MERHS as Host School for the Cape Ann Cooperative Boys Hockey Program (2026-2027 Pilot Year)

Manchester Essex Regional High School (MERHS) to assume the role of Host School for the Cape Ann Cooperative Boys Hockey Program beginning with the 2026-2027 winter season. This would be implemented as a one-year pilot program, after which all participating districts would evaluate its effectiveness and determine the long-term viability of Manchester Essex continuing in the host role.

Background

The cooperative boys hockey program currently consists of student-athletes from four school districts:

- Manchester Essex Regional High School
- Rockport High School
- Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School
- Ipswich High School

The program has historically been hosted by Rockport High School and has successfully provided student-athletes from all participating schools with the opportunity to compete in interscholastic hockey. Regardless of the host school designation, the team will continue to practice and compete out of Talbot Rink in Gloucester.

Rationale for Manchester Essex Serving as Host

Manchester Essex now represents the largest participant base within the cooperative program and is projected to contribute the greatest number of student-athletes for the upcoming season. These numbers do not include incoming 8th grade students who will be enrolled in grade 9 this Fall.

Returning Players for 2026-2027

School	Returning Players
Manchester Essex	10
Hamilton-Wenham	8
Ipswich	4
Rockport	2

With 10 returning players, Manchester Essex is expected to account for the largest portion of the team's roster. Given this level of participation, it is reasonable and appropriate for Manchester Essex to assume the administrative leadership responsibilities associated with hosting the cooperative program.

Hosting the program at Manchester Essex would align program governance with current student participation trends while maintaining the collaborative nature of the cooperative agreement among all member schools.

Pilot Structure

To ensure the sustainability of the program and protect participating districts, Manchester Essex proposes the following conditions:

1. One-Year Pilot: Manchester Essex would serve as Host School for the 2026-2027 season only.
2. Minimum Participation Requirement: Manchester Essex must maintain a minimum of ten (10) enrolled student-athletes in the program to continue serving as Host School.
3. Post-Season Review: Following the conclusion of the 2026-2027 season, representatives from all participating districts will review participation data, operational effectiveness, and program outcomes to determine whether Manchester Essex should continue as Host School in future years.

Benefits

Designating Manchester Essex as the Host School would:

- Align host responsibilities with the school contributing the largest number of participants.
- Provide greater organizational consistency between student participation and program administration.
- Maintain the existing cooperative structure and partnerships among all four districts.
- Preserve current practice and game operations at Talbot Rink in Gloucester, minimizing disruption for student-athletes and families.
- Allow for a measured, data-driven evaluation through a one-year pilot before making any long-term commitment.