

# Regional Area School Governance Plan

Submitted by the Governance Subcommittee

October 30, 2006

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Does every idea benefit education for the students? This question underlies the philosophy used to formulate this governance proposal.

## 1. Regional School Governance

- 9 members – each member has one vote (we propose no less than nine members and no more than thirteen)\*
- Elected by equal representation/population groups based on total resident population. Therefore, school board members represent the students rather than a town, and the present geo-political boundaries can begin to be removed in the new configuration.
- A future goal is to elect board members in an “at-large” regional status (when the region is comfortable and has built up trust in order to move to this status)
- One administration
- A School Advisory Group (SAG) of reasonable size at each school will be created, made up of parents and members of the community. School board members or other elected or appointed municipal officials are ineligible to sit on a SAG. The purpose of the SAG is to be a resource to provide feedback to the principals, teachers, and deal with local school issues (e.g. lunchrooms, field trips, etc.), and connect the school to the community. At the high school level, the SAG might also include student representation. The creation and membership of the SAG is left to each school. The SAG is advisory to the local school and has no statutory or supervisory role in allocating resources, personnel matters or policy creation.

## 2. Policy Recommendations:

- All students attend the regional public schools, with no tuition choice to schools, private or public, outside the regional district. Existing tuition agreements (standing at the time of the legal commencement of the new regional school governance structure) would be grandfathered and applied to all children within a family. Families could still choose to send children to private and public schools outside the school district, but tuition payments would no longer accompany the student.
- Public school choice within the regional school system. Residents within the regional district could choose to send their children to any of the elementary/middle schools.
- Neighborhood schools would give priority to students residing in their neighborhood, as well as to students living in Arrowsic, as the town has no neighborhood school and all Arrowsic students are “tuitioned” to other schools.

- One employment contract per bargaining unit.
- Some board decisions would require a supermajority: school closings; superintendent hire/fire (not a complete list)
- Elementary schools would be re-evaluated. Any closures or changes require community approval.\*\*
- The meeting location of the regional school board will be rotated among and held at the local schools.\*\*\*
- The regional school board will conduct a school board orientation workshop with MSMA on an annual basis. Attendance is required.

### 3. Budget:

- The Regional Board, in collaboration with the superintendent, will create an operational budget for each school.
- The regional school budget will be approved through a referendum established at the regional level, approved by a majority of votes cast. (date: late spring)
- The regional board will host public hearings on the proposed school budget in each of the 9 regional areas prior to the referendum.
- A mechanism to coordinate public hearings with local municipal officials will be established.

Allocation of funds/resources to each school under the EPS formula will be referred to and discussed with the Department of Education.

### 4. Board:

- **Although a school board member will be elected from a geographically distinct area of the region, all board members will be considered to represent and advocate for all children and all schools in the regional school district.**

#### Election:

- School board members cannot serve on a municipal board concurrently
- There is no municipal representation on the school board
- Members are elected by a regional area and must legally reside in their area
- One board member per area
- Elections will be held on the November election day.
- School board terms commence (and terminate) immediately after election.

#### Terms:

- Three year staggered terms; no term limits
- Board members must be present at meetings to vote; no proxies

- Self-nominated; nomination requires 50 valid signatures of residents in the region in which the school board member will be elected
- Vacancies due to resignations will be appointed by the regional board; replacement must come from same regional area and fill-in remainder of one year. Must seek re-election to continue to serve.
- After the election of the nine regional board members, at the first official meeting, a drawing by lot will determine the length of each member's term (one, two or three year term).

### **Demographic Representation**

- No school board member will represent a single municipality; therefore one municipality is not represented in its entirety in one regional designation.
- A professional demographer (with the transition team) will divide the area by population based on census figures, to be updated every ten years. The goal of the demographic distribution should be equitable representation (not necessarily proportionate) based on the principle of one person/one vote. A goal would be to have a school in each regional area, but is not a requirement.
- Vocational Education: the regional board, through the superintendent, will refer all unpredicted or future governance or fiscal issues related to the Regional Vocational Center to the Department of Education for advice and resolution.

### **5. Transition Team:**

- Upon approval of the new regional model by the Union 47 Joint Board and the Bath Board of Education, and upon approval by the Commissioner of Education to proceed, a transition team will be convened by the Co-chairs of the Regional Education Task Force.
- The Transition Team will consist of three members from the Union 47 Joint Board, three members from the Bath School Board, the Superintendents of Schools, and at-large and ad-hoc members appointed by the transition team. (Members of the Regional Education Task Force may be interested in serving on the Transition Team.)

The Regional Education Task Force will present its final report at a joint meeting of the Union 47 Joint School Board and the Bath Board of Education, and it is hoped that the two boards will endorse the report at that meeting. The two boards will seek approval from the Commissioner of Education; upon approval, the Transition Team will be convened, and the Task Force will be dissolved.

#### **The Transition Team is expected to:**

- seek outside professional help to design the transition plan.
- coordinate legislation. Any legislative placeholder bills will have specific language, especially to the effect that any legislation will come from and have consensus agreement of the transition team.
- finalize details and timeline of the new model.
- supervise the “marketing” of the new model, including community hearings and feedback (former Task Force members may be included in this effort).

The governance subcommittee recommends that the two school districts continue to collaborate:

- The two school boards meet together
- Administrative Team meetings include both districts
- Common curriculum; involve teachers from both districts to develop
- Professional development for both districts
- A common calendar for both districts
- Visiting artists/arts enrichment shared by both districts
- Sharing/streamlining special education services for both districts
- Allocation/collaboration of Technology planning for both districts
- Pre-school planning efforts involving both districts
- Collaboration with local colleges/community colleges and the high school
- Bulk purchasing

The governance subcommittee recommends the following:

- As part of the **vision** of our new regional school system, we support the application for a new high school building.
- That the Bath School Board defer to a later date their superintendent search until the Regional Education Task Force completes its work and receives approval by the DOE.
- That the new school system as a whole, and its different regional designations, be given names, not a number; AND that the names be solicited from and voted upon by the regional population as a People's Choice Award. Final names will be officially approved by the new regional school board and superintendent.

**Notes:**

\*Currently, and coincidentally, there are 6 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school in our 6-town regional area, for a total of 9 schools. There is a nice indirect relationship between the 9 schools and 9 board members, but that is not how the number of board members was chosen. A nine member board is large enough to allow for a full representation of the population, encourage broad discussion at board meetings, and is not so large as to be unmanageable in terms of attracting candidates, obtaining quorums at meetings, and making consensus decisions among the members. If demographic issues require a larger board, we recommend a board with no more than thirteen members.

\*\*Deferred maintenance in the Bath Public Schools will need to be addressed by the transition team with the Department of Education.

\*\*\*Holding school board meetings at the schools will bring the school board to the community, and the board and community into the schools. It symbolically affirms the regional equity of the new school board.

Unsolicited ideas for names for the new regional school system: Lower Kennebec Watershed Region, Southern Sagadahoc Region