

Frequently Asked Questions about HB349

1- What does this bill do?

This Bill authorizes the Towns of Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton to vote whether to form a special K through 12 school district. It addresses the unique circumstances arising from the fact that the elementary students from Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton are already educated in a school owned by the Bridgewater-Hebron Village District. This bill does not create a new school district, but instead allows the citizens to vote to create a school district. Upon an affirmative vote by the three towns, they will be withdrawn from the Newfound Area School District and the SAU and as of the established operating date, they will become a separate school district.

2- How does creation of the new school district take place?

The signed bill gives the three towns up two (2) years in which to study and plan for the potential creation of a new school district known as the Bridgewater-Hebron-Groton Special Purpose School District.

The Select Boards are authorized to appoint committees and to study and plan for the creation of the new district prior to bringing the matter to a vote. Upon a majority vote, and operating date shall be set for the new district. At a subsequent annual meeting the citizens will then adopt an operating budget, elect district officers and a school board. The District will commence to function as of its effective date of operation.

3- How will children be educated?

Elementary age children will continue to be educated in their local elementary school. Middle and high school children will be educated pursuant to negotiated tuition agreements, either with the Newfound Area School District or another School District, such as the Plymouth School District. In addition, the new district will have the prerogative to expand its facility to add middle school at the local village district school.

4. What are the benefits of the creation of this new school district?

The creation of this new school district will benefit the towns of Bridgewater, Hebron and Groton by providing local control over education. It will also relieve the towns and their taxpayers of the continued risk of inequitable apportionment of District operating costs. The new school district also presents revenue opportunities to the Newfound Area School District. If Newfound is willing to enter into a fair tuition agreement, it will have the benefit of a revenue stream that will allow it to move forward with its desired capital projects.

5. What Problems does this bill solve?

This bill ensures that elementary and potentially middle school education is both local and locally controlled. It allows for a greater local focus on educational quality.

By right-sizing the two resulting school districts in allows for an equitable apportionment of district operating costs in both districts. It potentially will strengthen the Newfound Area School District by allowing for tuition revenue as a potential offset to taxes incurred by the remaining towns.

6. Does this bill mean that we are withdrawn from the Newfound Area School District?

No. This bill authorizes a unique opportunity for the three towns to vote to create a school district. This is truly unique due to the fact that two of the three towns share a village district that owns the elementary school building. Whether or not the three towns decide to create the Bridgewater-Hebron-Groton Special Purpose School District will require a majority vote in each of the three towns to create the school district.

7. Won't this bill require that we hire new administrators?

Not necessarily. Other school districts have successfully negotiated contracts with a neighboring SAU to provide superintendent services, and that is an option for the new school district. There is a significant likelihood that the cost of these services will be equal to or less than the current portion that the three towns pay toward the SAU budget.

8. Will this bill be detrimental to the Newfound Area School District?

No. In this case, the infrastructure for providing local elementary education is already in place, and that operational cost will be shifted from Newfound to the new district which will benefit from that infrastructure. If anything, the bill will generate new revenue for the remaining district by way of tuition agreements, while enhancing more local control for the Newfound Area School District as well.

9. Is this bill detrimental to other cooperative school districts?

No. This bill deals with a very unique set of facts where the students who comprise the District will be educated in a school that is already owned by two of the three towns through the Bridgewater-Hebron Village District. No other towns in New Hampshire have such a situation, and this bill does not apply to any other cooperative school district.