

## Presentation to Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee

# Report of the Regional School District Study Committee

February 2, 2012

## Agenda

- Charge of the Committee and Membership
- Work Plan and Responsibilities
- Governance Issues
- Analysis of Educational Impacts
- Analysis of Administrative Impacts
- Political/Outreach Activities
- Financial Analysis and Preliminary Results
- Issues for Discussion

## Charge of the Committee

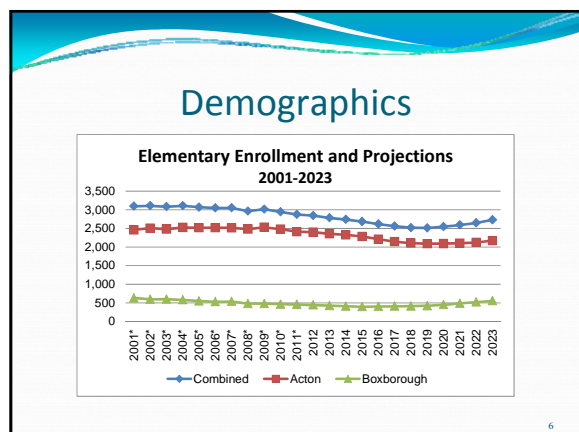
- Consideration of the viability of expanding the current District to include grades pre-K through 12
- Research and evaluate possible amendments to the current Regional Agreement (with and without full regionalization)
- Report back to Regional School Committee
- Membership:
  - Mac Reid and Peter Ashton (co-chairs)
  - Xuan Kong and Adria Cohen (Acton)
  - Mary Brolin and Kristin Hilberg (Boxborough)

## Work Plan and Responsibilities

- Began meeting in October and bi-weekly since then
- Identified issues:
  - Demographics
  - Educational impacts such as class size, maintenance of academic programs and independence
  - Impact on administrative expenses
  - Political issues such as control and representation
  - Financial implications
  - Assumption of existing debt, buy-in, other governance issues

## Work Plan and Responsibilities

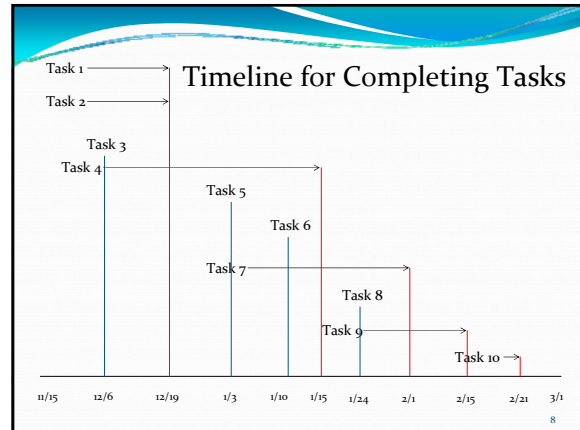
- Developed point person responsibilities
  - Administrative (Xuan)
  - Demographics (Peter)
  - Educational (Adria)
  - Governance (Mac)
  - Financial (Mary & Peter)
  - Political/Outreach (Kristin)
- Individual work plans by topic, then integrated into an overall work plan
- Goal was to inform RSC and public about potential for full regionalization for "Sense of Town Meeting" votes this spring



## Work Plan

- Task 1: Characterize current operating environment in all three districts
- Task 2: External survey of established pre-K to 12 districts
- Task 3: Brainstorm governance issues
- Task 4: Develop/characterize organization and impacts under full pre-K to 12 regionalization
- Task 5: Brainstorm on administrative impacts
- Task 6: Brainstorm on educational impacts
- Task 7: Develop financial model of full regionalization and comparative impacts
- Task 8: Brainstorm on financial model and impacts
- Task 9: Feedback from stakeholders
- Task 10: Make final recommendations

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## Governance Issues

- Budget/Assessments
  - Percentage of towns' budgets to schools
  - Allocation of transportation costs
  - Current debt

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## Governance Issues

- Regional Buy-In:
  - Current buildings
  - Debt
- Construction/Renovation Costs
  - Each town responsible for town buildings
  - Boxborough 5% discount

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## Governance Issues

- Current Equipment & Technology
  - Education equipment & technology
  - Technology infrastructure
- Transition and Regional School Committees
  - Transitional Regional School Committee election process
  - Regional School Committee: "one man, one vote"

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## Governance Issues

- Location of Students
  - Guarantee of hometown school
    - Special Education
    - Special educational & extra-curricular programs
  - Parent options
    - Equal access in Acton
    - Transportation responsibility
- Facilities
  - Own or lease
- Community Education
  - Integration of Boxborough programs

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### Analysis of Educational Impacts

- Interviewed administrators, teachers, union representatives
- Perceived benefits of regionalization:
  - Greater efficiency in obtaining resources (e.g., textbooks)
  - Shared curriculum efforts will reach more students
  - Enhanced professional development opportunities
  - Expanded collaboration with administrative and instructional personnel
  - Greater efficiency and enhanced services for special education in both towns

### Analysis of Educational Impacts

- “Hesitations” with regard to regionalization:
  - Impact on individual school identities
  - Longer distances by bus to school for some
  - Possible changes to Blanchard’s music, chorus, band programs
  - Possible changes in class sizes and number of specialists
  - Implications for contractual changes

### Administrative: Current Structure

- Full regionalization will simplify governance and structure
  - Currently three school districts with three school committees
  - Distinct student record, human resource, and financial management systems
  - Duplicative regulatory reporting effort

### Administrative: Full Regionalization

- Full Regionalization enables better service delivery in a more cost effective manner
  - Streamlined operations and organization
  - More coherent learning experience for students
  - More transparent financial reporting
  - More consistent benefit management for employees
  - Simplified inter-governmental relationship
  - Improved parent-guardian interaction with schools

### Administrative: Study Process

- Met with both superintendents to review current administrative structures
- Interviewed all department heads at district level
- Examined impact on elementary schools at building level
- Reviewed interview results with two superintendents together to receive further feedback
- Surveyed other regional school district organization structures
- Brainstormed with members of study committee

### Administrative: Study Outcome

Summary of Impacts and Potential Savings with Full Regional Organization:

Department	Add FTE	Lose FTE	Net FTE
Superintendent	-	(2.40)	(2.40)
Curriculum	1.00	(0.20)	0.80
Finance*	0.25	(1.50)	(1.25)
Pupil Services	0.40	(0.50)	(0.10)
Educational Technology	0.50	-	0.50
Municipal Staff	-	(1.00)	(1.00)
Elementary Staff Support	1.50	-	1.50
Transportation			Contract savings nets out against additional bus lease costs
Community Education			Integration of Boxborough with Acton could save 1 FTE
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>(5.60)</b>	<b>(1.95)</b>

\* Budget analyst position included in FY13 and therefore not included here

Estimated savings = \$150,000

### Political/Outreach Activities

- Goal
  - To inform people of the charge of the ABRSDSC
  - To understand general opinions, questions and concerns
  - To listen with a “neutral ear”
- Activities to Date
  - Informal presentations and discussions with school organizations (PTO, PTF)
  - Informational guest article in The Beacon and school newsletters
  - Conversations with individual stakeholders: parents, residents without kids in school, kids, etc.

### Political/Outreach Activities

- What We Learned – Lots of Questions:
  - Educational impacts
  - Administrative impacts
  - Mechanics of school placements for students
  - Transportation...time, cost, efficiency
  - Budget dynamics, fundraising
  - Perceived loss of control to the Region
  - Loss of local school control, loss of identity
  - Financial issues regarding the split
  - Perception that opening the agreement means opening “everything”

### Political/Outreach Activities

- And If We Move Forward...
  - Public education and outreach will be key to an informed vote at Town Meetings
  - Attention to detail and facts vs. emotions
  - All formats must be tapped
    - Published: Patch, Beacon, Newsletters
    - Personal: guest speakers at meetings (schools and town)

### Financial Analysis and Preliminary Results

- Analyzed two cases: “Base Case” – status quo  
“Full Regionalization:” pre-K thru 12
- Difference between the two reflects potential savings
- Developed 5 year projections of budgets and revenues
- Analyzed FY11 and FY12 budget and revenue data; used FY13 as starting point for comparative analysis
- Base Case follows budgets and expected revenue amounts and calculates costs to Acton and Boxborough

### Financial Analysis and Preliminary Results

- In the Regionalization case, we:
  - Identified savings from changed administrative structure (~\$150,000)
  - Identified additional revenues from state reimbursement of transportation costs (~\$520,000)
  - Projected a shift of APS retirees’ HI costs from APS budget to municipal budget as required by law (~\$530,000)
  - Identified savings in Acton municipal and Boxborough municipal budgets of certain administrative costs (~\$60,000)
  - Projected a decline in Boxborough choice revenue as program is assumed to be phased out over seven years (~\$25,000/yr.)
  - Projected no change in current academic environment – possible additional savings from classroom reductions

### Financial Analysis and Preliminary Results

- Preliminary results have identified cost savings and potential additional revenue of approximately \$695,000 per year in the full regionalization case
- Further shift toward Acton of total enrollment (84% vs. 82% using three year average)
- Under current agreement regionalization leads to higher costs in Acton, very significant savings in Boxborough
- Based on our preliminary conclusions, if both communities are to participate in savings, some adjustment to the regional agreement would be necessary

## Issues for Discussion

- Is ~ \$700,000 in “benefits” worth going forward?
- How to restructure the regional agreement to permit both towns to share in savings?
- Are likely educational benefits and administrative efficiencies worth going forward?
- How to overcome concerns expressed in both towns regarding loss of school identity, loss of control, other issues?
- Is there enough time to provide the required public outreach over the next two months?

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## Next Steps

- Seek Regional School Committee feedback and direction this evening
- Continue to evaluate salary/contract implications
- Assess savings from possible classrooms reductions
- Obtain public input and feedback
- Develop committee recommendations
- Ask for sense of Town Meeting?

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