and financial relief in the short term. Specifically, we spent a great deal of time discussing sharing some special education services for students.

We acknowledged that outside-the-district placement of some special education students in highly specialized programs is the logical response to students' needs outlined in their Individual Educational Plans (IEP's). This is particularly feasible, where there is a similarity of disabilities, a similarity in educational programs, and a critical mass of students with those characteristics. Therefore, we thought it wise to begin to look at the feasibility of creating our own 'in house' or supervisory union-wide program.

In addition to looking at numbers of students with particular disabilities and their educational programs, our far-ranging discussion caused us to look at logistical issues such as transportation and its costs. We discussed the role of the family and parents' need to review new programs and placements as part of deciding which school best meets their child's needs. We looked at the numbers of students, their grade level, their disabilities, and the possible commonality of their educational programs. In addition, we discussed possible school affiliations for such a program, whether or not it could and should be housed on an existing school campus, adjacent to it, or simply nearby.

Although we cautioned each other that the benefits of combining students for a regional program may not yield short-term financial gains, we believe that we need to research special education outside placements, think about creating a local programs and to look at possible long-term financial savings. We also agreed that the OWSU Special Services Director will begin the inquiry immediately with the help of the superintendent. Meanwhile, the building-based administrators will review their facilities and support personnel to share the feasibility of hosting a special program in or near their school.

Enrollment History

Given the contemporary discussion about school funding and the firestorm created when the legislature passed Act 82, the Administrative Cabinet reviewed OWSU enrollment history over the past five years.

Grade	Chelsea	Newton	Tunbridge	Royalton	Sharon	Total	Yearly % Loss
K	11	10	8	26	11	66	
1	15	16	11	26	13	81	
2	12	14	12	20	8	66	
3	12	18	9	20	14	73	
4	14	12	13	29	15	83	
5	11	9	13	16	8	57	
6	11	13	11	27	17	79	
7	5	10	19	30		64	
8	4	8	13	29		54	
9	16			35		51	
10	16			52		68	
11	30			45		75	
12	17			54		71	
total FY08	174	110	109	409	86	888	-4%
SY 07	193	111	112	414	97	927	-7%
SY 06	214	110	126	437	115	1002	-6%
SY 05	241	112	124	468	125	1070	-4%
SY 04	236	137	138	479	119	1109	-5%
SY 03	257	144	139	505	125	1170	
07 to '08							
# Difference	19	1	3	5	11	39	
% Difference	-10%	-1%	-3%	-1%	-11%	-4%	
5 YR DIFF	83	34	30	96	39	282	

% DIFF	32%	24%	22%	19%	31%	24%	
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From this statistical foundation, we discussed the developmental, the educational, and the community needs of students and families. We acknowledged that, although it may difficult to sustain community-based schools in the face of dwindling numbers of students, there appears to be a great deal of political will to do so, as witnessed by two merger votes (in Sudbury & Whiting and in Essex, Essex Junction & Westford) which went down to defeat at the polls this week. However willing the residents of our communities are to sustain their schools, we realize that we need to emphasize the high quality education that our students receive and attend to the costs associated with this education. With reference to the first topic of this report, we are committed to finding additional ways in which we can supplement and support each other's educational endeavors.