

## Schools and Regionalization: The Maine Model

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### **Key Education Reforms to Maine's Education System in Last Decade**

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- Implementation of an adequacy based school funding formula (Essential Programs and Services)
- Creation of a statewide required local mill rate program
- Significant increase in state funds to support local school districts
- Implementation of school district reorganization (consolidation) program

## **Rationale for School District Reorganization: “Perfect” Storm**

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- Continued growth in K-12 expenditures, declining enrollments and flat student performance
- Majority of school districts spending above EPS allocation
- Narrow defeats of two TABOR initiatives
- Governor’s task force on increasing efficiencies, resulting in “Sinclair – Like” legislation, which was subsequently defeated
- Three commission reports recommending some form of school district reorganization and/or restructuring
- Governor’s first year of second term

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## **School District Reorganization Laws were designed to promote achievement of two broad policy goals:**

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1. Improve education opportunities for all students by increasing equity and access to rigorous academic programs.
- and*
2. Increase the efficient use of limited resources for improving education opportunities.

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**Original Proposal:** Governor proposed reducing the total number of school districts from 290 to 26 (varying in size from 1000-25,000 students)

**Modified Proposal:** Education Committee attempted to craft a law to reduce the number of school districts from 290 to 80 (districts of 2,500 students or more)

**Legislation:** Passage of first school district reorganization law (June 2007)  
 Passage of revised school district reorganization law (April 2008)  
 Passage of amendments to original law (April 2010)

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## **Types of School District Reorganizations**

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### **Basic**

- SAUs with less than 2500 students required to reorganize.

### **Alternative Plans**

- SAUs between 2500-1200 allowed, if meet certain parameters
- SAUs between 1200-1000 allowed, if isolated rural (“inland island”) SAU.
- “Donut hole”
- Alternative organizational structure (AOS)

### **Exceptions**

- SAUs with more than 2500 students
- Offshore islands
- Tribal schools
- Higher performing, efficient school districts

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## Maine Department of Education Support

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- Facilitators
- Financial support
- RSU guided support
- Educational planning for RSU/AOS
- Data conversion support
- Statewide transportation software

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## Reorganization Status of All Maine School Systems, October 2010

Status	# Former Units	# Current Units	Enrollment (Oct. 2008)	% of Students
<b>Unchanged Units</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>107,382</b>	<b>56.4%</b>
<b>Approved Alternative Plans</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>106,126</b>	<b>55.7%</b>
Exempt (Island, Maine Indian Education, geographic isolation)	19	19	1,256	.7%
<b>Reorganized</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>61,673</b>	<b>32.3%</b>
Regional School Unit (RSU)	78	22	46,483	24.4%
Alternative Organizational Structure (AOS)	66	11	15,190	8.0%
<b>Non-conforming</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>21,589</b>	<b>11.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>190,644</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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Source: Maine Department of Education, 2010.

## Penalties for Nonconforming School Administrative Units

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- Minimum receives 50% of the minimum state allocation
- System administration reduced by 50%
- Local mill expectation is increased by 2%
- Lose eligibility for “ transition adjustments”
- Less favorable consideration for funding of school construction
- Assessed annually unless the unit approves a new reorganized unit and meets all criteria

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## Status on Achievement of Policy Goals

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- **Improved education opportunities :**
  - *Examples include:*
  - Expanding education programs such as music, foreign languages and gifted and talented
  - School reconfigurations and class sizes
  - Staffing patterns
  - Consistent curriculum and assessment practices
- **Increased Efficiencies:**
  - Maine Department of Education Claims
  - Current systematic analysis underway

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## Observations and Lessons

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1. One size solution.
2. Projections vs Predictions
3. Start up costs.
4. Results for different organizations.
5. Devils in the details.
6. Positive outcomes.
7. Mandates and public policy.

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