

Revised DRAFT

Brookline Expansion Study Committee Report

Executive Summary

After reviewing enrollment trends, financial obligations, collective bargaining agreements, capital needs, and SAU operations, the Study Committee determined that while limited efficiencies may be achieved through Brookline dissolving and joining the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative school District, meaningful cost savings and structural efficiencies would likely require broader reorganization.

Preliminary Findings

- Brookline-only expansion offers minimal direct cost savings, limited efficiencies at the SAU
- Joint Hollis and Brookline expansion with the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District presents greater potential efficiencies
- SAU restructuring if the number of districts were fewer appears to offer the largest opportunity for cost savings
- Disparities exist across the districts in:
 - Per-pupil costs
 - Debt obligations
 - Capital needs
- Student programming impacts/benefits appear minimal in the short term but potential benefits may exist for future opportunities
- Legal and governance cost changes could be substantial

Scope of Work of the Study Committee

The Committee comprised of two Brookline School Board members and three community members, held **six meetings**, during which it reviewed the following materials and data:

- Article 8 of the 2025 Brookline School District Warrant
- Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District Articles of Agreement
- Collective Bargaining Agreements for:
 - Hollis Teachers
 - Brookline Teachers

- Cooperative Teachers
 - Brookline Support Staff
 - Hollis Support Staff
 - Cooperative Support Staff
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- Applicable New Hampshire RSAs, including RSA 195:6, RSA 195:18, and RSA 195:25
 - Statutory limitations on total debt assumed under RSA 195:6 III
 - Current student enrollment data
 - Comparisons of projected versus actual enrollment
 - Long-term debt obligations across all three districts
 - Town growth and demographic data
 - Curriculum alignment across Brookline and Hollis elementary schools
 - Average staff tenure across the three districts
 - Qualitative data related to student well-being and homework preparation
 - The 2016 report on dissolving the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District
 - FY27 budget planning documents
 - Brookline Budget Summary for FY27
 - Student performance trends, including cohort data across SAU schools
 - Impacts of students converging at the middle school from two districts
 - Staff mobility
 - Day-to-day operational differences between districts
 - The State Report on reducing the number of School Administrative Units (SB 57, Chapter 220:1)

Committee Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion followed regarding the potential impacts of expansion and ways to best inform the community. The Committee determined that any structural changes would **not result in immediate impacts** to students, staff, or facilities in either Brookline or Hollis. Any future changes would be contingent upon action by the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District and approval by the Brookline community.

Under RSA 195:16, changes to Cooperative School Districts require a detailed, multi-step process. The Committee concluded that expanding grade levels would require a revision of the Articles of Agreement and the creation of detailed warrant articles. Addressing all legal, financial, staffing, and governance implications was beyond the scope of this committee's charge but would need to be resolved by revising the current Articles of Agreement.

While limited financial benefits and operational flexibility may result from expansion, the Committee determined that this approach alone would not represent an optimal solution for reorganizing districts within SAU 41.

The Committee discussed how HB765 related to the consolidation of Brookline into the existing Hollis / Brookline Co-Op and noted that there is an opportunity to achieve financial efficiencies

through the consolidation of the school districts. Additionally the committee noted that other non-financially motivated efficiencies are likely to be achieved as well – greater flexibility with staffing, increased superintendent presence to students (reallocating time spent managing three independent districts to face-to-face time), increased physical footprint allows for more options when evaluating future construction and community growth, increased teacher collaboration. They found that there were no concerns found regarding HB765 and the potential expansion.

SAU Impacts

The Committee identified that the most significant financial and efficiency impacts would likely occur at the **SAU level**. To improve transparency and understanding, the Committee requested that the Superintendent review:

- Current SAU workload and staffing responsibilities
- Potential impacts of Brookline independently expanding grade levels
- Potential efficiencies and cost savings if both Brookline and Hollis dissolved and joined the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative

Based on that review, the Committee determined that:

- Brookline-only expansion would result in minimal cost savings, though some spending realignment may be possible but would be a positive next step.
- Joint expansion by both Brookline and Hollis could yield greater cost savings, but those impacts require further study and data collection by Hollis.

Next Steps

1. Present the study and recommendations to the Brookline School Board for their review and acceptance.
2. If approved as a course of action, move forward with conversations with the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School Board regarding revisions to the Articles of Agreement to determine specific changes.
3. Engage Community Stakeholders into the conversation regarding the potential changes to the Articles of Agreement and the impact of those changes.
4. Engage in conversations with the Hollis School District regarding the possible benefits to both Hollis and Brookline if both districts decided to expand their agreements with the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District
5. Propose the concept of changing the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School District to form a new non-town specific named school district.

Study Committee Recommendation

After careful review of enrollment data, financial obligations, collective bargaining agreements, capital needs, governance structures, and School Administrative Unit operations, the Brookline Expansion Study Committee makes the following recommendation:

The Study Committee recommends that the Brookline School Board initiate conversations with the Hollis-Brookline Cooperative School Board toward revising their Articles of Agreement to expand Brookline to PK-12.

The Study Committee would need to vote on this at our next meeting.

Applicable Statutory Authority

The Study Committee's work and recommendations are guided by the following provisions of New Hampshire law:

RSA 195:6 — Cooperative School Districts

- Establishes the authority for forming cooperative school districts
- Governs financial obligations, including limitations on debt assumption
- Requires voter approval for cooperative agreements and amendments

RSA 195:16 — Procedure for Making Changes

- Specifies the required process for **altering grade configurations** or **amending cooperative agreements**
- Requires:
 - Detailed study and analysis - Completed by current Expansion Study Committee
 - School board action
 - Revision of Articles of Agreement
 - Development of specific warrant articles
 - Approval by affected voters