

Central Lincoln County School System

AOS #93



March 8, 2024

To the Members of Great Salt Bay Consolidated School District Town Offices-

I am taking this opportunity to communicate with you regarding the next steps for the towns of Bremen, Damariscotta, and Newcastle in regards to combining the current 4 school boards into one board that oversees preK-12 education for all three towns. We will need your help to make this happen!

All nine members of the current Boards have met and voted to move forward with forming the GSB RSU. The timeline and steps for approval are in a document attached to this email that shows it happening for July 1, 2024. I have also attached a letter I sent to the school staff that discusses the district proposed changes in a wider perspective, as it helps to explain the why and how and could be beneficial for you to read as well. The information below should be beneficial to you as well.

GSB is engaging in the process to become its own preK-12 Consolidated School District or RSU. Here are the details:

- **This would not impact school staff or the student educational structure, but would achieve organizational efficiency. The day to day life of schools would not change- just who works at the Central Office for all of our districts and who works just for specific smaller districts.**
- The RSU structure is essentially the same as the CSD structure that we already have in place, but the DOE calls all “new” units a Regional School Unit.
- We still will offer school choice to secondary students, and tuition them to state approved schools.
- We would like to have this entity approved and in place for July 1, 2024. If that is not possible, we will start it on July 1, 2025. All information in this letter is in regards to the July 1, 2024 start date.
- This combination of boards is NOT as complicated as a typical RSU formation, due to the fact that we do not operate a secondary school, and therefore do not have separate collective bargaining agreements, staff, buildings to merge, board members or other logistics to review. We will need to review two things: board membership/voting percentages, and the cost sharing formula. However, we have both of these in place already for the combined GSB board, and we are not seeking to add additional towns, so this should stay pretty stable.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Lynsey Johnston
Superintendent

Tara McKechnie
Assistant
Superintendent

Peter Nielsen
Business Manager

Kelly Stokes
Director of
Special Services



SCHOOLS

**Bristol Consolidated
School**
Bristol, Maine

Great Salt Bay School
Damariscotta, Maine

**Jefferson Village
School**
Jefferson, Maine

**Nobleboro
Central School**
Nobleboro, Maine

South Bristol School
South Bristol, Maine

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The GSB Board and the three Secondary Boards have already met together, and will continue to do so. They will form the reformation committee (probably next week) to address formation details discussed above and to address another structural component: administrative services. Here are possibilities:

- The AOS #93 Board is moving forward with creating an Educational Service Center (ESC) to operate services such as the Business Office, Adult Ed, Information Technology, and Nutrition services. The GSB RSU would be able to access all of these through the ESC with the same amount of money already approved at the December AOS FY25 budget meeting for those same services.
- The GSB RSU can choose to stay in the AOS (as well as the ESC) and access Superintendent and Director of Student Services positions. There is another choice- I believe that the GSB RSU would be well served to withdraw from the AOS and hire these services specifically for themselves. Needs warrant this, and it would allow people in these positions to focus in more closely on this one specific district and meet the needs of the GSB RSU. These Superintendent and Student Services personnel could be part time or full time, depending on the needs and preferences of the Boards. Again, we would be able to fund these positions from the money that has already been approved for the AOS budget for FY25 for the three secondary boards and the current GSB board.
- We believe that having your own Superintendent and Director of Student Services is not only positive for attention and impact on your district, but that it can also be done with cost savings. Being a member of the ESC allows us to gain additional subsidies (starting in the FY26 fiscal year) that will also help save an amount from the tax amounts being asked to raise for the school district.
- Please note- we are all already separate districts that share all Central Office services through the AOS. That is important to remember as you read through this. That means that our funding from the state, for grants, and reports, etc is all already separated from other schools in the AOS.

What is the benefit to town offices?

- Instead of multiple school budgets to factor into your municipal budget, we would give you one number for preK-12 each year.
- Instead of multiple budget approval and validation referendum questions, it would be down to one for your ballot as well.

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What are the benefits or drawbacks to taxpayers and community members?

- A cost reduction from the current school budgets- approximately \$20,000. We know that is not a lot, but it is something, and certainly better than an increase!
- Starting in the FY26 year, additional subsidy for each town which will help reduce the Local Additional tax amounts.
- Community participation in the budget process and election for Board seats still would happen exactly as it does for the GSB K-8 budget currently.
- We do not see any drawbacks, as there are NO changes to the students, school, staff, school choice for high school, etc.

What does this require of you?

- Please post the attached notice of the public meeting we are holding on March 20th in regards to this change.
- The June town meeting will need to have a referendum item to approve the formation of this RSU. We will provide this language to you or provide you with paper ballots for it as we do for the budget validation. We (the school board and myself) plan to get information out to community members through town email lists, school parent email lists, the Lincoln County News so that the word is out that this is a positive change that will not alter the daily experience for students, families, and staff, but will offer organizational efficiency.

None of this is my decision as Superintendent- it will be up to the Boards/Committees and voting communities as necessary. I hope that you find this update helpful and are willing and able to help us move forward with the process. I know that I, as well as the Boards/Committees, am happy to have feedback, discussions, or answer questions about any of this information. I'd be happy to come to the town office if that would be helpful!

Respectfully,

Lynsey Johnston
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