

# NEWSBRIEF

MAINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION @ WWW.MAINE.NEA.ORG

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April 26, 2007

## Regionalization or hostile take over?

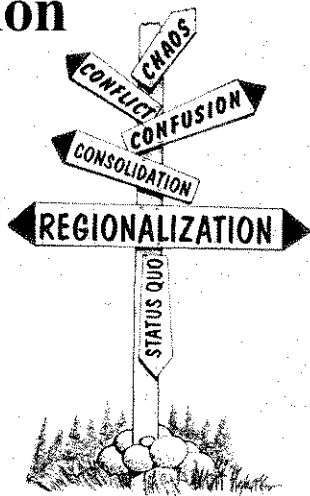
The Maine Legislature is now at the point of dealing with hard political choices over plans to consolidate school services and programs. The basic issues are:

Whether or not school systems will be allowed to collaboratively and democratically choose regional plans that work for their students and reduce costs as recommended by the Education Committee and Maine Education Association, or if school systems will be mandated into mega-districts whose sole purpose is to reduce spending without regard for the quality of education as recommended by the Appropriations Committee.

And, whether or not the employment rights and collective bargaining rights of educators will be honored as demanded by MEA or abolished as existing school districts are replaced by new employers.

MEA Executive Director Mark L. Gray says the Association supports thoughtful regionalization that meets basic criteria that preserve the high quality of our schools and safeguard the employment rights of educators:

1. Student learning environments must be protected – “Regardless of which plan is passed by the legislature, it must be sensitive to the disruption that will inevitably be caused by such a significant change in school system structures.”
2. Member employment rights must be protected – “School employees must not suffer any loss of employment rights during the administrative restructuring of our schools. It is simply unacceptable.”
3. Member’s collective bargaining rights must be protected – “This is a right that has existed for almost



four decades and must not be diminished as a result of such changes.”

4. PreK-12 public school educational programs and services must continue to be public services – “This is not the time to make the mistake of contracting out public school services in the hopes of reducing costs.”
5. The actual number of school administrators must be reduced and real cost savings must be realized – “Public school administration has become overly bureaucratic and the number of school administrators has increased beyond what our public schools can afford. With the threat of future taxpayer revolts in Maine, it is time to cut the number of school superintendents and other administrators and achieve real savings.”

Gray encourages members not sit on the sidelines during this important debate. “Your state senators and representatives need to hear from you now,” he says, “so that they will judge all the regionalization proposals in light of these criteria. Their decisions must be based on what is good for students and educators, not solely on economics.”

To email your legislators and express your views, go to [www.maine.nea.org](http://www.maine.nea.org), click on Capitol Events and use the Cyberlobby.

## Bar Harbor TA opposes senseless consolidation

The Bar Harbor TA has adopted a position statement against the proposals on regionalization that are emerging in the legislature. They have submitted the position statement to their legislators and area newspapers.

BHTA is also urging other MEA affiliates to support their efforts to preserve our public schools by adopting similar policy statements and engaging their state legislators. Their statement reads in part:

“The Bar Harbor Teachers’ Association takes the following position against degradation of our educational system through mandatory consolidation and spending limits.

(Continues)

If the conditions in Maine's schools are not conducive to student learning, the quality of life in our schools, our communities, and our state will decline.

The effectiveness of our teachers will be compromised if our educational leaders – our superintendents and their support – become overburdened and geographically removed.

An additional level of bureaucracy to manage regional school systems would compete for educational funds.

The true savings from mandatory consolidation will come directly from lower school budgets as a result of:

- (1) spending limits mandated by the state (like the EPS limit that is being proposed; and
- (2) as communities become distanced and estranged from the governance of their schools, the communities' ability and inclination to invest time and money in their schools will decline.

The proposals emerging from Augusta will result in fewer teachers and larger classes. While larger classes may have been acceptable fifty years ago, the demands of modern education, with mainstreaming, state and federal standards, and sophisticated demands on graduates, make larger classes unacceptable.

The proposals emerging from Augusta will result in less diversity in course offerings, and fewer co-curricular activities like jazz band and sports teams.

The Bar Harbor Teachers' Association would endorse consolidation and spending limits if they achieved savings through efficiencies that do not compromise the education of the students in the State of Maine.

The Bar Harbor Teachers' Association recognizes the importance of reducing spending while balancing the needs of education with tax relief. As teachers and taxpayers, we

are flexible and want to be part of the solution. We recognize that consolidation of school administrations and services are merited in specific circumstances.

We, however, oppose broad-sweeping mandatory consolidation and spending limits that will place too great a burden on our schools."

For more information on BHTA's position, email president Amanda Dyer at [adyer@u98.k12.me.us](mailto:adyer@u98.k12.me.us)

## Summer Leadership Conference

Mark your calendar and reserve the dates for MEA's Summer Leadership Conference which will be held on July 30, 31 and August 1 at the Grand Summit Hotel at the Sunday River Ski Resort in Bethel.

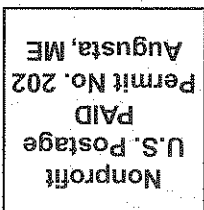
This is your opportunity to build the capacity and strength of your local association while developing personal leadership skills. Courses are being planned and the trainers are being recruited for an extensive curriculum.

Under consideration are sessions on basic negotiations, intermediate bargaining, influencing decision-makers, grievance and advocacy, Human and Civil Rights, professional issues, member benefits, boundary issues, employee to employee relationships, certification, National Board certification, and IDEA.

Special breakout workshops are planned for higher education members, food service workers, bus drivers, and clerical employees. And, optional courses will be offered on sick buildings, technology needs, behavior management, and literacy across the curriculum.

More information and registration materials will be mailed to local association presidents this spring and posted on our web site at [www.maine.nea.org](http://www.maine.nea.org).

*Newsbrief*



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