

Introduction

On September 29, 2009, the Essex North School Union (ENSU) Board and School Administrative Unit 7 (SAU 7) Board invited interested area residents to a meeting of a Resource Committee for Area Schools. The purpose of this committee was to discuss ways the two districts could "...contain costs and increase educational offerings in an era of sustained declining enrollment." At this meeting ENSU Superintendent Chris Masson presented information on enrollment trends in both districts and outlined the rationale for considering the formation of an Interstate School District. At later meetings the committee heard a report from Greg Placy of the 45th Parallel Emergency Services Organization who had recently combined emergency services in the region and reports from four sub-committees: *Scheduling and Staffing; Vocational Programming; Immediate Solutions; and, Facilities and Technology*. Over the next several months the Resource Committee and the sub-committees met on roughly six occasions. The meeting minutes and related materials can be found on the websites of ENSU and SAU 7.

The Tillotson Grant underwriting this strategic planning and educational planning study is the result of a recommendation of the Resource Committee for Area Schools. The Superintendents and Boards in ENSU and SAU 7 identified representatives to serve on a Steering Committee who will assist the education consultant, Dr. Wayne F. Gersen, in the development and review of alternative solutions to the demographic, budgetary, and educational challenges facing the region. The final report from this study will be issued following a number of community forums/planning sessions and will include recommended education and governance plans that might be considered by the various electorates of ENSU and SAU 7.

This interim report provides:

- An overview of the demographic, budgetary, and educational challenges facing both ENSU and SAU 7
- An outline of educational plans and governance structures reviewed to date by the Steering Committee
- A preliminary analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing facilities.
- Appendices providing enrollment projections in each school in the region and relevant census information on each of the towns in the two districts

The Steering Committee will be considering each of the educational and governance plans proposed in this interim report in the coming weeks, identifying the most feasible plans to present in forums to get feedback from the public. During this same time period the consultant will be conferring with faculty members and community leaders to get their feedback on the proposals in this interim report and their insights on the needs of the schools and communities.

About the Consultant

Dr. Wayne Gersen recently retired as Superintendent of Schools in SAU 70, the first Interstate School district in the nation, serving the towns of Hanover, New Hampshire and Norwich, Vermont. Before his seven years in Hanover, New Hampshire, Dr. Gersen served as High School Principal and Superintendent in Bethel, Maine, Superintendent in Exeter, NH, Washington County, MD, and Wappingers Falls, NY. He is currently consulting with North Country Education Services, assisting them in their efforts to increase collaboration among districts in the North County.

Challenges Facing ENSU and SAU 7 Schools

Schools in ENSU and SAU 7 face three inter-related challenges: population decline; cost-effectiveness; and educational opportunities.

The **population decline** challenge contributes directly to the other areas. The five schools in the region are projected to lose 100 students over the next three years, roughly 12% of the current enrollment. (See *Appendix A for details*)

This loss in the number of students leads to a challenge in **cost-effectiveness**. It is difficult to reduce 12% of the staff because the projected enrollment decline is spread relatively evenly across the grade levels in five schools. If staffing levels remain fixed and spending increases by 3% per year, the cost per student would increase by 25% due solely to the loss of students. (See *Appendix B on budgets*). This rise in per pupil costs will make it difficult to pass operating budgets and retain the programs in schools.

Given the budget challenges outlined in the previous paragraph, districts will find it increasingly difficult to provide **educational opportunities** for students, particularly at the high school level. Researchers recommend a high school should enroll at least 300 students in order to provide the array of academic and vocational opportunities for students. As the projections in *Appendix A* indicate, it will not be possible to achieve that level of enrollment even in the ten towns served by ENSU and SAU 7.

To meet these challenges, schools need to move forward simultaneously on three fronts whether or not any of the proposed education plans or governance plans are adopted. To address the challenges outlined above, ENSU and SAU 7 schools should:

- **Expand the use of multi-age grouping in elementary and middle schools** – Given the small cohorts in all of the schools except Colebrook, schools need to consider offering courses like art, music and physical education to groups of 20-25 students without regard to their grade levels. Similarly, elementary and middle schools need to consider housing more than one grade level in a classroom and/or delivering special education services to students in multi-age groups.
- **Expand the sharing of staff** – In addition to sharing staff in areas like special education and elementary art, music and PE, the ENSU and SAU 7 should consider sharing school nurses, counselors, office personnel, maintenance and custodial staff, and administrators.
- **Integrate technology into the classrooms** - The thoughtful use of technology could mitigate these challenges, particularly at the high school level where NCES intends to expand the number of course offered through video conferencing. In the New Hampshire high schools, it may be possible to broaden the curriculum offerings by awarding competency-based credits and expanding the use of Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs), though similar kinds of opportunities may exist in Vermont in the near future based on initiatives under review in Montpelier.

Finally, the loss of students will create surplus space in schools, particularly if the districts adopt some of the educational plans outlined in this study. If the ENSU and SAU 7 districts can realize cost savings by implementing the recommended actions outlined above, this surplus space could be used to provide pre-Kindergarten classes, before and after school programs, and the delivery of services for social and medical students provided by government agencies and non-profit organizations. The final report will provide detailed options for the use of surplus space.

Alternative Education Plans

As noted in an earlier section of this report, the need for change is driven first and foremost by the need to expand education opportunities for the children attending schools in the fine towns comprising ENSU and SAU 7. Combining schools, particularly at the secondary level, could provide students with a wider array of courses, co-curricular activities, and athletic opportunities while realizing some cost savings due to economy of scale.

In many cases, the proposals included in this section will require changes in the governance structure. Because this plan intends to focus on the expanded number of educational opportunities that are available to students in larger schools, governance structures will be discussed in the context of instructional programs instead of the other way around.

As a general rule, elementary grade level cohorts that result in classes with 20-25 students are preferable to grade level cohorts of fewer than 10 students. In situations like those in Pittsburg, Canaan and in some grade levels in Stewartstown, students have a limited range of classmates to interact with and teachers are unable to plan activities that require multiple groups of students. Administrators and Boards in schools with small grade-level cohorts face constant budget challenges, particularly if parents and teachers expect one teacher per grade level while the public demands lower per pupil costs.

At the middle school, having larger grade level cohorts allows the opportunity for teachers to specialize in a particular content area, which, in turn, provides students with more focused instruction and the opportunity for enrichment or remedial programs.

At the high school level larger cohorts provide opportunities for multiple levels of offerings (*e.g. Algebra II, Algebra III and AP mathematics in separate classes; an array of foreign languages; etc.*), provide more curriculum offerings, and provide more opportunities for teachers to engage students a variety of activities.

The education plans outlined below describe alternative grade-level configurations that would serve as the basis for organizing programs. The first three assume a K-4, 5-8 and 9-12 grouping of grade levels with the assumption that students in grades K-4 would be taught in self-contained classrooms, students in grades 5-8 would be taught in content groupings, and high school students would have a broader high school experience since all high school age students in the region would attend a single high school. The next three assume a K-6, 7-8, and 9-12 grouping of grade levels with the assumption that students in grades K-4 would be taught in self-contained classrooms, students in grades 5-8 would be taught in content groupings, and high school students would have a broader high school experience since all high school age students in the region would attend a single high school. The seventh option assumes a K-8, 9-12 grouping of grade levels and also assumes that two schools, Pittsburg and Canaan, would close and Stewartstown would expand. This plan assumes that students in grades K-8 would be taught in self-contained classrooms, and high school students would attend a single high school. The final plan assumes no changes in student populations but also assumes an expanded use of technology to expand learning opportunities. Each plan is described on a single page. The spreadsheets providing supporting documentation are attached at the end of this section.

PLAN A - K-4, 5-8, 9-12 – Students in grades K-4 attend existing elementary schools; Stewartstown and Pittsburg students in grades 5-8 attend “Canaan Middle School”; all 9-12 students attend Colebrook Academy

Under this plan, all elementary schools would remain open and house students in grades K-4. Stewartstown and Pittsburg students in grades 5-8 would attend “Canaan Middle School”. Pittsburg and Canaan students in grades 9-12 would attend high school in Colebrook with students from Colebrook and Stewartstown.

The resulting 2013-14 enrollment patterns would be:

- K-4 cohorts unchanged
- 5-8 cohorts ranging from 28 to 45 in “Canaan Middle School”, 19 to 37 in Colebrook Middle School
- 9-12 cohorts ranging from 46 to 52 in Colebrook
- Elementary school (K-4) enrollments of 31 in Pittsburg, 51 in Stewartstown, 54 in Canaan, and 125 in Colebrook
- Middle School enrollments (grades 5-8) of 137 in Canaan and 108 in Colebrook
- High School enrollment of 197 in Colebrook

Advantages:

- Enhanced middle school and high school programs for Pittsburg, Canaan, and Stewartstown students as a result of expanded Canaan Middle School
- Potential program expansion at high school due to expanded enrollment
- Potential net savings as a result of consolidation due to combining middle and secondary students *(NOTE: It is difficult to forecast cost impact since governance model will affect cost sharing. An analysis of cost impacts will be included in the final report)*

Disadvantages

- Travel required for Pittsburg students in grades 5-12, Stewartstown students in grades 5-8. Canaan students in grades 9-12.
- Potential need to upgrade facilities at Colebrook, Canaan
- Limited operations savings

PLAN B - K-4, 5-8, 9-12 – Students in grades K-4 attend existing elementary schools; all students in grades 5-8 attend “Colebrook Middle School”; all 9-12 students attend Colebrook Academy

Under this plan, all elementary schools would remain open and house students in grades K-4. Stewartstown, Pittsburg, and Canaan students in grades 5-8 would attend Colebrook Middle School. Pittsburg and Canaan students in grades 9-12 would attend high school in Colebrook with students from Colebrook and Stewartstown.

The resulting 2013-14 enrollment patterns would be:

- K-4 cohorts unchanged
- 5-8 cohorts ranging from 56 to 69 in Colebrook Middle School
- 9-12 cohorts ranging from 46 to 52 in Colebrook
- Elementary (K-4) enrollments of 31 in Pittsburg, 51 in Stewartstown, 54 in Canaan, and 125 in Colebrook
- Middle School enrollments of 245 in Colebrook
- High School enrollment of 197 in Colebrook

Advantages:

- Enhanced middle school and high school programs for all students as a result of expanded enrollment at Colebrook Middle School
- Potential program expansion at high school due to additional needed staff
- Potential net savings as a result of consolidation due to combining middle and secondary students (*NOTE: It is difficult to forecast cost impact since governance model will affect cost sharing. An analysis of cost impacts will be included in the final report*)

Disadvantages

- Travel required for Pittsburg students in grades 5-12, Stewartstown and Canaan students in grades 8-12.
- Potential need to upgrade facilities at Canaan
- Limited facilities operations savings

PLAN C - K-4, 5-8, 9-12 – Close Canaan, Pittsburg schools, expand Stewartstown Community School to house additional students, have all 9-12 students attend Colebrook Academy

Under this plan, two schools- Canaan and Pittsburg- would close and Stewartstown Community School, which is 9 miles from Pittsburg and just under 2 miles from Canaan, would be expanded to house K-8 students from Pittsburg, Stewartstown and Canaan. Pittsburg and Canaan students in grades 9-12 would attend high school in Colebrook with students from Colebrook and Stewartstown.

The resulting 2013-14 enrollment patterns would be:

- K-8 cohorts of 26-45 in Stewartstown and Canaan and 19 to 37 in Colebrook
- 9-12 cohorts ranging from 46 to 52 in Colebrook
- K-8 enrollment of 273 in Stewartstown Community School, 137 of whom would be in a 5-8 middle school program
- K-8 enrollment of 233 in Colebrook, 108 of whom would be in a 5-8 middle school program
- High School enrollment of 197 in Colebrook

Advantages:

- Increased flexibility in creating classes in grades K-4 due to increased size of cohorts
- Enhanced middle school programs for Stewartstown, Canaan and Pittsburg students
- Potential program expansion at high school due to additional needed staff
- Potential net savings as a result of consolidation due to combining middle and secondary students (*NOTE: It is difficult to forecast cost impact since governance model will affect cost sharing. An analysis of cost impacts will be included in the final report*)

Disadvantages

- Travel required for Pittsburg, Canaan students
- Loss of public school in two communities
- Need to expand and upgrade facility in Stewartstown
- Potential need to upgrade facilities at Colebrook

PLAN D - K-6, 7-8, 9-12 – Students in grades K-6 attend existing elementary schools; Stewartstown and Pittsburg students in grades 7-8 attend “Canaan Middle School”; all 9-12 students attend Colebrook Academy

Under this plan, all elementary schools would remain open and house students in grades K-6. Stewartstown and Pittsburg students in grades 7-8 would attend “Canaan Middle School”. Pittsburg and Canaan students in grades 9-12 would attend high school in Colebrook with students from Colebrook and Stewartstown.

The resulting 2013-14 enrollment patterns would be:

- K-6 cohorts unchanged
- 7-8 cohorts of 32 at “Canaan Middle School”, 24 and 37 in Colebrook Middle School
- 9-12 cohorts ranging from 46 to 52 in Colebrook
- Elementary school (K-6) enrollments of 46 in Pittsburg, 69 in Stewartstown, 94 in Canaan, and 172 in Colebrook
- Middle School enrollments (grades 7-8) of 64 in Canaan and 61 in Colebrook
- High School enrollment of 197 in Colebrook

Advantages:

- Enhanced middle school and high school programs for Pittsburg, Canaan, and Stewartstown students as a result of expanded Canaan Middle School
- Potential program expansion at high school due to expanded enrollment
- Potential net savings as a result of consolidation due to combining middle and secondary students *(NOTE: It is difficult to forecast cost impact since governance model will affect cost sharing. An analysis of cost impacts will be included in the final report)*

Disadvantages

- Travel required for Pittsburg students in grades 7-12, Stewartstown students in grades 7-8. Canaan students in grades 9-12.
- Potential need to upgrade facilities at Colebrook, Canaan
- Limited operations savings

PLAN E - K-6, 7-8, 9-12 – Students in grades K-6 attend existing elementary schools; all students in grades 7-8 attend “Colebrook Middle School”; all 9-12 students attend Colebrook Academy

Under this plan, all elementary schools would remain open and house students in grades K-6. Stewartstown, Pittsburg, and Canaan students in grades 7-8 would attend Colebrook Middle School. Pittsburg and Canaan students in grades 9-12 would attend high school in Colebrook with students from Colebrook and Stewartstown.

The resulting 2013-14 enrollment patterns would be:

- K-6 cohorts unchanged
- 7-8 cohorts of 56 and 69 in Colebrook Middle School
- 9-12 cohorts ranging from 46 to 52 in Colebrook
- Elementary (K-6) enrollments of 46 in Pittsburg, 69 in Stewartstown, 94 in Canaan, and 125 in Colebrook
- Middle School enrollments of 125 in Colebrook
- High School enrollment of 197 in Colebrook

Advantages:

- Enhanced middle school and high school programs for all students as a result of expanded enrollment at Colebrook Middle School
- Potential program expansion at high school due to additional needed staff
- Potential net savings as a result of consolidation due to combining middle and secondary students (*NOTE: It is difficult to forecast cost impact since governance model will affect cost sharing. An analysis of cost impacts will be included in the final report*)

Disadvantages

- Travel required for Pittsburg students in grades 7-12, Stewartstown and Canaan students in grades 7-12.
- Potential need to upgrade facilities at Canaan
- Limited facilities operations savings

PLAN F - K-6, 7-8, 9-12 – Retain all schools and house students in grades K-8, have all 9-12 students attend Colebrook Academy

Under this plan, all schools would remain open and house students in grades K-8. Pittsburg and Canaan students in grades 9-12 would attend high school in Colebrook with students from Colebrook and Stewartstown.

The resulting 2013-14 enrollment patterns would be:

- K-6 cohorts of 5-9 in Pittsburg and 7-11 in Stewartstown, 10-28 in Canaan, and 19-29 in Colebrook
- 7-8 cohorts ranging of 7 and 8 in Pittsburg; 9 and 8 in Stewartstown; 16 in Canaan, and 24 and 37 in Colebrook.
- 9-12 cohorts ranging from 46 to 52 in Colebrook
- Elementary (K-6) enrollments of 46 in Pittsburg, 69 in Stewartstown, 94 in Canaan, and 125 in Colebrook
- Middle School enrollments of 15 in Pittsburg, 17 in Stewartstown, 32 in Canaan, and 61 in Colebrook
- High School enrollment of 197 in Colebrook

Advantages:

- Limits loss of students from Canaan, Pittsburg schools as compared with other alternatives
- Potential program expansion at high school due to additional needed staff
- Potential net savings as a result of consolidation due to combining middle and secondary students *(NOTE: It is difficult to forecast cost impact since governance model will affect cost sharing. An analysis of cost impacts will be included in the final report)*

Disadvantages

- Travel required for Pittsburg and Canaan students in grades 9-12,
- Potential need to upgrade facilities at Colebrook
- Limited facilities operations savings

PLAN G - K-6, 7-8, 9-12 – Retain all schools and house students in grades K-8, have all 9-12 academic students attend Colebrook Academy, all 9-12 Vocational Students attend “Canaan Vocational Center”

Under this plan, all schools would remain open and house students in grades K-8. All 9-12 academic students, including those in Pittsburg and Canaan, would attend high school in Colebrook with academic students from Colebrook and Stewartstown. All 9-12 vocational students, including those in Pittsburg, Colebrook, and Stewartstown, would attend high school at the Canaan Vocational Center.

The resulting 2013-14 enrollment patterns would be:

- K-6 cohorts of 5-9 in Pittsburg and 7-11 in Stewartstown, 10-28 in Canaan, and 19-29 in Colebrook
- 7-8 cohorts ranging of 7 and 8 in Pittsburg; 9 and 8 in Stewartstown; 16 in Canaan, and 24 and 37 in Colebrook.
- Combined 9-12 cohorts ranging from 46 to 52 in Colebrook Academy and Canaan Vocational Center
- Elementary (K-6) enrollments of 46 in Pittsburg, 69 in Stewartstown, 94 in Canaan, and 125 in Colebrook
- Middle School enrollments of 15 in Pittsburg, 17 in Stewartstown, 32 in Canaan, and 61 in Colebrook
- Combined High School enrollment of 197 in Colebrook Academy and Canaan Vocational Center

Advantages:

- Limits loss of students from Canaan, Pittsburg schools as compared with other alternatives
- Potential vocational program expansion at high school due to new Vocational Center
- Potential net savings as a result of consolidation due to combining middle and secondary students (*NOTE: It is difficult to forecast cost impact since governance model will affect cost sharing. An analysis of cost impacts will be included in the final report*)

Disadvantages

- Travel required for Pittsburg and Canaan students in grades 9-12,
- Potential need to upgrade facilities at Colebrook and Canaan
- Limited facilities operations savings

PLAN H - K-6, 7-8, 9-12 – Retain all schools and house students in current grade configurations but expand capability for distance learning to provide broader enrollment opportunities for students

Under this plan, all schools would remain open and house students in current grade configurations. All schools would expand their capabilities for distance learning to provide students with wider access to an array of programs and courses.

The resulting 2013-14 enrollment patterns would be:

- K-6 cohorts of 5-9 in Pittsburg and 7-11 in Stewartstown, 10-28 in Canaan, and 19-29 in Colebrook
- 7-8 cohorts ranging of 7 and 8 in Pittsburg; 9 and 8 in Stewartstown; 16 in Canaan, and 24 and 37 in Colebrook.
- 9-12 cohorts of 22 to 33 in Colebrook Academy, 10 to 15 in Canaan, and 7 to 16 in Pittsburg
- Elementary (K-6) enrollments of 46 in Pittsburg, 69 in Stewartstown, 94 in Canaan, and 125 in Colebrook
- Middle School enrollments of 15 in Pittsburg, 17 in Stewartstown, 32 in Canaan, and 61 in Colebrook
- High School enrollment of 105 in Colebrook Academy, 51 in Canaan, and 41 in Pittsburg

Advantages:

- Retains current configuration of schools
- Potential program expansion at all levels due to upgrade in technology infrastructure
- Potential net savings if multi-age grade levels, shared staff initiatives implemented K-12

Disadvantages

- Requires change in delivery of instruction
- Cost to upgrade technology infrastructure at schools
- No facilities operations savings

Alternative Governance Plans

The September 2009 presentation on the need for consolidation of services in SAU 7 and ENSU suggested a change in the governance structure, replacing the two existing school districts with an Interstate district. The governance issues are technically complicated, politically charged, and they ultimately affect adults in the community and employees in the schools far more than they affect the students attending school. Therefore it is important for the communities to first determine how they want to organize the schools to improve instruction for students and then determine the governance structure that accomplishes that outcome most effectively. The seven organizational plans in Section X indicate which governance model(s) might work for each.

Among the governance concepts under consideration at this writing are:

- **Rivendell Model**: An interstate district with one board serving all ten communities

Under this model, the ten districts in SAU 7 and ENSU would be replaced with a single board whose membership would be defined by the Articles of Agreement adopted by the districts affected by the proposed reorganization. Ideally, board membership would be limited to no more than nine members who proportionally represent the Vermont and New Hampshire towns in ENSU and SAU 7.

- **Dresden Model**: An interstate district with three boards: one serving Vermont elementary students; one serving New Hampshire Elementary students; and one combined board serving Interstate secondary school(s).

In Dresden, where there is one elementary school in each state and a shared middle school and high school, the elementary/secondary divide is relatively clear-cut. There are, however, differences in the elementary school grade spans that result in complicated tuition calculations, a situation that could be avoided in a newly established interstate district.

The Dresden Interstate district also works because the size of each elementary board, when combined, roughly corresponds to the proportion of the elementary students attending the secondary schools. The Dresden board includes all twelve board members from each community, but only four of the five Norwich Board members have a vote on the Dresden Board though they fully participate in deliberations on personnel matters and negotiations and serve on board committees. This balance could be more difficult to achieve in ENSU and SAU 7 where a disproportionate number of New Hampshire students would be attending any combined secondary school.

- **Co-op Board for Combined Secondary School**: Retention of current board governance arrangement for elementary schools with a new secondary co-op Board serving interstate cooperative secondary school(s).

In some New Hampshire and Vermont towns, an independently elected board oversees all or some of the secondary schools or programs. Should the districts wish to retain local control without creating an unwieldy 20+ member secondary board it might consider creating an independently elected interstate board to oversee secondary

schools. At the same time it might explore dissolving all elementary boards where no school is open. This concept would require further research before public dissemination.

- **Retention of current board governance arrangement with tuition agreements established to allow for inter-district and intra-district transfers and expanded sharing of staff and resources**

Vermont districts with “choice” and New Hampshire districts without secondary schools that operate outside of AREA agreements often negotiate tuition agreements with neighboring communities. Instead of pursuing the complicated action of creating an interstate district or creating a new governance structure, the SAU 7 and ENSU Boards could remain as they are and negotiate tuition agreements that provide a means of accomplishing the educational outcomes each board seeks. At the same time, the Boards could explore the possibility of sharing administrative, instructional, and specialized services either through formal contracts or arrangements achieved administratively.

Logistical Issues

In the introductory paragraph I indicated that the governance issues are “technically complicated and politically charged”. Among the technical complications the ENSU and SAU 7 Boards will need to address are:

- Differences in state regulations: Vermont and New Hampshire have different regulations governing issues like Special education; school quality standards; curriculum standards; transportation, etc.
- Differences in State funding: Revenue streams vary between the states as they apply to special education, building aid, Federal aid; etc.
- Collective bargaining: There are differences in wages and benefits within each district and differences in negotiations procedures in each state.
- Debt service: In reaching any interstate agreement or modifying the governance in a fashion that creates a new district, any overhanging debt will need to be taken into consideration
- Contracts: Any extended contracts with vendors (*e.g. transportation, food services, etc*) will need to be examined.
- Legislative: Any interstate district will require legislative action in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Congress. It is conceivable that legislation might be required in one or both states if a new district is created or new form of tuition agreement is adopted.

The overarching politically charged issue is local control. Additionally, each of the issues described above incorporates a political component either internally (*e.g. collective bargaining agreements*) or externally (*e.g. involvement with parents and community members*).

As the above list indicates, changing the governance structure will require more time and more technical assistance.

Enrollment Projections

Appendix A includes enrollment projections for each school in SAU 7 and Essex North School Union and an explanation of how the projections were calculated. With the exception of the Stewartstown, which is projected to maintain its K-8 enrollment, the other towns in the region are expected to lose 100 students, or 12.7% of their current enrollments. The chart below displays the projected changes in enrollments in each town:

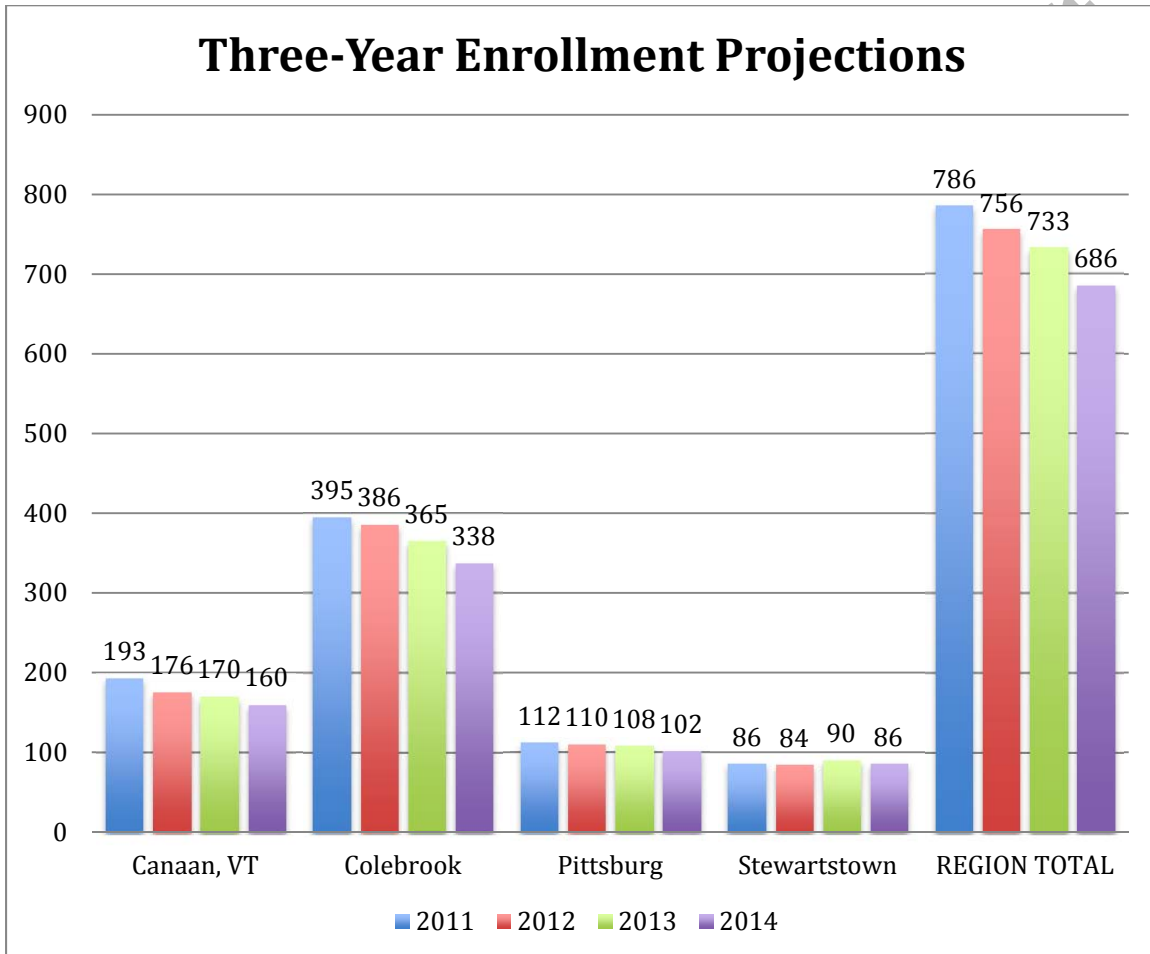


Figure X displays the town-by-town grade-level breakdowns for the coming three years. As noted in the explanatory section of Appendix A it is crucial to note that these projections are derived by applying mathematical formulas and are intended to be used for broad planning.

APPENDIX A INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS

This section of the report includes three-year enrollment projections for each of the schools in SAU 7 and ENSU. The three-year projections were calculated using the cohort survival method, whereby enrollments for future years are calculated by using the enrollment differentials between grade levels in previous years. The enrollment projections were calculated in two ways: using a straight three-year rolling average and a weighted three-year rolling average. After examining the results of both calculations, I based the conclusions below and included in report on the straight or UNweighted enrollment projections. When the weighted numbers are used, it assigns a higher value to the most recent enrollment trends, a method that is useful when a district is experiencing either rapid growth or rapid decline. Neither circumstance appears to be the case in the northernmost regions of Vermont and New Hampshire. While the declines in population are marked over time, they are not precipitous. Moreover, in schools with small enrollments declines in one year can have a far-reaching and overstated impact on “out years”. The comparison of weighted and un-weighted projections for Pittsburg Elementary illustrates this phenomenon.

As noted in the body of the report the student enrollments in the region are projected to decline by 10.6% in the coming three years.

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