

Westminster 7th-8th Grade Options Study Committee

The 7th-8th grade options committee will look for a better way to provide 7th and 8th grade for Westminster residents. With no plan in place, Vermont state law sets our rules and we have no control over cost or quality. We have seen two years of large increases in expenses with no practical way to budget for the increases.

The committee will seek alternatives to address the weaknesses of our present arrangement and propose a "next step" for the voters to consider at Town Meeting in 2014. The proposal will be ready for consideration at the School Board's Dec. 17, 2013 meeting.

Driving questions:

What are the costs and benefits of the current system of having "no school" for grades seven and eight?

Does the current system serve all or most students in the town effectively, including special education students?

Is the cost of the current system a manageable one that the taxpayers are willing to bear?

Are there other possible scenarios that could offer students good educational opportunities that make effective use of financial resources in a predictable manner?

What are the governance options available under these scenarios?

Tasks:

Gather data (past 3 or 5 years) regarding:

- costs under the current system
- enrollment vs budgeting for grades 7 and 8
- schools that 7th and 8th graders attend
- demographics of students attending various schools
- educational outcomes—test scores, grad. rates, etc
- contact other school districts in similar circumstances
- other, as determined by the group

Using data gathered whenever possible, document both the drawbacks and the positive aspects of the current system of "no school" in grades 7 and 8

Explore the question of whether "choice" truly exists for students with special needs or for students from lower socioeconomic circumstances.

Explore options for restructuring the current system of "no school" and define possible advantages and drawbacks for each of these options, to include:

- K-12 or K-8 restructuring or a joint school (consultant may be available to assist through the State of VT)
- designating a middle school or schools
- other options as determined by the group