

**Compromise Bipartisan Working Group Report on School Consolidation  
Update to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

May 21, 2007 at 1:00 PM

**The Bipartisan Working Group is composed of members of the  
Education Committee, the Appropriations Committee, the Rural Caucus, Interested Parties, and Leadership**

Issue	Report "A"
1. Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* All school districts subject to consolidation with other districts must vote on school consolidation in January 2008 to be implemented on July 1, 2008.</li> <li>* School districts voting not to consolidate in January 2008 must consolidate and be operational by July 1, 2009 in order to avoid penalties that are in addition to the modification to General Purpose for FY 2009</li> <li>* All School districts not required to consolidate must submit a report to the Commissioner of Education no later than December 1, 2007 that explains the means by which administrative savings will be achieved to meet the reduction in EPS funding.</li> <li>* Beginning July 1, 2008 [FY 2009], a modification of \$36.5 million is made to General Purpose Aid that impacts all school districts to reflect administrative reorganization.</li> <li>* Beginning July 1, 2009 additional penalties will be imposed on school districts that have not yet consolidated.</li> </ul>
2. Number of Districts	Legislative Intent for 80 districts
3. Size of School Administrative Units.	The size of each district is based on population density. School districts in counties with a population of less than 100 per square mile must achieve a minimum student population of 1200 students. School districts located in the following counties with a population of more than 100 residents per square mile in: York, Cumberland, Androscoggin, Kennebec, Sagadahoc, Knox, must achieve a minimum student population of 2500 students.
4. Governance	Each school administrative unit will be governed by an executive board assisted by local school committees. Governance is flexible and not prescribed. [May be similar to school union governance].
	<p><b>Prior to the operation of the Working Group, a bipartisan subcommittee of more than 30 people participated in the development of a compromise school consolidation proposal. Included in this group were members of the Education and Appropriations Committees, bipartisan party leadership, superintendents, and other interested parties. The bipartisan subcommittee agreed to a smaller working group to propose a school consolidation plan.</b></p>
	<b>Issues in Report "A" That Are in Common with Report "B" - Rural Caucus</b>

1. Role of Reorganization Planning Committees	The 26 Reorganization Planning Committees work with local regional planning committees to manage the regional planning process, prepare reorganization plans for submission to the Commissioner and local voters, and to facilitate the transition to the new district
2. Leadership & Direction	Local regional planning Committees provide leadership and direction with the assistance of the Commissioner. The Department will provide necessary data, expertise, and maps to assist in developing the new School Administrative Units
3. Collaboration	Collaboration among school units and municipalities is encouraged at the earliest possible time, prior to consolidation and following consolidation. Collaboration to achieve savings above the \$36.5 million modification includes, but is not limited to: purchasing of equipment and supplies, purchasing for food and fuel, transportation of students and maintenance of vehicles, preparation of payroll, book-keeping, etc
4. Budget Transparency	Mandatory summary budget with 11 expenditure articles. Each budget must make a clear link between school spending and any changes in tax rates. There will be a standardized budget format statewide for transparency. If the budget spends more than 100% of EPS, it must show the increase any increase in the tax rate associated with it.
5. Ultimate approval of consolidated school administrative units	* Determined by Statute with clear criteria. The Commissioner will use the criteria to determine whether the proposed consolidated unit meets statutory requirements. * A Popular vote of the new school administrative unit will be final.
6. Cost Sharing	Cost sharing formulas are determined by local agreement or private and special law as they are under existing law. Local voters approve cost sharing formulas
7. Local-only Debt	Local only debt is transferred to the reorganized school unit if the reorganized school unit takes over associated school property
8. School Closing Procedure	A 2/3 vote of school boards is required to initiate the school closing Procedure.
9. School Choice	School choice will be recognized and maintained in the new district. This includes independent and private schools.
10. Exemption from Consolidation	Off-shore Island schools and Tribal schools.
11.. Issues not Addressed	Education of students from the Unorganized Territory, Incentives, and Penalties