

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO EVALUATING CONSOLIDATION PLANS

(From the Maine Small Schools Coalition, Greenville, ME 10/08)

In November, December, and January, some Maine citizens will vote on enlarging their school systems because of the School Reorganization law first passed in 2007. **How should you vote at your town or district's referendum?** We hope the questions below will help you evaluate the plan that your region has developed for a new Regional School Unit (RSU).

PLEASE ASK THESE QUESTIONS AT MEETINGS ABOUT YOUR PLAN. If your answers to the Four Big Questions are "No" or "It's Not Clear", your plan does not do what the reorganization law says it should. Such plans deserve a "No" vote at the upcoming referendum. If the plan gives clear and detailed reasons to answer "Yes", then vote to approve it.

WILL THIS PLAN SAVE US MONEY?

1. What savings will there be from combining Superintendents' Offices?
 - a. How were these figured? Are they convincing?
 - b. Are these 1-year savings? Or, will they be permanent?
 - c. Will the new consolidated Office serve our schools and citizens well?
2. What savings (or new costs) will there be from negotiating one "consistent" contract for teachers and, possibly, administrators and support staff (transportation, cooks, clerical, maintenance)?
 - a. Have these figures been calculated over the next five years?
3. What other savings are advertised in the plan? Are they reasonable?
4. What new costs will likely come with the plan? Are they included in it?

WILL THIS PLAN IMPROVE LEARNING FOR OUR CHILDREN?

5. What specific steps does the plan include to strengthen programs and services for our children? Are these realistic and supported by best practices with proven success?
6. What existing programs and services will disappear from our school?

WILL THIS PLAN GIVE US CHOICE OVER IMPORTANT DECISIONS INVOLVING OUR SCHOOL?

7. Can we determine educational programs and staffing?
8. Can we determine how much we choose to spend for our school?
9. Can we determine whether to collaborate and/or combine with other schools?
10. Can we determine other community uses for our school facilities?

WILL THIS PLAN BE FAIR TO ALL PARTNER TOWNS & CITIZENS?

11. Does the plan fairly tax all towns in the region? How does it "equalize" the burden of paying for schools among all towns?
12. Does this plan fairly distribute funds and other resources to each school so that every school can offer students an equal opportunity to learn? How?