

Brookline Expansion Study Committee Report

Executive Summary

The Brookline Expansion Study Committee was charged with studying the potential impact of Brookline independently dissolving and joining the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District.

After reviewing enrollment trends, financial obligations, collective bargaining agreements, capital needs, governance structures, and SAU operations, the Committee determined that Brookline-only expansion would not provide meaningful cost savings, substantial structural efficiencies, or significant student programming benefits.

While limited operational adjustments may be possible, the core administrative framework within SAU 41 would remain largely unchanged. As a result, the Committee does not recommend that Brookline independently dissolve and join the Cooperative at this time.

During its review, the Committee identified that the greatest opportunity for long-term efficiency and structural improvement appears to lie in reducing the number of independent districts within SAU 41. A joint consolidation effort involving both Brookline and Hollis could potentially achieve those efficiencies. However, that scenario exceeds the scope of this Committee's charge and was not formally analyzed.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the Brookline School Board initiate discussions with the Hollis School Board to determine whether there is mutual interest in studying a joint consolidation into the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District.

Scope of Work

The Committee consisted of two Brookline School Board members and three community members and met six times.

The Committee's charge was limited to evaluating the potential impacts of Brookline independently joining the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District.

The Committee reviewed the following materials:

- Article 8 of the 2025 Brookline School District Warrant
- Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District Articles of Agreement

- Collective bargaining agreements for Hollis, Brookline, and Cooperative teachers and support staff
- Relevant New Hampshire statutes, including RSA 195:6, RSA 195:16, RSA 195:18, and RSA 195:25
- Statutory debt limitations under RSA 195:6 III
- Current and projected student enrollment data
- Cohort performance data across SAU schools
- Long-term debt obligations across the three districts
- Town growth and demographic data
- Curriculum alignment between Brookline and Hollis elementary schools
- Staff tenure and mobility data
- Operational differences among districts
- The 2016 report on dissolving the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District
- FY27 budget planning documents and the Brookline FY25 Budget Summary
- The 2025 state report on reducing the number of School Administrative Units (SB 57, Chapter 220:1)

The Committee did not conduct a full feasibility study of joint dissolution by both towns, as that was outside the scope of its charge.

Findings

1. Financial Impact

- Brookline-only expansion would result in minimal direct cost savings.
- Certain spending categories could be realigned, but significant structural savings would not be realized.
- Debt obligations and capital needs vary across the districts and would require careful legal and financial review if expansion were pursued.

2. Student Programming

- Short-term impacts on students would likely be minimal.
- No significant immediate academic or programmatic enhancements were identified under a Brookline-only model.

3. Governance and Legal Considerations

Under RSA 195:16, changes to cooperative school districts require:

- Detailed study and analysis

- School board action
- Revision of Articles of Agreement
- Development of warrant articles
- Voter approval in affected communities

Revising the Articles of Agreement to accommodate Brookline-only expansion would require substantial legal and governance work.

4. SAU-Level Impacts

The Committee determined that the most significant opportunity for efficiency lies at the SAU level.

Brookline-only expansion would not materially reduce the number of independent districts within SAU 41. As a result, core administrative structures and associated costs would largely remain intact.

In reviewing SAU operations, the Committee observed that greater efficiencies might be achieved if the number of independent districts were reduced more broadly. A joint consolidation of both Brookline and Hollis into the Cooperative could potentially produce:

- Increased administrative alignment
- Greater staffing flexibility
- Reduced duplication of governance structures
- Improved long-term structural sustainability

However, this broader scenario was not within the Committee's formal scope and would require a separate, dedicated feasibility study.

Committee Conclusion

Based on the work conducted within its defined scope, the Committee concludes that Brookline independently dissolving and joining the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District would not provide sufficient financial, structural, or student benefit to warrant pursuing that course of action at this time.

While expansion could produce limited efficiencies, it would not meaningfully address underlying structural duplication within SAU 41.

The Committee further concludes that the most promising opportunity for meaningful efficiency appears to involve broader consolidation, a matter that extends beyond the charge of this Committee.

Study Committee Recommendation

1. The Committee does not recommend that Brookline independently dissolve and join the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District.
2. The Committee recommends that the Brookline School Board initiate discussions with the Hollis School Board to determine whether there is mutual interest in conducting a joint feasibility study of both towns dissolving their individual districts and joining the Cooperative together.

Future Action and Process Considerations

If the Brookline School Board accepts this recommendation:

1. The Brookline School Board would formally initiate discussions with the Hollis School Board.
2. The Hollis School Board would independently determine whether it wishes to participate in a joint feasibility study.
3. If both boards agree, a structured joint study would be undertaken to evaluate:
 - Financial modeling and debt implications
 - Collective bargaining impacts
 - Governance structure
 - SAU staffing and operational efficiencies
 - Student programming implications
 - Legal requirements

Any consolidation would ultimately require:

- Revision of the Articles of Agreement
- Development of warrant articles
- Approval by voters in both communities pursuant to RSA 195:16