

NOV 25 '19 PM12:14

*Kim Garb*

# **Amendments to the Temporary Regional School Study Committee Plan of Regional School District 13**

**November 13, 2019  
Regional School District 13  
Board of Education**

## **Amendments to the Temporary Regional School Study Committee Plan for Regional School District 13**

This report is offered to amend the Plan of Regionalization for Regional School District 13 for two purposes: first, to clarify the authority of the Board of Education to close a school building, and second, to revise the election of Board members to meet the Durham Charter revision of 2006 with regard to election of Board members and terms of service.

### **Authority**

In 1967 the Temporary Regional School Study Committee, for the towns of Durham and Middlefield, submitted a recommendation to the State Board of Education to establish the regional school district. On April 10, 1968 the State Board of Education voted to approve the establishment of a regional school district composed of the two towns pursuant to Section 10-45 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Board voted to designate the district as Regional School District 13, to be organized under the provisions of the General Statutes dealing with regional school districts.

The Temporary Study Committee, after studying the need and benefits, made the following recommendations:

*\*that Durham and Middlefield cooperatively administer their entire educational system – Kindergarten through grade 12*

*\*that the new regionalized system be organized on an elementary, middle and high school basis*

*\*that children attending elementary and middle school remain in their present locations*

*\*that a four-year high school be constructed on the site presently available in Durham*

The report further describes the initiation of the District following approval of the referendum. It also states that, ***“It must be emphasized again that within the broad limits of the proposal, which is prescribed by law, the regional board of education would determine the programs and facilities of the regional district. Logically, the board could be expected to give due consideration to the recommendations of this study committee, but is not legally bound by them.”***

While it is clear that the Study Committee made certain recommendations in order to establish the district, it is also clear that they understood that the regional board would determine the program and facility needs over time while giving consideration to the recommendations. Since the time of the establishment of the District, the board has closed Center School in Middlefield and Francis E. Korn Elementary School in Durham, created the Integrated Day Program at John Lyman Elementary School and the Contemporary Program at Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School, with both programs at Memorial and Frank Ward Strong Middle Schools and provided students with the choice of attending either program. It also provided for all middle school students to attend Frank Ward Strong Middle School in Durham. These actions were taken to meet various program and student enrollment factors and were supported by corresponding budget approvals.

Following the approval of the Regionalization Plan on April 10, 1968, the first Board of Education Members were elected on April 22, 1968 with five members from Durham and five members from Middlefield. The Board adopted its policies and procedures on July 1, 1969 and began the operation of the RSD 13 schools. The schools included Chestnut Hill School (later John Lyman Elementary School), Memorial Middle School, and Public School (Center School) in Middlefield and Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School, Francis E. Korn Elementary School and Frank Ward Strong Middle School in Durham. In 2002, following requirements on representation of the population of each town (CGS 10-47c, 10-63h, 10-63j-10-63t) the Board member apportionment was changed to six members from Durham and four members from Middlefield.

Coginchaug Regional High School began Construction in 1968 and opened for the school year 1970/71. In 1981, Center School was closed and subsequently sold to Middlefield on August 24, 1982. Students in grades 5-8 in Middlefield attended Memorial Middle School and Durham students in grades 5-8 attended Frank Ward Strong Middle School. In the 1985/86 school year, grades 5-6 from both towns attended Memorial Middle School and grades 7-8 attended Frank Ward Strong Middle School. In June 2016, Francis E. Korn Elementary School was closed with grades K-3 attending Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School and grades 4-6 attending Memorial Middle School.

In the early 1970s the Board established an Open Classroom Choice in a few grades. In 1981, John Lyman Elementary School began to host the Open Classroom (subsequently changed to the Integrated Day Program) as well as Middlefield students in the traditional program and after 1985, for all students of both towns for grades K-5. After the 1990 renovation of Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School, all students in the Contemporary Program attended Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School for grades K-2, Francis E. Korn Elementary School for grades 3-4 and Memorial Middle School for grades 5-6. The Integrated Day Program ran at Memorial Middle School for grades 5-6 and in grades 7-8 at Frank Ward Strong Middle School in conjunction with the Contemporary Programs at both schools. On January 9, 2019 the Board of Education adopted a single educational approach district-wide with phased implementation starting at Strong School to be followed at all schools, with the following school configuration: grades Pre-K-2 at Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School, 3-5 at Memorial Middle School, 6-8 at Frank Ward Strong Middle School and 9-12 at Coginchaug Regional High School. This action precludes the need for John Lyman Elementary School to remain open.

The Board, after public meetings and surveys, proposed the closing of John Lyman Elementary School as a result of continued reduced student enrollment, excess building capacity, capital needs and associated costs. Additionally, the Board voted to move forward with the development of a single educational approach rather than the two program choice design with a grade/building configuration of: primary/ grades Pre-K-2 at Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School, intermediate/ grades 3-5 Memorial Middle School, middle/ grades 6-8 Frank Ward Strong Middle School and grades 9-12 Coginchaug Regional High School.

To support this configuration, building improvements to Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School and Memorial Middle School are needed along with the closure of John Lyman Elementary School. State funding is sought along with a local bond issue for the construction of the

improvements. In preparation of the bond referendum, District 13 Bond Counsel has determined that a Regionalization Plan amendment is needed to authorize the Board to close John Lyman Elementary School based on the initial recommendations of the Temporary Regional School Study Committee despite the several closures and realignments over the last fifty years, in consideration of recent State Supreme Court decisions on school closures in other districts.

The Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-47c of the Connecticut General Statutes, proposes that the Regionalization Plan for Regional School District 13 be amended as follows:

***The Board of Education of Regional School District 13, notwithstanding the recommendations of the Temporary Regional School Study Committee of 1967 for the towns of Durham and Middlefield, is authorized to determine the programs and facilities including associated grade level configuration required to best serve the students of the district as established including the alteration, expansion or closure of district school buildings.***

***Additionally, Regional School District 13 will maintain at least one active school in both the towns of Durham and Middlefield that educates students of determined grade levels. The Board of Education will hold at least one public hearing to receive input from both Durham and Middlefield communities before determining the programs and facilities required including associated grade level configuration to best serve the students of the district as established including the alteration, expansion, or closure of district school buildings.***

### **Election of Board Members**

In 2006, the Town of Durham revised the Town Charter to revise the method of the election and term of the members of the Board of Education. The Charter revision provides for Board members to be elected at the regular voting process in November and the term of office be 4 years rather than the current May election at the Town Meeting for a term of 3 years. The Town of Middlefield has not made a similar change to its election process.

Under the provisions of Section 10-47c of the Connecticut General Statutes, if the legislative body of a town served by the regional board of education makes a request to amend the election procedure and terms of office the regional board shall prepare a report on the proposed amendment, file the report with the State Commissioner of Education and hold a public hearing and referendum on the amendment in each member town.

Accordingly, this report will serve as the required action. It must be noted that the proposed change will not affect the manner of election or term of office of the Regional School District 13 members from the town of Middlefield unless Middlefield also requests such a change.

The Board of Education pursuant to Section 10-47c of the Connecticut General Statutes, proposes that the Regionalization Plan for Regional School District 13 is amended as follows:

***The election of Board of Education Members from the Town of Durham shall be in the manner as prescribed by Sections 2.1(6) and 6.1 of the Town of Durham Charter and serve a term of four years.***

On approval and adoption of this Regionalization Plan, the terms of the existing Durham members of the Board of Education will be adjusted in accordance with a schedule prescribed by the Town of Durham and in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes.