

## REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT #20

Belfast · Belmont · Frankfort · Morrill · Northport  
Searsmont · Searsport · Stockton Springs · Swanville

### FAQ

#### Frequently Asked Questions Regarding RSU 20 Reorganization October 3, 2011 Update

1. Could the referendum be moved to June 2012?  
**We have a number of opportunities for people to have input and become informed between now and November 8. As November draws near, if the Board feels we need more time, the non-binding referendum can be moved to a later date.**
2. What would happen to the Garden Project?  
**The Garden Project is an integral part of the middle school curriculum and would move with the middle school. It might be cheaper to build another greenhouse rather than move the one at THMS. Furthermore, gardening and agriculture are becoming part of the elementary curriculum.**
3. What is a non-binding referendum?  
**A non-binding referendum is like an opinion poll. The public will have a chance to express their opinion on the reorganization concept. The Board of Directors is the body elected to make this decision but they clearly want to hear from you.**
4. Does the Board have the final decision or do you?  
**The Board of Directors.**
5. Will travel time be longer than this under the concept?  
**While some students will actually experience less travel time, it is clear that the majority will have longer bus trips. All middle school students from the former SAD34 and all high school students from the former SAD56 will have to add on the time to go their respective schools. The average bus travel time between BAHS and SDMS/HS is 14 minutes.**
6. Would additional space be required at the high school by some State or federal law?

- No, we have more than adequate instructional space. The common areas (lobby, café, and library) are smaller than we would like to see but are not restricted by any law or code.**
7. Would NEASC standards affect the number of students in the high school?  
**NEASC does have a facilities component of their accreditation process and will no doubt, note our common areas indicated in the previous question.**
  8. What are the one time costs for the move and facilities change?  
**At this time (July 7) we have not estimated a cost for the move. We have acknowledged there will be a cost.**
  9. What happens to the empty schools?  
**When building cease to be used for educational purposes by the Region, they must first be offered back to the municipality in which the building is located. There is a detailed process described in State Statute as to how this occurs.**
  10. Could 300 elementary school students be put in Searsport District High School? Reconfigure the school to include these students?  
**This question warrants some further investigation. There are some who would not favor their young children in the same building with middle school and high school students but there may be ways to isolate a wing for elementary usage.**
  11. What happens to the CASS school?  
**Capt. Albert Stevens School would not change. All rooms are currently being used.**
  12. The cafeteria at BAHS is very crowded. What happens if you add 200 students?  
**There will be a need for some creative scheduling around lunch to allow for all students to have a chance for lunch.**
  13. How is debt service on the schools factored in the cost savings?  
**Any debt service on a building to be closed must either be paid by the Region or assumed by the owners of the building.**
  14. How are the ten (10) teaching positions cut at the high school level arrived at?

**Each department will determine how many sections of a subject are needed (per the class size policy) and thus, how many teachers are needed. The Board of Directors will have the ultimate say on the number as they have to vote to eliminate the positions. The negotiated employment contract includes the provisions and process for a Reduction in Force.**

15. Concerns over limited opportunities if schools are combined in the new sports classification?

**This is a valid concern. The high school would be a Class A school and would not have as many total teams as the two existing high schools.**

16. If the referendum indicates that there is little public support, what will you do?

**It is what the Board of Directors does that is important. They have clearly indicated that they want to hear from you. This is a major concept change to the way we deliver education in this area and the Board is going to listen to the public. Without significant public support, this concept is going to struggle.**

17. Alternative idea? Zero funding for sports, field trips, after school activities.

**In the past five years, we have been cutting back on sports and extra/co-curricular activities. The total for all extra/co-curricular activities (sports, clubs, drama, etc) equals 1.42% of the budget. Field trips were cut significantly for the 2011-2012 budget. There is very little left to be cut in these areas.**

18. How was it decided which elementary school would be closed?

**The first consideration was given to the proximity to a school that could house additional students. No one is in favor of long bus rides. Second consideration was given to the age of the building and work needed to bring a building up to code and the final area of consideration was the amount of debt service remaining on a building.**

19. What will taxes, on average, go up in Searsport if we do not go for this?

**How much will taxes go up?? I can not answer that question with any accuracy at this time. However, I can estimate that the cost of education for the town of Searsport in RSU 20 would decrease by \$252,044.00 a year if this concept is implemented. For a home valued at \$200,000.00, the tax savings would be \$180.00 per year.**

20. With recent shifts in monies from the legislature, do you anticipate more money coming to our region?  
**Yes I do. The legislature has made some changes in the funding law to help the more rural regions, such as doing away with the “economic adjustment”. Regions located in higher income areas of the State received an economic adjustment because it cost more to live in those areas.**
21. How will the needs of 504 students be met in a larger school? There is such a quick response and good communication at SDHS now.  
**I would be very quick to point out that the needs of 504 students are handled in a quick and effective manner in all our schools. The 504 regulations very clearly outline how the needs of 504 students are to be met.**
22. How is the input from this forum being used?  
**A summary of the questions and suggestions from each forum will be presented to the Board. Board attendance has been good at both of the first two forums.**
23. What will it do to class size if the schools are combined?  
**Some classes will increase in the number of students but always within the class size policy established by the Board.**
24. When we vote in November, will we be voting on the big idea (concept) presented here tonight, or will the ideas presented here tonight be a part of the plan to be voted on?  
**The concept presented at the first two forums is only a concept and is subject to change. The Board is seeking your input and ideas and, if they feel it is warranted, the Board will incorporate those ideas into what is ultimately considered in November (or whenever the non binding referendum occurs).**
25. Classroom space at Searsport Elementary School? Is it adequate?  
**Yes, there is adequate space at SES to house the students from either Frankfort Elementary or Stockton Springs Elementary**
26. Could SES students go elsewhere if the building was used as a dormitory as suggested at a previous forum?  
**They could but it would not be my recommendation. Students would have to go to FES or SSES or Swanville or we would have to take part of SDHS/MS and convert it to an elementary school.**

27. Why are Frankfort Elementary School students slated to go to SES rather than SSES?

**Space—there might be a time when the number of students from FES would fit into SSES but if that were the case, then maybe FES and SSES would all fit into SES.**

28. Can you give us a breakdown of transitional/one time costs?

**At this point in time, 9/16/11, the estimated one time costs for the consolidation could be up to \$900,000.00. The estimates may be on the high side but I am sure there are costs we have not realized. Types of costs include sports team re-identified, signage, bathrooms adjusted for elementary use at THMS, labor and equipment for the physical move, legal expenses, lockers, shelving, lower water fountains, new greenhouse (as opposed to moving the existing greenhouse) for the middle school, and a playground.**

29. What do you anticipate for net savings in the first year of reorganization?

**The total projected savings per year is \$1,836,020.00.**

30. Do you foresee building a new high school at some point?

**Absolutely at some point in time. My best guess at this time would be 15 years or more from now.**

31. Will BAHS need any capital improvements? Cost?

**There have been two projects considered for some time but no State funds to help out. One is a new extended entrance that would increase the size of the lobby and get rid of the walkway cover. Cost \$600,000.00 The other project includes the expansion of the cafeteria, kitchen, and library. The library is right above the café. The cost which would include the front entrance is just over six million.**

32. Has a fire marshal inspected BAHS recently re: space in an emergency if the two schools are merged?

**We did not request a fire marshal inspection. We retained WBRC to do a study on the feasibility of the building housing 800+ students.**

33. How much did it cost for the WBRC study?

**\$4,076.00**

34. Will there be additional transportation costs for drivers, buses, etc.?  
**We expect a small increase as we will need to move all middle school students as well as high school students to their respective locations. We do, however, expect reduced costs in other areas like the elimination of the shuttle bus runs between Ames school and the Weymouth school.**
35. Is there a Plan B?  
**A plan B that results in the proposed savings from the reorganization concept? No**
36. Has the Board addressed any of the questions/suggestions brought up at these forums? **See Question #22.**
37. Are the closed buildings sold at fair market value? **See question #9.**
38. Have you figured in the cost of maintaining the closed buildings into the projected savings?  
**No, not at this time.**
39. Will the new school funding formula help us? **See question #20.**
40. Have you seen an increase in home schooling and/or students going to other districts since this idea was first proposed?  
**No**
41. Have you considered polling students?  
**Polling students, no. Meeting with a group of students from BAHS, THMS, and SDHS/MS to hear their opinions and input, yes.**
42. Length of bus runs for pre-K students (Ames to EB)? Will it be mandated for 4 year olds to go to school?  
**For some pre-K students attending the program at Ames, the bus ride to Eastside School will, without question, be longer. A very preliminary estimate is about an additional 15 minutes. Students are not required to attend a 4 year old program.**
43. Technology. Where are we with the MLTI Program? How will this be impacted? What about technology grants?  
**Technology is a crucial part of our curriculum and essential for the future success of our students. The costs have caused the BOD to step back and review the future direction of technology in**

**RSU 20. I am not sure what impact Reorganization will have on the technology programs. I suspect the future State support for MLTI costs will be diminishing.**

44. BAHS is already over-crowded in cafeteria. How will this be resolved?  
**BAHS currently uses a lunch process that allows students to eat anywhere they choose in the building in order to eliminate multiple lunch times. The process seems to generally work well and would have to continue.**
45. Philosophical differences between the two high schools? Credit based at BAHS vs. standards based at SDHS? How will this be combined?  
**The differences in grading, assessment, and instruction between the two high schools would have to be resolved prior to any combining of the two schools. There is progress in bring the two schools together but it is slow and difficult.**
46. Does BAHS have on-line courses?  
**No, some online remedial sites are used but no online courses.**
47. What science selections would be added?  
**That has not been discussed.**
48. If high schools are combined, what will be the process for the elimination of ten positions?  
**There is a process spelled out in the teachers' negotiated contract that must be followed.**
49. Why are our senator and representative not present?  
**Rep. Gillway was at the Stockton Springs forum on 9/29. I suspect our legislators are following the Reorganization in the news but this is really a local decision, not a State decision.**
50. Have we had conversations with towns about purchasing the schools?  
**Two of the towns have expressed some interest in buildings if they should become available.**
51. Have we looked at the costs to smaller communities to keep their schools open so they can choose?  
**No, but it easy to provide our building expenses to a town if they desire that information.**
52. What will be the wording on the ballot?

**At the Board meeting on 9/27, the Board decided not to hold a non binding referendum on November 8.**

53. We are concerned with the accuracy of the dollar amounts presented as savings.  
**The savings are based on known expenditures and I would be glad to discuss any amount that folks have a concern about.**
54. Concerns with property valuations of communities that don't have schools.  
**This is a valid concern as younger folks with children tend to move to an area near their school. If there is no school, what is the draw for families to move to that community?**
55. Why has the "concept" presentation not changed in each community?  
**The "concept" information that is presented needs to be consistent from town to town so that everyone hears the same information. If a significant change was introduced half way through the forums, it should be shared with all towns, including those that have heard the basic presentation.**
56. What will the Board do now that this is not going to the non-binding referendum?  
**We will seek input through our fall Region newsletter, Community Connections, either as a write in response or via a web site link.**
57. How does this affect average class size? See question #23.
58. Horticulture and gardening at THMS – will that building be moved?  
See question #2.
59. Have re-occurring costs like transportation been built in?  
**Yes**
60. Is the Waldo County Technical Center included in this plan?  
**Yes, by all means. WCTC is a key component of our school system.**
61. What will be the economic funding change?  
**I wish I could answer this question. We do know the State and Federal funds are on the decline and we do know we have a slow but steady decline in enrollment and we know costs are going up.**

**These factors combined do not present a very positive outlook for the future.**

62. Schools at risk for closure. What schools are at risk? What is the time frame for closure if the plan does not go through?  
**Per the concept, Ames, Weymouth, Nickerson, and Frankfort Elementary would be considered for closure. At this time, there is no time frame for closure if the plan does not go through.**
  
63. How would you handle the plan if by chance the population should increase?  
**If we had a sudden increase in student population, which would be great, we would have to immediately evaluate the situation and likely reverse some decisions.**
  
64. Are you going to get a committee together to change and/or improve the plan?  
**That is up to the School Board.**