

Amendment to the Temporary Regional School Study Committee Plan for Regional School District 13

**July 15, 2024
Regional School District 13
Board of Education**

Amendment to the Temporary Regional School Study Committee Plan for Regional School District 13

Pursuant to Section 10-47c of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Region 13 Board of Education finds it advisable to amend the Plan of Regionalization for Regional School District 13 for the purpose of authorizing the Region 13 Board of Education to implement a district-wide school configuration plan.

Background

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 State Board of Education 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. On February 11, 2020, the Plan of Regionalization was amended by the voters of Durham and Middlefield to provide consistency between the Plan of Regionalization and the Durham Town Charter. After the amendment to the Plan of Regionalization, the Durham members of the Region 13 Board of Education will now serve a term of four years.

Original Temporary Study Committee Recommendations

The Temporary Study Committee, after studying the need and benefits of the proposed regional school district, 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, “[i]t 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 Temporary Study Committee made certain recommendations in order to establish the District, it is also clear that the committee understood that the regional board of education would determine the program and facility needs over time while giving consideration to the committee's recommendations. Since the time of the establishment of the District, the Region 13 Board of Education has closed Center School in Middlefield and Francis E. Korn Elementary School in Durham. In addition, the Region 13 Board of Education has established the Integrated DayProgram at John Lyman Elementary School and the Contemporary Program at Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School and provided for all middle school students to attend Frank Ward Strong Middle School in Durham. These actions were taken by the Region 13 Board of Education to meet various program and student enrollment factors and were supported by corresponding budget approvals.

Prior School Reconfiguration Decisions of the Region 13 Board of Education

Following the approval of the Plan of Regionalization on April 10, 1968, the first Region 13 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 Regional School District 13 schools. At the time, the schools included Chestnut Hill School (later named John Lyman Elementary School), Memorial 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.

Coginchaug Regional High School began Construction in 1969 and opened for the school year 1970/71. In 1981, Center School was closed and subsequently sold to the Town of Middlefield on August 24, 1982. Students in grades 5-8 in Middlefield attended Memorial 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 School and grades 7-8 from both towns 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 School. In the school year 2020/21, grades 6-8 from both towns attended Frank Ward Strong School.

In the early 1970s, the Region 13 Board of Education established an Open Classroom Choice Program in a few grades. In 1981, John Lyman Elementary School began to host the Open Classroom Program (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 School for grades 5-6. The Integrated Day Program ran at Memorial 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 December 11, 2018, the Board of Education adopted a single educational approach district-wide with phased implementation starting at Strong School to be followed at all schools, and on January 9, 2019, the Board adopted the proposed school configuration: grades Pre-K-2 at Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School, 3-5 at Memorial School, 6-8 at Frank Ward Strong Middle School and 9-12 at Coginchaug Regional High School. This configuration was rejected at referendum and John Lyman School remained in use.

The board has reviewed its school configuration and is recommending a reduction to a three-school model as a result of continued reduced student enrollment, excess building capacity, capital needs and associated costs, with the following configuration:

- Pre-K – Grade 5 at Memorial School
- Grades 6-8 at Strong Middle School
- Grades 9-12 at Coginchaug Regional High School

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

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 adopt a three-school model with Pre-K-Grade 5 at Memorial School in Middlefield, Grades 6-8 at Strong Middle School in Durham, and Grades 9-12 at Coginchaug Regional High School in Durham and is further authorized to implement temporary school grade configurations during construction and/or renovation and to close Frederick F. Brewster School in Durham and John Lyman Elementary School in Middlefield upon the transition to the three-school model.

Question to be Presented at Referendum

“Shall the Regional School District 13 Plan of Regionalization be amended to authorize the Region13 Board of Education to adopt a three-school model with Pre-K-Grade 5 at Memorial School in Middlefield, Grades 6-8 at Strong Middle School in Durham, and Grades 9-12 at Coginchaug Regional High School in Durham and to close Frederick F. Brewster School in Durham and John Lyman Elementary School in Middlefield upon the transition to the three-school model?”