

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In June 2023, the ConVal School Board contracted with Prismatic Services to undertake a reconfiguration project. As noted in the district's request for proposals (RFP), the goals of this project were to:

- ◆ *Evaluate the impact that the closing/not closing has on the educational, safety, financial, social, organizational control, community, and the future of the district.*
- ◆ *Provide an analysis that will detail the needs, development, and implementation of the best possible, educationally rich, safe, socially responsive, community sensitive, financially responsible, and organizationally sound physical model to support the ConVal community and students.*
- ◆ *Detail the approach(es) that the ConVal School District will take to migrate to the most strategically advantageous physical organizational model.*
- ◆ *Bring a viable conclusion to the question, "What is Best for the ConVal Students and Taxpayers?"*

This report is provided in fulfillment of Prismatic's contract. It is important to note that the ConVal School Board voluntarily undertook this work. Moreover, recognizing that the question of reconfiguration has been discussed in ConVal for many years, the school board wanted an outside company to complete the work, "in order to be as neutral in this evaluation as can be accomplished."



## Project Approach

Prismatic proposed and followed a 7-task work plan to meet the district’s requirements:

1. Initiate Project
2. Field Constituent Surveys and Launch Online Forum
3. Conduct Onsite Work – Tour Facilities, Hold Community Meetings, Hold Focus Groups
4. Develop Preliminary Issues
5. Develop Draft Report
6. Develop Final Products
7. Submit Work Papers

Throughout the project, Prismatic coordinated with the chairman of the Strategic Organization Committee (SOC), district leadership, and district staff on a regular basis. Weekly updates and monthly check-in meetings occurred throughout the project to discuss activities completed, review challenges or changes in project progress, review activities scheduled, and review upcoming project products and deadlines.

During project initiation, the order of subtasks within Tasks 2 and 3 was determined. Project activities occurred from July through October 2023. Data analysis, the data party, and presentation of results occurred July through December 2023.



# PROJECT TIMELINE





As part of this project Prismatic:

- ◆ interviewed all school board members
- ◆ collected data from the district in response to an initial data request of 96 items, then additional data items as the study progressed
- ◆ completed 20 interviews with district staff (some staff were interviewed multiple times)
- ◆ visited the schools 58 separate times (not including the visits for town meetings), covering all schools and typically including short, informal interviews with principals/other staff
- ◆ completed 6 focus groups with students, which included 19 Great Brook students, 17 South Meadow students, and 15 ConVal high school students
- ◆ completed 9 focus groups with district staff, with a total of 54 participants
- ◆ administered a student survey that received 201 responses (40 Great Brook, 97 South Meadow, 4 Dublin 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and 60 ConVal high school students)
- ◆ administered a September staff/parent/community survey that received 1,555 responses, including 483 parent responses, 138 staff responses, and sufficient responses from each of the 9 towns for analysis
- ◆ administered an October parent/community survey that received 405 responses, including sufficient responses from some of the 9 towns for analysis
- ◆ hosted 9 town meetings, with a total of 472 participants
- ◆ hosted an online forum that received 69 individual comments/questions, plus numerous emojis indicating agreement/disagreement
- ◆ spent a total of 60 days onsite across all Prismatic staff, conducting interviews/focus groups, completing classroom observations, evaluating facilities, assessing technology usage, assessing food service/technology operations, gathering data, hosting the town meetings, and presenting results
- ◆ conducted a data party with school board members, school principals, and district leadership
- ◆ developed draft and final reports, then presented the report to the school board for action



**Project Limitations**

All projects of this nature have time and resource constraints. Beyond those typical constraints, this project had these limitations:

- ◆ Student survey participation was lower than desirable. New Hampshire requires parents to consent for students to participate in surveys. Not all parents noticed the request for consent and some potentially chose not to allow their children to participate.
- ◆ Prismatic was only able to hear from staff/parent/community constituents who were willing to participate in project activities. Staff participation was lower than desirable (~34% of all staff). Community participation in both the surveys and town meetings trended older than the district’s overall demographics. Data from the US Census indicate that ~27% of the ConVal community was age 62+ in 2021. On the Prismatic surveys, 39% of September and 44% of October respondents were 61+ years old.

- ◆ As a smaller district, not all data requested were available. District and state data sometimes differed, depending on the dates the data were reported. District data sometimes conflicted with other district data, depending on the sources. These issues occurred slightly more frequently than is typical in Prismatic’s work with smaller districts.
- ◆ Peer district data were often limited to what was available on state and district websites. Not all peer districts responded to emailed requests.

## Peer Selection

Using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Prismatic selected peer districts for this project based on student enrollment and locale type. The most recent enrollment figures in NCES are from 2021-22. All of the peers were designated as “Rural-Fringe,”<sup>1</sup> the same as ConVal, with 1 exception. The data shown for the percentage of economically disadvantaged students were sourced from the New Hampshire Department of Education.

Peer District	Enrollment 2021-22	Locale Type	% Economically Disadvantaged 2022-23
Berlin	1,063	Rural-Fringe	55%
Fall Mountain Regional	1,448	Rural-Fringe	38%
Gilford	1,127	Rural-Fringe	16%
Kearsarge	1,730	Rural-Distant	15%
Litchfield	1,230	Rural-Fringe	11%
Monadnock Regional	1,615	Rural-Fringe	33%
Windham	3,032	Rural-Fringe	<10%
<b>ConVal</b>	<b>2,066</b>	<b>Rural-Fringe</b>	<b>24%</b>

## Report Organization

The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

- ◆ Chapter 2 – District Background
- ◆ Chapter 3 – Constituent Input
- ◆ Chapter 4 – Relevant Research and Findings
- ◆ Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations
- ◆ Appendices

Throughout the report, Prismatic has used several abbreviations to reduce page length and improve readability. These include “ES” for “elementary school,” “MS” for “middle school,” and “HS” for “high school.”

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<sup>1</sup> A US Census designation.

## Acknowledgements

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- ◆ Mr. Alan Edelkind, Chairman of the ConVal SOC
- ◆ ConVal School Board Members: Mr. William Bryk, Ms. Erin Pils-Martin, Mr. Michael Hoyt, Mr. Thomas Kirlin, Ms. Katherine Heck, Mr. Dan Harper, Mr. Richard Dunning, Ms. Janine Lesser, Dr. Greg Kriebel, Mr. Tom Burgess, Mr. James Fredrickson, Ms. Elizabeth Swan, and past member Ms. Crista Salamay
- ◆ Dr. Kimberly Rizzo Saunders, Superintendent
- ◆ Ann Forrest, Assistant Superintendent
- ◆ Ben Moenter, Director of Special Education
- ◆ Cari Christian-Coates, Director of Student Services
- ◆ Tim Grossi, Facilities Director
- ◆ Brian Cisneros, Business Administrator
- ◆ Amy Wing, Terminal Manager
- ◆ Katelyn Moore, Fresh Picks Café
- ◆ All the ConVal principals and staff members

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