

## More HB349 FAQs

9/24/2023

The steering committee of Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton has attended several “listening sessions” and noted public comments and questions in their own meetings. What follows is a list of the most frequently heard concerns and an initial response.

- 1. Why isn't there already a plan or specifics?** Because the process just started. The boards of selectmen only gained the authority to appoint the steering committee at the end of August. The selectmen of all three towns found and appointed that committee within ten days. Since the beginning of September, the committee has met weekly and is scheduled to continue at this pace to answer questions and concerns.

In those three weeks the committee has already:

- i. Created draft articles of agreement among the three towns.
  - ii. Drafted a template tuition agreement for use with other districts.
  - iii. Identified three potential solutions for superintendent services and created a request for proposal document if we elect to outsource that function.
  - iv. Contacted and started discussions with the companies responsible for transportation, curriculum, and food services.
  - v. Worked with the NH Department of Education on the process to qualify for federal funds.
  - vi. Started research on the creation of an initial budget.
  - vii. Had Initial discussions for services from other school districts. Newfound is an option but is not the only district that can provide administrative and superintendent services.
  - viii. Confirmed the structure of teacher collective bargaining contracts through our lawyer.
- 2. Will teachers' pay and benefits be the same?** Yes. This is protected by law. The teachers who would like to join the new district, at a minimum, must receive the exact same pay, bonuses, and benefits. Yes, there would be a new contract, but the terms at a minimum would be identical to the SAU4 contract.
- 3. Will we use the same curriculum?** Yes, to start with. The existing curriculum was a teacher/staff/superintendent decision. We are in contact with the current curriculum provider to assure we can continue with the same program for the short term. If the new school board and superintendent working in conjunction with the teachers want a change downstream, that option will now exist.

**4. Will we have “School Choice,” allowing my child to stay in SAU4 schools?** There has been some confusion here because school law is, unfortunately, very complicated and we don’t know the intent of SAU4. However,

**What is certain:**

- I. There has never been a school withdrawal in NH that has not allowed for a student’s “tailing out.” It would be part of the withdrawal agreement and one we would agree to and pay for.
  - II. However, if for example, SAU4 refused a “tail out” agreement and attempted to leverage children in the process, there is a mechanism in the Department of Education to override that decision. We would use that process because our goal is to provide parents with more choice not less.
  - III. On the reverse side, we plan to welcome children from towns other than ours if they want to continue at BHVS. We are committed to public school choice for our students as well as other current students.
- 5. Tuition agreements:** This is a term used when one district pays for their student attending school in another district. ***It is paid for by the school district-not the parents.*** In our case we want to create an agreement with SAU4 (and others) to allow any parent to send their child to SAU4 schools grades 6-12. We want parents and families to have that choice and the new school district will pay for that option. The decision to continue with Newfound lies with SAU4 not us.
- 6. It is impossible for a small district to manage all the diverse functions needed like transportation and food services.** The Department of Education has helped us understand that even smaller districts already manage those functions exceedingly well. They have already supplied us with resources and contacts to manage these issues.
- 7. What about sports, clubs, and wider socialization in middle school if we form a K-8?** Modern education is about more than academics. There are multiple ways to address these concerns including working with other K-8s and incorporating our students into a larger system for these activities. It is a core concern we are addressing.