



## Lanesborough-Williamstown Proposed PreK-12 Regional Expansion

The School Committees of the Lanesborough Elementary School (LES), Mt Greylock Regional School (MG) and Williamstown Elementary School (WES) have voted unanimously to recommend that Lanesborough and Williamstown vote at their respective Town Meetings on November 14, 2017 to modify the Mt. Greylock regional agreement to incorporate LES and WES into the regional district.

### Historical Context

The Mt Greylock Regional School District was formed in 1958, and the Mt Greylock Middle and High School building opened in 1960. LES, WES and MG operated as separate school districts, each with its own superintendent, special education director, and business manager, and its own school committee, policies and budget processes.

In 2008, LES and WES established Superintendency Union 71 to share a single superintendent and other district administrators, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars each year and facilitating educational collaborations between the elementary schools.

In 2011, MG joined the collaboration, signing an agreement with SU71 to share a single superintendent and district administration across the three schools, in what came to be called the "TriDistrict." This arrangement generated additional cost savings and improvement in educational collaboration and coordination across all grade levels and between schools. For example, WES and LES now use the same math curriculum, and the LES instrumental music program is consistent with the way WES prepares students for middle and high school.

### The Need for PreK-12 Regionalization

This collaboration between the three schools has produced significant, measurable improvements in educational outcomes, with both elementary schools similarly preparing students to succeed at Mt. Greylock. LES and WES currently rank as the two best performing elementary schools in Berkshire County.

Improvements in learning outcomes have been especially notable at LES, with exceptionally high numbers of graduating sixth graders scoring "advanced" on recent MCAS tests. Students from the two schools integrate more effectively within the Mt. Greylock student body, and the common foundations and more cohesive culture benefit all students.

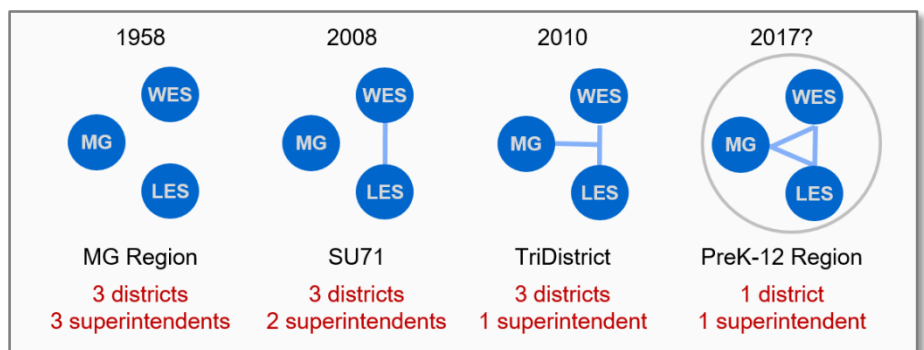
On the other hand, the current TriDistrict administration structure is very inefficient — to the extent that some people think it is unsustainable. Each school has its own governance structure, with its own school committee and budgeting process. This causes wasteful duplication of efforts and a seemingly endless number of

meetings for administration and volunteer school committee members.

This cumbersome structure has also made it very difficult to recruit and retain superintendents, business managers and special education directors in our relatively remote corner of the state. According to a May 2017 WBUR report, "The superintendent shortage in Mass. has reached crisis levels." Recruiting and retaining 2 or 3 highly-qualified superintendents and related staff in our area would be a significantly greater challenge than employing one superintendent and related staff.

### Goals

- Continue to benefit from **educational collaboration** and coordination,
- while making the governance and administration **more manageable** and sustainable,
- and maintaining meaningful **local control** of elementary schools



## Regionalizing while Maintaining Local Control

The proposed Regional Agreement builds on the work of the 2013 RDAC Committee and responds to feedback solicited throughout the community. The intention is to maintain and enhance the high-quality education students receive across the three schools, while addressing the inefficiency and complexity of governance and preserving meaningful local control of the elementary schools.

### What is not changing

- The PreK-12 region would maintain and enhance the educational collaboration across grade levels and between schools.
- Sharing administrators will continue to save hundreds of thousands of dollars per year, to free up funding for programs and services that directly benefit students and provide relief to taxpayers.
- The proposed Regional Agreement specifically states that the elementary school in a town cannot be closed without the town's consent. Both towns need to vote in favor of any school closure.
- The Mt. Greylock Region would retain the same governance structure, with a seven-member school committee comprised of three representatives from Lanesborough and four from Williamstown. (During a one-year transition, a Transitional Committee would be composed of three members from the existing elementary school committees and four members from the MG school committee.)
- Each town would continue to pay the operating costs associated with the town's elementary school.
- The costs for the middle-high school would continue to be apportioned using the existing method.

### What's new

- Instead of a school committee for each school, the new regional school committee would be ultimately responsible for PreK-12 education.
- The school council for each school, composed of the principal, teachers, parents and community members, would develop the annual school improvement plan and play a central role in the development and review of the school's annual budget.
- At the Annual Town Meeting, each town would vote on a school budget that includes the budget for the town's elementary school plus the town's portion of the middle-high school budget. State funds would be allocated to each town using a formula similar to the state's Chapter 70 formula that adjusts based on changes in both the student enrollment and the economic resources of each town

## Financial Benefits

The most significant financial impact of PreK-12 Regionalization is making the TriDistrict partnership more manageable and sustainable so that we can continue to save the roughly \$400,000/per year avoiding administrator redundancies — funds that are used to support educational programs and ease the burden on taxpayers.

PreK-12 Regionalization will also generate Regional Transportation Aid for elementary students, whose bus transportation to and from school is not reimbursed by the state unless the school is in a regional district. In the current year, this additional state aid would amount to \$191,000. Regionalizing the three schools will also require merging of employment contracts for teachers and other personnel, at a total increase of \$70,000 per year. When the second number is subtracted from the first, the net positive impact is calculated to \$121,000.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Level	Percentile
Williamstown - Williamstown	Level 1	90
Lanesborough - Lanesborough	Level 1	89
Lenox - Morris	Level 1	88
Pittsfield - Williams	Level 1	84
Richmond - Richmond Consolidated	Level 1	84

SECONDARY SCHOOL	Level	Percentile
Lenox - Lenox Memorial High	Level 2	89
Mount Greylock - Mt Greylock	Level 1	87
Central Berkshire - Wahconah	Level 2	69
Berkshire Arts and Technology	Level 2	57
Berkshire Hills - Monument Mt	Level 2	56

**WES and LES are ranked 1 and 2 of the 24 Berkshire County elementary schools, and MG is ranked 2nd of the 15 secondary schools. (DESE 2017)**