

Southwick-Tolland Regional School District
& the Granville Public School
Regionalization Proposal – Long Range Plan

Enrollment Information

Currently, the Southwick-Tolland Regional District's projected enrollment for FY '12 is 1,702 which is a decrease of 32 students from the previous year. Enrollment projections from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) indicate that enrollment at the Regional District will continue to decline in the next several years, before climbing back to previous levels. Similarly, the Granville School enrollment (K-8) is projected to be 147 for next year, although it will likely be less than that, and further enrollment declines are also indicated. The enrollment numbers for Granville are from a local cohort survival calculation. The total enrollment for the Granville district in FY '12, including secondary students, is estimated to be 207.

The enrollment certification number provided by the MSBA, and accepted by the District for a 7-12 addition renovation of the existing high school is 745 students, exclusive of the Town of Granville's seventh and eighth grade enrollment. The enrollment certification number inclusive of the Granville students is 790. A renovated 7-12 school will accommodate additional seventh and eighth grade students. By the time construction would be completed, Granville class sizes would be in the 10-15 student range. The Regional District would need to accommodate additional 5-7 students per class in a two team middle school model. Given the class sizes we are currently seeing at our elementary school, the additional students would be a welcome addition, not a problem. Granville students in grades 9-12 already attend the Regional High School, although some students also attend vocational school, private schools and some neighboring school choice school districts

Current Educational Program

All of the schools in the Southwick-Tolland Regional School District are located on one campus. The Woodland Elementary School, the Powder Mill Middle School and the Regional High School all serve approximately 600 students. Woodland currently serves PreK-4, the middle school serves grades 5-8 and the High school is for grades 9-12. The Granville School serves grades K-8 and, in the near term, no changes to this grade configuration are planned, although there is consensus that in the near future, seventh and eighth grade students from Granville would attend the new 7-12 middle school/high school in Southwick.

All of the schools in the Region as well as the Granville School have comparable records regarding student achievement. Currently the Woodland School is working to improve test results; the other schools have a good record of meeting state and federal expectations for achievement. The

Regional High School maintains accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and will be up for review in two years. Eighty-six percent of the class of 2010 chose to further their education at either two, or four year colleges and universities.

Educational Program Considerations for the Expanded Regional District.

It might be helpful think of the expanded region in terms of two campuses; the Southwick campus and the Granville campus.

A proposed building project will change the grade configuration in the Southwick campus to a PreK-2 , a 3-6, and a 7-12 middle school/ high school. The primary focus of this proposal would be a renovation and addition to the existing high school facility. With additional space and some structural repairs to the elementary and middle schools, the projected enrollment in the regional district would be well within state guidelines.

Regarding the Granville campus, there are many small elementary schools in the Western Massachusetts area so it is likely that the Granville School with either a K-8 or K-6 configuration will continue in this manner in the future. Class sizes may be sustained by enrollment of students from Tolland and there may be additional school choice enrollments. Also, there is currently an interest in allowing for intra-district choice in the expanded region so that children from any of the three towns could attend the Granville School. There will also be an exploration of programs like the Innovation School Model as the expanded region addresses program and financial necessities. As previously mentioned enrollment patterns in the future may generate an exploration of sending students in grades 7-8 to the Southwick campus, but it is not clear at this time when that would be studied. Of practical value is any classroom space that might be available at GVS. This could be used during construction and repair projects that are part of the anticipated building project. There is also the possibility of an integrated pre-school program being placed at the Village School.

In terms of educational benefits and efficiencies, a number of issues need to be noted. First, there would no longer be a need for two directors of special education. This could become one position and the programmatic infrastructure of the K-12 district would benefit seriously disabled students needing specialized placements. There is a likelihood that the need for out-of-district tuition would decrease over time for students from Granville. The Regional District is currently invested in inclusion programming for all special needs students and has been successful with this approach. Programs for autistic children are consistently well received by parents. Professional staff delivering specialized services like physical therapy, speech and language therapy, and nursing services could be efficiently shared and scheduled according to building based needs.

The Granville library can be more easily supported within a district with three library-media centers either through staffing with a librarian or an aide, or through collaboration and sharing of resources.

The increasingly significant task of data reporting, data collecting, technology infrastructure and educational technology currently needs re-assessment at the regional level. An expanded district would bring the Granville School into this technology discussion; it would bring a high speed network to all four schools and simplify SIMS, EPIMS and SCS reporting. We would no longer need to submit the mandated range of data reports for two separate school districts. It is currently a time consuming task to meet state requirements in two separate district reports.

Expanding the foreign language exposure program at our middle school to a full year program in the new 7-12 school is very much of interest. The Regional District has implemented only an exposure program in Spanish and French. The Granville School has offered Spanish in grades seven and eight for many years and the regional district could learn from this program and add to its own current course offerings. We hope to expand the foreign language program to include seventh and eighth graders. The 7-12 configuration will allow for sharing staff and could lead to an everyday foreign language program for grades seven and eight. There will also likely be a need to assess which languages are carried forward given changes in the global community. An exploration of staffing in music and art could also lead to a more coherent program in instrumental and choral programs for grades 7-12, and a greater breadth of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that could include Granville students and serve to restore some of the program cuts that have occurred over the last few years. All 7-12 students would be eligible for inter-scholastic athletics and they could participate in chess club, theater activities, music concerts, student councils, yearbook club, student newspapers and literary journals and intramurals.

All students in the expanded regional district will continue to be eligible for attendance at the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative's Career Tech program and the Westfield Vocational Technical School. These options are currently in place for parents and students in all three communities and they would stay in place.

Financial Considerations for the Expanded Regional District

Consistent with the Feasibility Study conducted by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Chapter 70 aide from the three towns would be consolidated under a three town region. Similarly, allocated state and federal grants would also be consolidated under a three town region. It is our belief that under a new agreement, with Granville as a member of the district, we enhance educational opportunities for all students. One reason for this is that the permanent inclusion of Granville students in the region's foundation enrollment brings a degree of financial stability to the districts' economic future.

An important financial consideration regarding the proposed building project is that the Massachusetts School Building Authority will provide an expanded regional district with six additional reimbursement points on an approved project. This incentive is consistent with the state's current interest in school district consolidation. Beyond this incentive, the Massachusetts School Building Authority has approved an innovative and unprecedented approach to our project. They are supporting

the renovation/addition to our high school and they are supporting infrastructure repairs at the elementary and middle schools as part of the same project. This “campus wide” solution is a model that, if successful, may prove to be a valuable approach to help other districts consolidate. The MSBA’s recognition of our local circumstances is a very important part of this regionalization initiative.

The previously mentioned feasibility study indicated that, in general, the assessment to Southwick may increase slightly; that the Tolland assessment would remain largely the same and that the Granville assessment would be less than their current local contribution. With an on-going effort to achieve some program savings, the assessments in both Southwick and Tolland could remain unchanged from current levels.

Inclusion of the Granville transportation services under an expanded regional district would generate a higher reimbursement than is currently received from the state. This would benefit all three communities. Access to the four schools would not reduce costs to any significant degree given the distances between Tolland and the Granville School.

District Administration

As the STRSD central office currently serves as the superintendent’s office for the Granville Schools, little change is anticipated in central administration. There would need to be a concerted effort during the months that the Transition School Committee is in place to resolve educational program, management and financial questions that will inevitably arise should regionalization be approved. The very tight timeline for date of implementation will present a challenge and acquiring grant funds for some if this work appears to be a priority at this time.

Implementation Tasks

We need to negotiate a revised Unit A collectively bargained agreement for professional staff.
(Negotiation cost: \$12,000)

We need to include secretaries, para-professionals, custodians, cafeteria workers and transportation staff into existing contracts at the regional district.
(Negotiation cost: \$12,000)

We need to coordinate transportation services including, mechanical service, garage location, and revise any bus routes that provide access to all three schools. Approximately 175 students from Granville could become part of the transportation reimbursement calculation. Any Tolland students who choose to attend Granville will continue to be eligible.
(Route adjustment and notices, \$2,500)

We need to incorporate the management of curriculum, instruction and professional development for all four schools in one central office position.

(Adjusted contract: \$1,500)

We need to assess the central office support staff to determine if efficiencies can be achieved given that a large part of one job is overseeing Granville finances, separate and apart from the region.

Regionalization will also call for one central point for the management of health insurance.

(Analysis and contract cost: \$5,000)

Granville's human resource management would benefit from the contracted services that are currently in place in the regional district regarding insurance claims, unemployment claims and payroll issues.

(Additional contract cost: \$2,000)

As part of the region, Granville would be fully covered by services offered by the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative.

Administrative functions related to the Transition School Committee.

(Consultant cost: \$25,000)

Additional Secretarial costs and office supplies

(\$5,000)

Additional legal costs, advertising and Building Committee costs

(\$9,500)

Sub Total: \$ 75,500