

# MEMO

October 12, 2012

TO: Small School District Study Work Group

FROM: Incentives Subcommittee (Paula Colen, Paul Gagliarducci, Betsy Gara, Sheila McCreven, Sheila McKay, and Kachina Walsh-Weaver)

RE: Draft Recommendations for Inclusion in Work Group Final Report

The Incentives Subcommittee met on October 5<sup>th</sup>. Along with the subcommittee members listed above, the following members of the public were also in attendance: Orlando Rodriguez of Connecticut Voices for Children; Cara Hart of CREC; Kathy Guay of Connecticut Council for Education Reform; Joseph Reardon of Union Public Schools; and, Joe Onofrio.

The subcommittee's preliminary recommendations are as follows:

## INCENTIVES

- **Planning & Implementation Grants** – Provide competitive grants to local school districts and municipalities to facilitate the necessary analyses and feasibility studies to pursue inter- and intra- resource sharing and collaboration.
  - The State of Massachusetts currently provides \$1 million per year for such purposes. Grants range from \$15k - \$20k for the planning side and around \$50k for implementation.
  - Consider using a similar structure as the Regional Performance Incentive Grant Program (CGS 4-124s). However, ensure that the eligibility criteria allows for individual municipalities to apply singly as well.
  - Capitalize on the systems already in place, the current regional education service center structure, to help promote and facilitate intra- and inter- municipal cooperation, along with identifying and implementing cost-savings measures for local and regional boards of education and municipalities.
- **Shared Benefit of Savings Achieved** – Allow any savings achieved through cost reductions, shared services, or intra-/inter-municipal collaboration to be shared as follows: 50% to a rolling fund balance, maintained by the Board of Education, for funding one-time or capital expenditures as they deem necessary, and 50% to returned to the municipality for property tax relief. In addition, the municipality would be allowed to reduce their MBR by the amount returned to them.

the balance

at least

## INFORMATION SHARING

- **Regional Education Service Centers** – There continues to be a lack of understanding, and at times skepticism, across school districts and municipalities about the role of RESCs. To bridge this gap, a comprehensive, yet easy to understand, mechanism should be created to: (1) explain what the RESCs are all about; (2) how they provide needed services and access to resources to local and regional boards of education; and, (3) how the pooling of this purchasing power can benefit any municipality.
  
- **Statewide Survey** - Conduct a survey of local and regional boards of education and municipalities to learn about what is already being done around the state to share resources and services; find innovative cost savings; and collaborate between the education and town government sides of local government. The survey should be simple and direct, so as not to be burdensome to the respondent and encourage many responses. A sample of some suggested questions are as follows:
  - Do you share any administrative services:
    - Between your town and your school district(s)?
    - With other towns and school district(s)?
    - If so, please explain:
    - Can you quantify the savings you have achieved through this?
  - Do you share purchasing of goods and supplies:
    - Between your town and your school district(s)?
    - With other towns and school district(s)?
    - Please explain:
    - Can you quantify the savings you have achieved through this?
  - Do you utilize RESC services?
    - If so, please explain:
    - Can you quantify the savings you have achieved through this?
  - Have you implemented any innovative measures to achieve efficiencies and/or cost savings?
    - If so, please explain:
    - Can you quantify the savings you have achieved through this?
  - Are you aware of, or have experienced, any impediments to sharing of goods and/or services that should/could be addressed?
    - If so, please explain: