

Proposed Consolidation Plan Durham, Freeport, Pownal (SAD-62) School Districts

This document outlines a plan for the consolidation of the Durham, Freeport, and Pownal (SAD-62) school districts. The purpose of this document is to provide a high level overview of the plan specifics, without the legal jargon required in the plan document to be submitted to the state.

- I. **Quality of Education:** The primary purpose of this consolidation is to create a school district that provides a higher quality of education for the students in the three towns than is currently in place. This plan incorporates by reference the findings of the Education Subcommittee of the RPC dated XXXXXX. The governing board of the RSU (RSU Board, see below) will take the following steps to ensure the best possible education for the students:
 - a. The RSU Board will create and maintain a set of specific operational goals (RSU Goals) for the school system. These goals will include, but will not be limited to, moving all schools in the district to High Performing designation as measured by the Silvernail methodology.
 - b. The RSU Board will develop and institute a set of measureable quantitative as well as qualitative benchmarks to track progress toward meeting the RSU Goals.
 - c. The RSU Board will direct the management of the RSU school system to implement additional programs and/or curriculum changes in the school to achieve the RSU Goals.
 - d. The RSU Board will prepare and distribute an annual written report presenting the goals, benchmarks, and results to the community.
- II. **Disbursement of Assets and Debt:** All assets and all outstanding debt from each of the three towns will be transferred to the RSU.
- III. **Cost Sharing:**
 - a. Definitions:
 - i. Essential Programs and Services (EPS): The state calculated funding level for the RSU district
 - ii. Additional Local Monies (ALM): The amount above EPS that the RSU board budgets to operate the RSU school system.
 - b. The Additional Local Monies shall be divided among the RSU member towns in proportion to the number of students from each town attending the RSU schools according to the following formula: $\text{Town ALM Contribution} = \frac{\text{Total ALM Amount}}{\text{Total RSU Student Population}} * \text{Town Student Population}$

- IV. **Governance:** The RSU will be governed, as required by the consolidation law, by a board established to reflect the relative voting populations of each town.

Town	Board Seats	Voting Weight
Durham	3	1
Freeport	6	1
Pownal	2	0.5

- a. From time to time, the RSU Board may review its makeup and institute changes to reflect changing populations of the towns.
- V. **Adjustments to the Plan:** The RSU Board may put modifications to this plan out for referendum by a simple majority. Modifications to the plan must be passed by a majority vote in a referendum of all member towns.

Discussion of Plan Outline

Quality of Education

All three towns believe that the quality of education should be the focus of the consolidation plan. This plan requires specific actions of the RSU board to ensure that the Board continues to transparently maintain that purpose in its ongoing operations. The recommendations of the Education Subcommittee are include here by reference to provide a pool of ideas for the RSU Board, but not to constrain their thinking as they work to move the district forward.

The requirements to prepare goals, measureable benchmarks and annual reporting are important to ensure that the three towns can see the results of the work of the board and can measure the return on their investment in new programs and/or curriculum. It is not too onerous a structure to impose as part of the consolidation plan and ensures that the participants have similar vision.

Assets and Debt

Each town brings something different to the consolidation. The three communities must enter into this consolidation with a mutual feeling of trust and respect. By absorbing the existing debt – and likewise, by contributing paid-off assets – the communities show respect for the historical management of the independent districts and acknowledge that both assets as well as debt are being contributed to the RSU.

While Freeport will be adding the most debt to the new RSU system, Freeport also will be adding the most fully paid off assets – in particular the High School which has very little debt in comparison to its total value.

Cost Sharing

Quality of Education is paramount to this plan. The towns must contribute to the Additional Local Monies of the district equitably to ensure that no one town feels like they are unfairly burdened with a disproportionate share of the RSU costs.

The state funding formula already guarantees that the bulk of the RSU budget will be contributed by the member towns in proportion to property valuation.

Table of Comparative Total Local Contributions Under Proposed Cost Sharing Structure

Town	% of total local contribution	% 2008 Students
Durham	19.78%	29.05%
Freeport	70.70%	59.74%
Pownal	9.52%	11.20%

[NOTE: This table is based on a scenario of paying for the three districts' 2008 budgets under the cost-sharing system proposed in this plan outline.]

This cost sharing system means that the three towns, together, will weather the rise and fall of state funding formulae as well as future increases in the school budgets.

It is important that the consolidation plan put into place a cost sharing system that will endure the test of time. The RSU Board will have its hands full ensuring the quality of education for the students without having to renegotiate the terms of cost sharing to make adjustments after three years. It will not get easier later to implement an equitable system.

Governance

The consolidation law specifies quite clearly that RSU governance must be proportional to voting population. This plan creates a board of manageable size while accommodating some redundancy for Pownal.

In addition, each town should make all reasonable attempts to put the budget referendums to the voters with directional advisory questions. A "NO" vote with no indication of directional preference does not help the RSU decide how to adjust to come back to the voters.