



WSD Joint Statement from the Board President and Superintendent

Jun 1, 2026

Dear Winooski Staff and Members of the Community,

We know it has been hard to make sense of the constantly changing news coming out of Montpelier this year and we wanted to provide you with a brief update and some commentary for what this could mean for us here in Winooski.

The Education Transformation Bill (H.955) cleared the legislature late last week and is now headed to the Governor's desk for his signature. Among other things, this bill:

- Requires our district to begin taking immediate steps toward merging with neighbors, with a timeline for a vote in less than two years.
- Requires us to immediately contribute to the creation of a Cooperative Educational Service Area (CESA), which entails several key tasks with surrounding districts in a short timeline.
- Requires our district to prepare for regionalized services and a potentially significant change in how our schools are funded.

As you can imagine, both our board and administration will be entering new territory this summer, with the burden of an incoherent policy framework pulling us in competing directions.

H.955 does not require mergers, but it does require merger exploration. When the identified target district size in this bill is above 2,000 students, Winooski finds itself in a difficult position among neighbors already meeting that threshold.

It is possible that we could dedicate significant time and resources towards the exploration of a merger with neighboring communities only to find ourselves in a situation where the other districts vote against the merger. This would require the Winooski School Board to ask our voters for approval to join districts that have historically expressed unwillingness to merge. For a district like Winooski to have to put itself through that process multiple times can be demoralizing and perpetuate narratives of inferiority typically attributed to our families.

On top of the significant time and effort dedicated to exploring merger, we are also expected to participate in the creation of a CESA, which the state has not provided resources to support. The specific authority and duties of a CESA will be determined by a CESA board, introducing a

new layer of governance to our system without clarity regarding how the CESA will be staffed, funded, or held accountable.

Finally, the legislation continues to push forward with a foundation formula, a new system of education funding, with a transition period that includes mechanisms to contain costs between now and full implementation.

Despite our concerns with H.955, we are committed to abiding by the law. We will approach the process with integrity and ensure that the resulting changes do not compromise the hard-earned progress we have made in recent years to provide our students with a high-quality educational experience with measurable results.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools,

Nicole Mace, Board President

Wilmer Chavarria, Superintendent