

It's About Learning

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from Tracy Wrend, Superintendent

There is a good reason this publication is titled *It's About Learning*. The primary mission of our school systems is the advancement of student learning. We realize, however, that the success of our schools is dependent upon strong community partnerships, and it is our obligation to balance each community's priorities and obligations for the education of students with community affordability. Therefore, this edition of *It's About Learning* does not focus directly on student learning; rather, it is intended to provide factual information regarding the impact of management practices within the districts of Lamoille South Supervisory Union (LSSU - see page four for more information) that yield efficiencies and illustrate how the Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe School Districts compare to statewide averages on key measurements of efficiency.

To illustrate the efficiency of LSSU, we draw upon Act 146 of 2010, commonly referred to as Challenges for Change. This law required the Vermont Department of Education to develop a formula to generate recommendations for reductions in education spending for the 2011-2012 school year totaling \$23.2 million or 2.052% statewide. The recommended reduction for the combined districts of LSSU is 2.217% or \$384,384 from current levels of education spending. LSSU's target percentage was 16th highest of 60 supervisory unions in Vermont. While the targets are voluntary, boards must consider the recommended targets thoughtfully. To answer the questions of whether or not Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe School Districts can meet the recommended targets, boards must consider possible budget actions that offset all inflationary increases, any anticipated reductions in revenue, then move to reduce education spending from current levels.

The formula for generating recommended reductions was to favor districts that have, among other things, demonstrated fiscal restraint in recent years; have low per pupil administrative costs; have high student to staff ratios; and other unique circumstances that affect education spending. We have included information to illustrate LSSU's history of fiscal responsibility based upon Education Spending per Equalized Pupil, per pupil administrative costs, student staff ratios, as well as a summary of the actions taken last year to further control expenses given the economic challenges statewide and changing needs of our students. This data aligns with the factors identified by the Legislature as key indicators for development of targets.

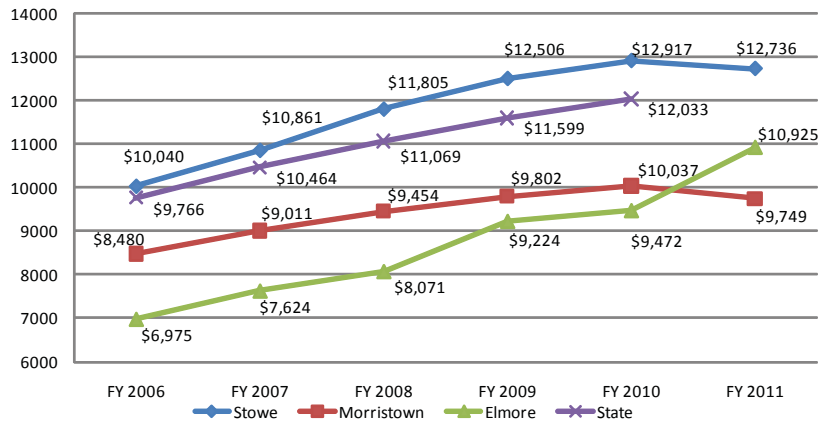
I hope you'll find this data informative and a useful context for budget deliberations later this winter. The budget development process is already underway in each of the districts of Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe and the impact of school budgets on the community will be thoughtfully considered as always. The needs of our students remain at the forefront of the budget development process, because ultimately, *It's About Learning*.

As always, your questions and comments are welcome.

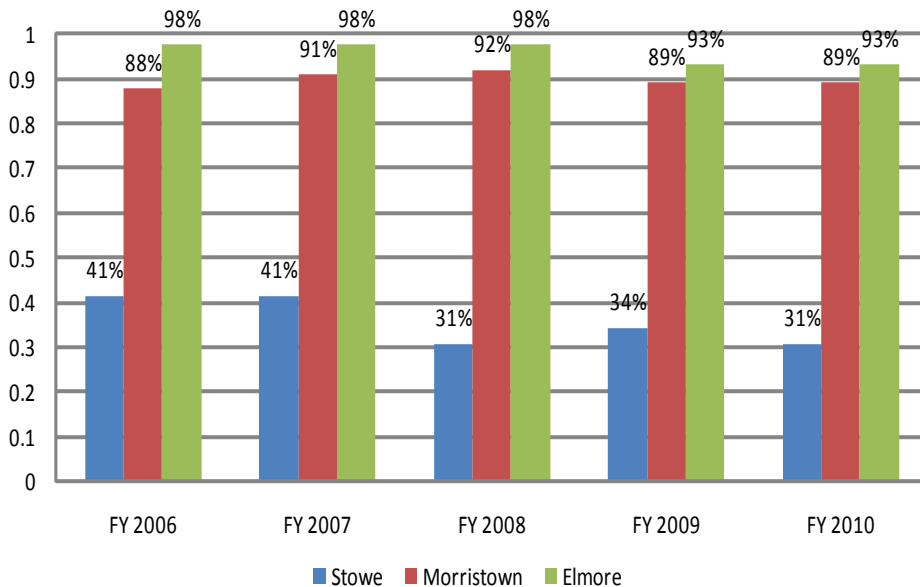


History of Education Spending per Equalized Pupil for LSSU*

- Morristown and Elmore have education spending per equalized pupil that is well below the State average spending per equalized pupil for the last six fiscal years.
- Both Morristown's and Stowe's education spending per equalized pupil were reduced from FY2010 to FY2011.
- Elmore's education spending per equalized pupil increased largely due to a decline in revenue (fund balance) for FY2011, not an increase in spending.



Percentage of Districts with Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil Above the Districts of LSSU*



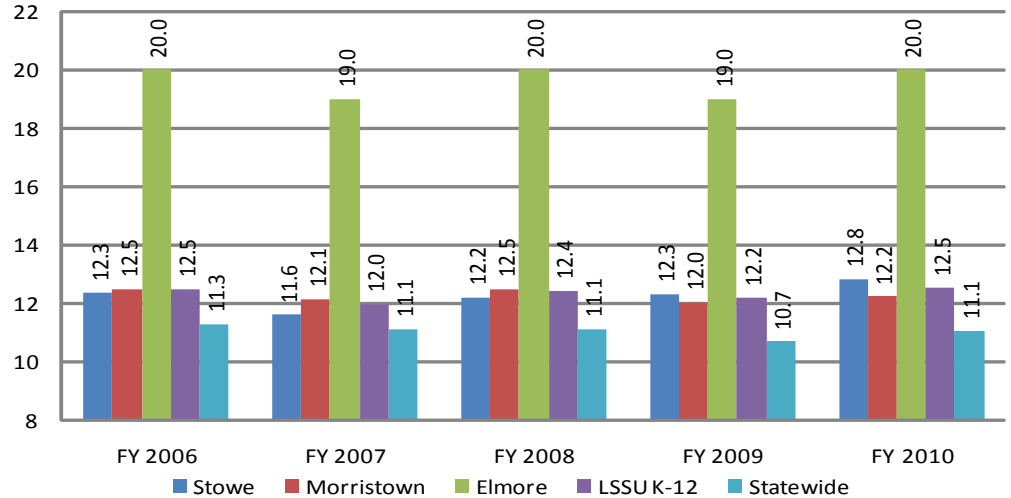
- In FY2010, 89% of districts had a higher education spending per pupil than Morristown, and 93% of districts had a higher education spending per equalized pupil than Elmore.
- Stowe's education spending per equalized pupil dropped from being among the highest in the State prior to Act 60, to falling within average range in comparison with other districts across the State.

Source: educ_data_comparison_data.xls (fin data tab)
http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/data/comparison_data.html

* Education Spending is the amount of money budgeted for pre-K through grade 12 costs, including expenditures for instructional staff, central, and other support services, general and school administration, business services, operation and maintenance, and student transportation less revenues from federal state and other sources, such as tuition paid by other districts and state and federal grants supporting special education. The equalized pupil count is a weighted, 2-year average number of students served by a school district; weightings are based upon factors such as the grade levels of the students, eligibility for free and reduced lunch, and English language learner status. Education Spending per Equalized Pupil is calculated to generate the local homestead tax and income sensitivity rates and is useful for comparison of relative spending by district.

Teacher Student Ratio Highlights for LSSU K-12**

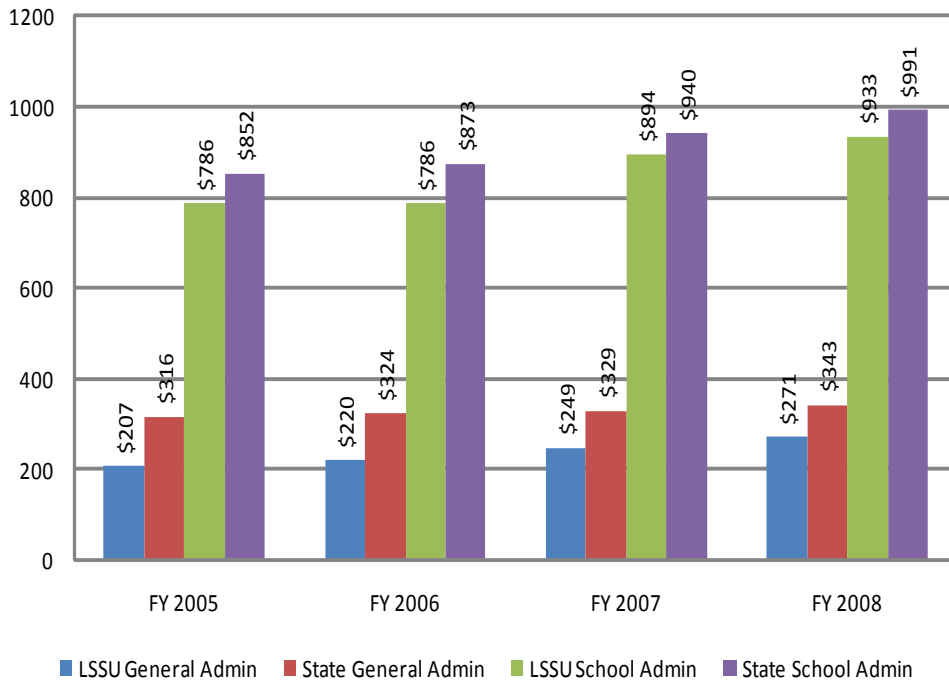
- Stowe, Morristown, and Elmore's teacher student ratios are all above the State average for the last five fiscal years.
- Stowe, Morristown, and Elmore's teacher student ratios all increased from FY2009 to FY2010.



Source: educ_data_teacher_FTE.xls (ratio report data tab)
http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/data/teacher_FTE.html

** Teacher student ratio is calculated by comparing the number of licensed teachers, including all classroom teachers, specials teachers, guidance counselors, special educators, and other licensed educators as compared to student enrollment on October 1 of each year.

General and School Administration Expenditures Per Equalized Pupil***



- LSSU is consistently below the statewide average for both general and school administration costs for four fiscal years 2005-2008.
- For the years 2005-2008, LSSU's general administration costs averaged 21-35% below the statewide average, while school administration was in the 5-10% range below the statewide average

*** General administration refers to the cost of administrative services provided by the supervisory union and the costs related to the operation and maintenance of the central office facility.

School administration refers to all school-based administrative services including costs for school principals and support staff as well as school-wide operational costs such as copiers, phones, and postage.

Source: sasrs_08_tables.xls (SASRS-SU tab, Table 6 = FY08 PK-12 Current Expenditures per Student in Membership)
<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/data/sasrs.html>

2010-2011 Budget Information

Each of the districts of Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe made difficult decisions and took action to reduce expenses for the current school year.

ELMORE

- Elmore's budget increased \$20,175 or 1.19%.
- Eighty-five percent (85%) of Elmore's Education Spending Per Equalized Pupil from FY2010 to FY2011 is the result of a decline in the amount of available revenues (primarily fund balance carry forward) not an increase in spending.

MORRISTOWN

- Morristown's education spending decreased \$488,150 or 5.8% from FY2010 to FY2011.
- The budget for FY2011 included the elimination of three classroom teachers at Morristown Elementary School and the elimination of a math teacher, a science teacher, a social studies teacher, and the Head of High School at Peoples Academy. Reductions in English, family and consumer science, guidance, the learning center, and planning room positions were also included as well as the elimination of a computer technician and the Technology Director position (shared with Stowe).
- In response to changes in enrollment, the FY2011 budget reflected the movement of kindergarten and grade 1 to the Elementary building and the District has renovated and leased a portion of the Graded Building to LSSU for administrative offices. This has allowed for the elimination of a receptionist position, library aide, part-time physical education teacher, a reduction of a custodial position, and provides an additional source of revenue for the district in the future.
- Faculty and staff agreed to compensation rates lower than negotiated and administrators in Morristown School District and Lamoille South Supervisory Union voluntarily accepted a salary freeze for the 2010-2011 school year.

STOWE

- Stowe held education spending essentially level from FY2010 to FY2011; the total increase in education spending was \$28,425 which is 0.35% , or less than half a percent.
- The FY2011 budget includes the elimination of middle level French, the culinary program at the high school, Strategies for College, a music program aide, a library aide, the Technology Director position (shared with Morristown), plus reductions in the family consumer science position at the middle level and athletic programs available at the middle and high schools.
- All faculty, staff, and administrators voluntarily accepted a salary freeze for the 2010-2011 school year.

Q: What is LSSU?

A: Lamoille South Supervisory Union is an administrative, planning, and educational organization that serves the school districts of Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe. LSSU provides required services such as the disbursement of federal and state funds and financial reporting. Through LSSU, the Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe School Districts also collaborate to provide services such as the coordination of special education and curriculum development; budgeting, accounting, and financial management; centralized purchasing; and specialized, direct services for the children of Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe. The Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe School Districts have a long history of working cooperatively through LSSU to provide high quality services in a cost effective manner.