

Union #39 School Board

The Boards are continually looking at ways to improve the quality of education. Recently, the U39 board in conjunction with the Ludlow Elementary board commissioned a survey of the towns of Ludlow and Mount Holly to get feedback and direction from the public. We hear from a small group of people at meetings and only a fraction of the voters at budget time. The survey was conducted by a professional surveying organization, The Center for Research & Public Policy. The boards felt it was important that the survey be conducted by an impartial and professional organization.

There were three main elements to the survey, the future of the Middle/High School, the perception of the quality of education at the schools, and Supervisory Union merger. By future of the school, the questioners were asked which of three options they supported, keeping the school open with renovations, tuitioning students to other schools or privatizing the school. The results showed that a majority would like to keep the school open with renovations. But in these times of Act 68, the residents are not very eager to pay higher taxes to support a renovation project. However, we need to remember that the existing BRHS building was the sole reason why the high school lost its accreditation; if we wish to regain that important academic recognition, we must address the inadequacies and shortcomings of the building.

Not surprisingly, on the question of the condition of the High School & Middle School facilities, only one-third of the respondents gave a positive answer. The quality of education at the Middle/High School received just shy of a 50% rating.

Because of these results, the Union #39 Board is having special meetings to first set our vision for education of the students in our community. This vision will guide us as we formulate the future of the schools. From here we will be working on mission and goals towards what the community has weighed in on: keep our schools open, renovate with minimal costs, and continue to improve the quality of education.

There were some things that the Board felt they could accomplish in the FY08 budget in reaction to one of the questions on the survey asking about school spending. The top three items that respondents felt too little was spent were: course offerings, the arts, and sports programming. The staff and board are working towards revamping the master schedule in order to create more and better programming. In prior years, we have tried to add business classes and were only able to add one due to budget constraints and add art classes. Last year, we were able to add a music class. In this current budget, we have added a part-time Health, part-time English teacher in order to broaden the course offerings to students. We continue to work on aligning the curriculum across all the elementary schools feeding into Black River Middle School and the transition from the Middle School to the High School.

Concerning the status of the Rutland Windsor Supervisory Union, two-thirds would like to see some combination or merger with neighboring Windsor South West Supervisory Union. The RWSU board has met with it's WSWSU neighbors and the two Superintendent's offices have been working together to find efficiencies and cost savings, such as joint professional development and Special Education needs.

Act 68 is something that the boards of this district have been watching. The current funding formula for education is changing at the legislative level. The Superintendent and several board members have been lobbying Montpelier to alleviate some of the issues that are inherent in Act 68. We will continue this work at the State level to help the citizens of Ludlow and Mount Holly.

Through the efforts of BRACC, the middle school after-school program funded by the 21st Century grant is thriving and expanding within both Ludlow and Mount Holly Elementary schools. Eventually, they would like to be a Kindergarten through 8th grade program. The 21st Century grant will not continue after a few years and the program will need to find a way to sustain itself. In order to apply for other grants, the Board has included \$5,000 of support as a match.

The School Board would like to thank the Principal, Jim Frail, the teachers, staff and custodians for their hard work and continued dedication to the school. We would also like to commend the Booster Club and the many parent volunteers, clubs and organizations that support our students in and out of the classroom. Through the continued collaborative efforts of BRACC, the Select Boards of Ludlow & Mount Holly, Ludlow Town Manager, Frank Heald, Howard Paul at the Recreation Dept., and the Fletcher Memorial Library we are providing for the students such things as funding of books, transportation, and co-curricular programs while reducing the burden to the taxpayers of Ludlow and Mt. Holly. And finally, we would like to thank the community for your continued support.

Respectfully,

For the Board
Diana Chimbolo, Chair
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