

Frequently Asked Questions

General

Will our elementary school be closed?

The Draft Regional Agreement reads that no school can be closed unless both member towns vote to do so. If either town doesn't vote in favor of a school closing, it will not happen.

What are the advantages of regionalization?

- *An education system with more capabilities and opportunities that will always cost less for the same education than if we kept the schools as separate districts.*
- Increased coordination of curriculum across grade levels through greater communication and expanded curriculum development resources.
- Increased opportunity to improve existing programs via cost sharing, increased buying power and improved coordination.
- Significantly decreased redundant work/cost across schools associated with day-to-day financial, compliance and administrative/governance meetings.
- A simplified and rational committee structure, removing redundancies that overburden volunteers and makes district administration unwieldy and difficult to manage.
- An improved ability to recruit and retain high quality superintendent and district administrators in an environment where available candidates are scarce statewide and we are disadvantaged by our remote location.
- Enhanced role of parents, teachers and community members through collaboration in building-based school councils, which will play a central and formal role in setting educational and budget goals and expectations for their building.

What are the disadvantages of regionalization?

- Somewhat diminished local control over budget planning and offerings, although Town Meeting in each town retains sole authority of approving the total budget of the local elementary school.

Education

How will my child's education change?

Regionalization will allow the district to increase coordination and communication across the schools and capitalize on economies of scale when hiring shared staff, purchasing academic resources and arranging for teacher professional development.

Further, acting as one district will allow teachers to collaborate across schools both horizontally and vertically. As all three schools are small and public education is complex in the 21st century, opportunities to talk about teaching and learning with a greater number of colleagues will provide a significantly better experience.

How will teachers' jobs be affected?

In terms of compensation, teacher salaries will continue to be determined according to collective bargaining agreements, which would be unified district-wide. State law requires that no teacher suffer a negative financial impact from the unification of collective bargaining agreements.

As far as job location, the immediate expectation is that teachers will continue to work where they are. However, as a region, teachers, administration and staff will be eligible to pursue openings in another district school. For example, a 7th grade teacher certified to teach elementary school who wished to pursue an opening could do so. The opportunity to seek employment in a different district school would be particularly advantageous if a teacher or staff member were to lose a job because of a reduction in force. All this said, it is critical to note that each school has its distinct culture and traditions, and it would not benefit schools if district administration were to shift teachers from one school to another without careful consideration.

Will we lose programs (enrichment) if the other elementary school does not have the program?

No, each school will be able to maintain unique programs and opportunities. The school council and principal within each school will be critical voices in setting the building's goals and priorities.

What will be the impact on curricular alignment?

While some variance is desirable as it usually reflects the needs and interests of a school's specific student population, traditions and budget, it is enormously beneficial to have significant consistency across schools. That is something that the elementary schools have been working hard to achieve. When students arrive at middle school from different elementary schools with similar preparation, they can progress more effectively. Curriculum alignment could be understood not only with regard to content and skills taught but also with regard to materials and technologies used. It's critical to think our children as students who will traverse the entire school-age range and benefit from a coordinated, coherent educational approach.

Finance

Will regionalization save money?

The majority of current savings are already being realized by the schools' existing cost sharing structures – SU71 and the Mount Greylock / SU71 shared services agreement. The schools already share central office staff costs and a number of programs. Depending upon the alternative structure that you compare to, the existing cost sharing has been saving ~\$400,00 per year across the three schools.

This proposed agreement is projected to save the towns an additional \$120,000 annually due, in large part, to increased regional transportation aid from the state. Additional savings are

anticipated from cost sharing, greater buying power and increased state/federal/other funding opportunities.

How does how we pay now for our elementary school and Mt Greylock compare to how we would pay on one assessment from a regional district?

Towns will pay only a single assessment to the regional district rather than having separate appropriations for pre-K through 6 and 7 through 12 education. The current draft regional agreement apportions the district's overall costs to each town as follows:

- Each town pays for the operating costs associated with the elementary located within that town (net of state aid, grants and other funding).
- Each town pays for a portion of Mt Greylock's operating costs, as determined by the same pupil ratio approach as is currently used.

The net impact of this apportionment approach is that each town pays for the same things that it does now, except it will save additional money from new state aid and realize future savings from additional cost coordination and outside funding opportunities.

How will regionalization impact my school's LIFE / WESE / SEE fund?

Regionalization will not necessitate any change to the schools' individual funds. All of the schools will be able to maintain their separate funds, associated boards and approach to supporting their school's offerings.

Regional Agreement & Governance

How will the regional agreement change?

- Designate PreK-12 to the district in the regional agreement
- Towns will lease elementary school buildings to the district for \$1/year
- No elementary school can be closed without the consent of both member towns
- There will be a transition committee for the district consisting of members from all three school committees (LES, MG and WES) for the period up until the next biennial election
- All seats on the district school committee will be open for election at the first biennial election
- Apportionment of operating costs will:
 - assign costs for MG as before
 - assign the operating costs associated with each elementary school to the town in which that school is located
- Town meetings will vote a single regional school district budget, with each town paying its portion of operating costs as apportioned above

What will be the membership on the school committee? Why doesn't my town have more representation?

The membership will remain in the same configuration as currently exists – 3 members from Lanesborough and 4 members from Williamstown. Both Lanesborough and Williamstown

residents vote on all seven seats. This provides the maximum number of representatives for Lanesborough, given the relative population between the two towns of the various options permitted by state law for regional school districts.

Will children be forced to go from our elementary school to the other elementary school?

No. The draft text of the Regional Agreement states as follows:

“Children in grades pre-kindergarten through six shall have the right to attend schools in their town of residence. Should parents/guardians of children in grades pre-kindergarten through six wish to send their children to schools not in their town of residence (but within the District), intra-district choice may be made available contingent upon and consistent with District policy. Intra-district choice requests shall be considered prior to allowing inter-district choice requests.”