

Presenting Your Alternative Governance Structure Proposal

Tips for Your Meeting with the Agency of Education

Act 46, Vermont's 2015 education governance law, requires school boards and communities around the state to explore possibilities for new governance structures. Between January and May, 2018, Vermont communities interested in retaining their supervisory union structures will be presenting their "Alternative Governance Structure" (or AGS, also known as "Section 9") proposals to representatives from the Agency of Education. This document offers general guidance for those at this stage.

Your Community, Your Proposal

School boards and community members who have already been through this process offer the following reminders based on their experience.

- Prior to your meeting with the Agency of Education (AoE), review the pre-meeting questions sent to you from the AoE as a school board. Decide together on your answers and which points you most want to emphasize. You can either put your answers in writing or in presentation form. If you feel you have insufficient time ahead to prepare, ask to be rescheduled at a later date.
- Prepare the written response to the questions and send it in by email the morning of the meeting or day before, or prepare it in presentation form for the meeting.
- If you are planning to do a presentation, time it for a maximum of 15-20 minutes long, saving 10 minutes for questions. Take charge of your own time—i.e. you may wish to tell them you will take questions at the

end, but would prefer no interruptions during the presentation.

- At the meeting, address the pre-meeting questions (feel free to refer to your written document), and tell your local story of how you came to your decision to make an AGS application. Be clear that this is your decision after extensive study, and that it is the best way to meet the goals of the law at this time.
- Describe in detail how you have addressed the goals of the law. Remember that meeting the goals of the law through an AGS is clearly allowed under the law. You made an AGS application for a reason: because you feel it is the best way to meet the goals of the law. This is not the "easy way," but your board(s) have decided it is the right approach for you. Outline your reasons for choosing this path.

The Agency and SBE have not had the time to do the thorough job you have done. Go in with the expectation that they will respect your work and your community-supported decision.

- Consider taking a lawyer or a legislator with you—or both. A local community member who is a lawyer might be a valuable addition to your team and legislators should bear witness to this process.
- Take notes or record the meeting in some way.
- Follow up afterwards with a letter on any particularly important points or issues that arose. This is also a time to clarify any points you feel were not clearly addressed.

Links for Further Reading

Visit www.vtschoolsrock.org the Vermonters for Schools and Community website for additional useful resources including:

- **Map:** Communities Considering Alternatives to Consolidation
- **Fact Sheet:** Tips for a Strong Alternative Governance Structure Application
- **Fact Sheet:** Making the Case for Alternative Governance Structure

Vermont Agency of Education “Section 9 Proposal Process Overview”:

<http://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-school-governance-act46-section-9-proposal-process.pdf> -

Act 46

<http://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/2016/Docs/ACTS/ACT046/ACT046%20As%20Enacted.pdf>

Act 49

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/2018/Docs/BILLS/H-0513/H-0513%20As%20Passed%20by%20Both%20House%20and%20Senate%20Official.pdf>

Who is Vermonters for Schools and Community?

Vermonters for Schools and Community (V4SC) is a network of community members—school board members, parents, educators, students, citizens—who believe that schools are at the heart of Vermont’s communities. V4SC serves as an information hub and resource clearinghouse to help like-minded Vermonters stay informed, connected and empowered around issues related to Act 46.

V4SC offers these materials as guidance only, as a place for communities to start their AGS effort. V4SC cannot guarantee that the state will approve your AGS proposal. Be sure to consult directly with statute and rules. Remember: You know your community and school best. Clear, thoughtful proposals supported by strong evidence and documentation will make the most powerful case for an AGS.
