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Report of Findings-Ad-Hoc Cost Sharing Committee
Programming Subcommittee:

Members:

Rose Bisson, Hampton BOE Chair, Chair — Wendy Sears, Scotland Selectman
Kathy Donohue, Hampton Board of Finance — Juan Arriola, Hampton BOE
Community Member
Cassidy Martin, Scotland BOE Chair

INTRODUCTION:

The Programming Subcommittee was one of two subcommittees formed to study the impact of combining Scotland and Hampton Elementary Schools. The members of this group were tasked with determining what a combined elementary school district would look like from a financial, programming and physical standpoint (staffing). An overall estimated budget for a new district was generated with input from each school's administration and financial staff, and other contributors.

SCOPE OF WORK:

Staffing

Each department was calculated thoughtfully, with the information we had available. We asked questions and gathered data as necessary, with assistance from each of our elementary schools. Each of the departments in the Combined School Estimate includes a conservative estimate of the necessary staffing for each position. We attempted to closely match existing staffing, and then add to staffing levels as needed, dependent on class sizes or anticipated needs of students, staff and administration.

The Committee, overall, wished to see more additional programming for those programs classes that fall under the "specials" category, but maintained a conservative estimate for the purposes of this model. The daily academic schedule would certainly be the driving factor as to the addition of time to this category, but by keeping the "specials" time allotment conservative, it allows for consideration of other student program enhancements.

Salaries

Estimates for staff salaries were determined by averaging each school's current staff salaries separately, by position, and then taking the average of those two numbers to determine the average salary for each position. See Appendix A for calculations used to determine average salaries for certified teachers, paraprofessionals, superintendent, principal and special education director.

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Limitations & Struggles:

The committee found that there were some areas which were more difficult, or took more time to identify and represent appropriately, than other areas.

Special Education

Determining special education costs can be difficult to anticipate, in consideration of (sometimes) wildly fluctuating year-to-year costs for expensive outplacements and related transportation. For illustrative purposes, Scotland’s special education outplacement + related transportation has varied in the last 6 years from a low of \$0 to a high of approximately \$90,000, with the average of those years being approximately \$21,000.

Administration Salary

Principal salary was questioned by the committee, as the average salary (\$100,006) seemed inadequate for the role of this full-time administrator. After much discussion, the group decided to include a salary range for this position of \$110k-\$120k, dependent on the individual experience level and credentials. This number was decided upon based on the salaries indicated in the District Reference Groups (DRG) classification system for this position, as shown in Chart below.

Principal FTE & Salary for Other Small School Districts				
Town	FTE	Salary	# Students	DRG
Pomfret	1	\$130,024	382	C
Barkhamsted	1	\$132,536	197	C
Salem	1	\$136,812	416	C
Andover	1	\$139,000	198	C
Marlborough	1	\$150,521	448	C
Scotland	1	\$98,000	105	E
Hampton	1	\$103,000	84	E
Lisbon	1	\$117,641	419	E
Colebrook	1	\$118,033	74	E
Eastford	1	\$120,837	150	E
Franklin	1	\$122,570	159	E
Hartland	1	\$122,570	157	E
Norfolk	1	\$124,959	73	E
Bozrah	1	\$126,000	185	E
Ashford	1	\$142,438	390	E
Sprague	1	\$125,294	272	F
Voluntown	1	\$126,000	261	F
Sterling			360	F

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"The District Reference Groups (DRGs) classification system, used by the CT State Department of Education (CSDE), groups local public school districts together based on the similar socioeconomic status of their students. DRGs are useful in making comparisons among districts and can provide both district leaders and policymakers with helpful context when making resource decisions."
~ctschoolfinance.org

Calculations of Savings vs Perceived Savings

Savings were designed to automatically calculate for each category and each department level. There are, however, certain line items that represent savings for a particular department but are not truly savings overall. Certain items show up as expenses in each town’s current individual school budget, but when applied to the estimated combined school budget, they appear as \$0, thereby being represented as a savings. Those expenses are actually pushed out to each individual town BOE, still as an expense, but must be adequately represented within the model framework.

At the bottom of the Estimated Budget Spreadsheet, you will see a chart labeled “Expenses Moved from General Education Budget to Individual Town/BOE Budgets”, which indicates these individual expenses. For reference it is shown below as well:

Expenses moved from General Education Budget to individual Town/BOE Budgets:		
	Scotland	Hampton
REGULAR INSTRUCTION:		
TUITION/PUBLIC IN STATE	50,470	19,196
SPECIAL EDUCATION:		
TUITION/PUBLIC IN STATE	16,530	0
TUITION/PRIVATE		76,500
TRANSPORTATION SPECIAL ED		10,000
ADULT EDUCATION		
ADULT EDUCATION	2,000	2,135
SUPERINTENDENT		
ENUMERATOR	816	550
PUPIL TRANSPORTATION		
PUPIL TRANSPORTATION	94,420	110,700
FUEL - OTHER	4,000	13,950
Total expense from General Education Budget to Individual Town BOE Budget (Individual Town Expenses):		
	168,236	233,031

**note: \$55,350 is the transportation expense & \$6,975 is the fuel for Hampton Elementary only, but the entire RD11/Hampton Elementary Transportation expense must be transferred to the HES BOE Budget.

Embedded Enhanced Programming

There are multiple ways to represent and recommend enhanced programming for the students, and the committee had many discussions about where/how to show this. The committee wanted to ensure that the benefits which are embedded in the estimated budget are identified as such. This enhanced programming is represented in the form of

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additional resources for the students, which for the most part, organically occurred by way of having a larger student body, requiring that those additional resources be more widely available and more efficiently provided for. Some of these embedded enhancements include:

- adding staff positions (as opposed to contracting for these services) for Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech Pathology, Special Education Staff,
- Increases in line items for field trips, contracted enrichment
- Adjusting programs to allow for separate librarian and media/technology positions, increases to psychological services

Benefits and Enhancements

There was much discussion within the committee regarding the benefits of a Cooperative School. The main benefit, and the reason for beginning this project, is profound cost savings. But that is not the only, nor necessarily the most important benefit. If the cost savings, though substantial, did not provide for additional and tangible benefits to the students, it would be difficult to recommend this cooperative arrangement in its entirety.

Academic and Extracurricular Enhancements

Some of the academic program enhancements considered were foreign language studies, student competitions such as a spelling or geography bee, science fair or invention convention. After school programming can also give students the opportunity to participate in club activities such as homework assistance, cooking classes, science club, intramural sports, or gardening club. Though our schools may have recently, or currently offer these kinds of after school activities, the larger student body ensures that these activities could continue because they would not be as affected by low enrollment numbers.

Some of the upper grade program enhancements that the committee recommends be considered also have the added benefit of preparing students for, and aligning processes or curriculums with, those at the middle school level. One of the opportunities that were discussed included the combining of 5th and 6th grade seasonal sports with those at the middle school level. Many of the middle schools in the region include students from grade 5 through 8, giving their students more opportunities to participate in competitive sports at a younger age. In order to not lose academic time due to the end-of-the-school-day time differences, the middle school students could come to our Cooperative School and utilize those facilities for practices and/or games. Parish Hill would also benefit from this arrangement, as it opens up field and gym space for practice and games at the high school level.

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Grade Level Academic/Interest Grouping

Having the benefit of a larger student body allows for better grade level academic grouping for subjects such as math and reading. It also allows for better or different offerings/groupings related to student interests. When the student body is small (or too small as may be the case), the benefit to the students diminishes, especially when it comes to social groupings. It can also be difficult to offer more academically individualized programming when a small classroom includes students of drastically varying needs.

When grouping students based on performance and academic needs, the ability to offer multi-age groupings benefits students at different grade levels. A student who may need additional help in one subject can get that core subject intensive instruction in one group, but that same student who performs at an advanced level in another core subject can be grouped with similarly advanced students. This model provides for the academic needs of each and every student by placing them in a grouping of students that best enhances their subject literacy and academic progression.

Diversity

Larger student population will innately increase the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of a school. Though our communities typically lack the same diversity that other larger communities or more urban areas record, combining our schools and increasing the student body has the potential to offer more opportunities for students to interact with and learn from other students with more diverse backgrounds.

Information we expected to gather

Information we recognized as a by-product of our work

Analysis of data

Mechanisms for determining costs/expenses

History

Overall Findings

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EXTRA/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR POSSIBLE INCLUSION

State of CT Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee authorized a study entitled Regional Cooperation Between Local Boards of Education. Their findings (dated December 15, 2015) are published here:

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/pri/docs/2015/Regional%20Cooperation%20Staff%20F&R%20Full%20Report.pdf>

Introduction

Regional Cooperation Between Boards of Education

Regional cooperation between boards of education refers to the joint, voluntary provision of services, programs, activities, or operations. Cooperative activities can vary widely, from two school districts arranging to share a bus route or a director of special education, to the creation of a regional school district serving children in grades K-12 or a group of districts jointly running an adult education program for interested adults from multiple towns.

Cooperative activities are often undertaken based on an assumption that the programs and services will be provided at a reduced cost compared to each school district individually providing the service or program, or at the very least, will contain future costs. It is important to note that in addition to potential financial advantages, cooperative efforts may expand an individual school's course offerings or programs, or provide other non-economic benefits.

Historically, cooperation between boards of education was first authorized statutorily through a special act establishing the Regional High School District Number 1 of Litchfield County in 1937.¹ Then, in addition to developing a statutory scheme for the formation of additional regional school districts,² in 1949 the legislature authorized individual districts to share superintendents.³ The 1960s saw the evolution of the statute authorizing shared superintendents and multi-district supervisory units into one allowing "cooperative arrangements" to carry out any of the statutory duties of boards of education.⁴ As recently as 2010, the legislature further clarified that any board of education can partner with other boards of education or municipalities to establish shared service agreements with no formal requirements other than that they be documented in writing.⁵

The second paragraph of this Introduction describes the reasoning behind the commitment of time, energy and resources to studying the impact to the towns of Scotland and Hampton. Studies such as this current Hampton/Scotland Ad Hoc Committee for Interdistrict Educational Cost Sharing Committee was undertaken initially to determine if there would be cost savings in the combining of our Elementary Schools.

In addition to finding significant savings, the subcommittee noted other valuable benefits that should not be overlooked:

Highlighted in the opening description of this study were factors that Superintendents identified as needing to be "... used in deciding whether to form or continue a collaboration..."

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Table 2-1. Factors Contributing to the Formation of Regional Cooperative Efforts.	
Factor	Related Superintendent Comments
1. Contains costs/Saves money (59%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has to be worth it, must cost less, not more (unless significant value for kids) • Not so much decreasing costs as cost containment • In general, the economic savings has to be significantly more than 5% to entice collaborations. A 20-30% savings might promote or encourage regionalism.
2. Creates efficiencies or improves quality of services (36%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it create efficiencies for all parties? • Will it help us to operate more efficiently? • There needs to be both a savings and an efficiency (Something that would save \$2,000 but require 400 hours to do, is not worth it).
3. Satisfies a need of the school district (21%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it make sense? (gain in efficiency and cost savings, that can then lead to the reallocation of resources for other district needs). • There needs to be a common need among the potential partners • There has to be both a need and opportunity to collaborate
4. Benefits all collaborating parties (21%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there mutual (and relatively equal) benefit? • Meets the needs of both school districts (both parties); creates a win-win situation • At least the same or greater level of services can be offered at lower cost and without inconvenience or increased risk
5. Benefits/positively impacts students (18%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it good for kids? • If it doesn't create excellence/excellent program, then they don't want their students involved in something that isn't high quality. • If there are not enough kids to field a team, should combine with other school districts to make the sport available (co-op sports).
6. Logistics can be worked out (18%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating school day schedule and calendar • Logistics - will it work in light of time frames, schedules, etc. • Logistics--who oversees what?
7. Needs of Local Control/Politics/Relationships are met (18%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a mutual willingness on the part of the potential partners? • No loss of control, impact on the community • Is there Bd of Ed support and town council support?
8. School district has knowledge of opportunity (11%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there availability to cooperate in the school district's geographic area? • Availability and knowledge of opportunity. • Proximity to a larger better resourced district that may have developed services and have capacity to share.

These questions should be answered before endeavoring to create an education partnership between our local communities. The members of the Hampton/Scotland Committee have attempted to answer these questions