



SAU 104

Superintendent Services Feasibility Study Public Presentation

October 24, 2024



Feasibility Study Team & Information Sources

Feasibility Study Ad Hoc Committee members:

- Michael Blough, Rollinsford School Board Chair
- Kerri Choate, Rollinsford School Board Vice Chair

Supported by Lori Lane, Advisor to the Rollinsford School Board

Consultation with RGS administration and appropriate staff, MSAD #35 administration, SAU 56 administration, NH DOE, NHSBA, educational professionals and contracted service providers, as well as other state and local historians and community members to gather information for this study.

Various historical documents were also reviewed and serve as information sources for this study.



Purpose of the Feasibility Study

The purpose of the Feasibility Study was to *determine whether or not SAU 104 could complete the transition to become a fully independent SAU by providing its own superintendent services.*

- a. Review the **educational history** leading up to the current state of SAU 104
- b. Identify the advantages and challenges with the **current superintendent services agreement** with SAU 56 to determine if this model was meeting the needs of SAU 104.
- c. Create and review **various staffing scenarios** to determine if superintendent services could be provided by SAU 104 and determine the advantages and challenges of each scenario.
- d. Determine the **financial impact** of the current agreement as well as other staffing scenarios.
- e. Make a **recommendation** to the full Rollinsford school board on the staffing scenario that would best meet the needs of SAU 104.



Documents Available

In addition to this presentation, the following documents will be made available to the public and can be found on the SAU 104 website. <https://www.sau104.org/>

- SAU 104 Superintendent Services Feasibility Study Report
- 2019 SAU Withdrawal Committee Report
- 2012 Withdrawal Committee Report (to send grade 7-12 students to MSAD #35)



Presentation Outline

1. Historical Review
2. Staffing Scenario Options
 - a. Advantages/Challenges of Scenario
 - b. Budgetary Impacts
3. Analysis and Rationale
4. Ad Hoc Committee's Recommendation
5. Next Steps



Historical Review - Education for Grades 7-12 Students

- In 1968, Rollinsford entered into an AREA agreement with Somersworth to provide education for students in grades 7-12.
- Over the next 40 years, there were periodic requests from the public to review this agreement and seek other educational options.
- After completing a feasibility study on the educational options available, in 2013, the school board recommended that the voters approve ending the AREA agreement with Somersworth and begin sending students to MSAD #35 in South Berwick, ME. The voters approved this recommendation.
- Students began attending MSAD #35 schools in fall 2015.
- In October 2024, the tuition agreement between the two school districts was renewed.



Historical Review - SAU History

- In 1987, SAU 56 was a multi-district school administrative unit (SAU) that was comprised of two school districts - Rollinsford and Somersworth.
- From 1987 - 2020, SAU 56 had a joint school board whose primary function was to hire and evaluate the superintendent of schools.
- In 2018, Somersworth notified Rollinsford that it would be forming a committee to start the process to leave SAU 56 so that it could have sole decision making over its educational decisions. Rollinsford formed its own committee to study withdrawing from SAU 56.
- In 2020, the Rollinsford school board recommended that the school district leave SAU 56 and form its own SAU. This recommendation was approved by the voters.
- In 2020, Rollinsford entered into an agreement with Somersworth to purchase “superintendent services” from SAU 56. This agreement is set to automatically renew on July 1, 2025.
- In 2024, the Rollinsford school board expressed interest in looking at other options for these services. An advisor was hired to assist the school board in conducting a feasibility study to determine if SAU 104 could complete the transition to a fully independent SAU.



Superintendent Services - What are they?

RSA 194-C:4 Superintendent Services. –

Each school administrative unit or single school district shall provide the following superintendent services:

- I. An educational mission which indicates how the interests of pupils will be served under the administrative structure.
- II. Governance, organizational structure, and implementation of administrative services including, but not limited to:
 - Business services (i.e., payroll, accounts payable, employee services, grant management)
 - Educational program oversight (i.e., programs, curriculum)
 - Policy development and implementation (i.e., student, staff, board functions, fiscal oversight, community relations)
 - Ancillary services procurement (i.e., transportation, food service)
 - Daily operations - processes and procedures (i.e., school calendar, emergency operations, hiring procedures)
 - Fiscal oversight (i.e., operating budget creation and implementation)
 - School board support
 - Community relations



Superintendent Services Options Overview

After discussion and researching different models, the Ad Hoc committee decided to further explore the following staffing scenarios:

Staffing Scenario 1: Continue with the existing agreement with SAU 56

Staffing Scenario 2: Hire a part-time superintendent and other SAU administration and staff

Staffing Scenario 3: Hire a “district administrator” and other SAU administration and staff



Staffing Scenario 1a and 1b

Scenario 1a - Continue with the current five-year agreement with SAU 56 to provide superintendent services with no proposed agreement changes/amendments. (Please note: the current agreement automatically renews on July 1, 2025 unless Rollinsford notifies SAU 56 by January 1, 2025 about the desire to end the agreement.)

Scenario 1b - Continue with the current five-year agreement with SAU 56 to provide superintendent services that would include agreed upon change(s)/amendment(s).



Advantages of Scenario 1a and b

Advantages:

- There will be continuity in the superintendent services being provided. There will not be any transition to a new services model so operations will continue as they have been.
- SAU 104 has access to full-time superintendent services each week, whether or not the district's needs in a given week exceed the 16% portion of time SAU 104 is paying for. In other words, the SAU 56 administration and staff are available to SAU 104 when needed at any time during the work week.
- The current agreement renews automatically so it is in place unless SAU 104 wants to end the agreement. SAU 56 cannot end the agreement, only SAU 104 can.



Challenges with Scenario 1a and b

- SAU 104 has no input into the SAU operational budget. SAU 104 receives a budget figure from SAU 56 annually as to what its 16% portion is of the overall SAU operating budget. There is no mechanism for input with SAU 56 about SAU operational budget.
- SAU 104 has no input into the hiring of the superintendent. SAU 56 chooses their own superintendent. The educational leader for SAU 104 is the one that SAU 56 has chosen.
- The SAU 56 superintendent is expected to be the educational leader for SAU 104. There is no mechanism for SAU 104 to evaluate the SAU 56 superintendent as to how this person is meeting the needs of SAU 104.
- SAU 56's needs require a full-time superintendent. As a result, meeting Rollinsford's needs could be overlooked.
- None of the SAU 56 staff (i.e., business and student services personnel) are Rollinsford employees. As with the superintendent, Rollinsford has no involvement into the hiring decisions of these critical positions. The board has limited ability to provide appropriate direction and oversight to the superintendent on the SAU staff's work with the RGS staff or MSAD #35.
- SAU 104 is paying 16% of an SAU office - staff and operating costs - that is open 40 hours/week. SAU 104 does not need the same level of administration and staff to provide the superintendent services that are required.
- Specific to scenario 1b, there are ongoing discussions with SAU 56 about possible amendments to the existing superintendent services agreement. However both districts need to agree on amending the contract and there is no guarantee this will happen.



Staffing Scenarios 2a, 2b, and 2c

scenario 2a - Hire your own superintendent and your own SAU staff.

Scenario 2b - Hire your own superintendent and find other districts to provide the other required services (i.e. special education administration).

Scenario 2c - Hire your own superintendent, hire some members of your own SAU staff, and contract some required services (i.e., special education administration) from other districts.



Advantages of Scenario 2

Advantages:

- The superintendent works directly for the SAU 104 board. The superintendent is an SAU 104 employee and is the school board's to manage and evaluate.
- The superintendent works with the board, school administration and staff, and with MSAD #35 as a partner in providing educational leadership based on SAU 104's specific needs and goals.
- The superintendent is no longer shared with another SAU. Their time is entirely devoted to Rollinsford.
- The superintendent would be in the district every week, routinely working alongside the staff and building administration to provide appropriate leadership, management, support, and mentorship.
- Superintendent services can be provided in a model that is "right-sized" for SAU 104. SAU 104 only pays for staffing and other budgeted items that meet the district's needs.
- SAU 104 has full control of and decision making of the SAU budget and expenditures.



Challenges with Scenario 2

Challenges:

- Part-time employees can be difficult to find and retain.
- SAU 104 may not have access to full-time superintendent services (i.e., part-time superintendent).
- Staffing with independent contractors and/or staff from other SAUs will require regular, active communication and coordination by the superintendent to develop and maintain the positive working relationships needed for the model's success.
- Providing your own superintendent services will not come at a cost savings.



Staffing Scenario 3

Scenario 3 - Hire a District Administrator to serve as both superintendent and RGS principal. Hire an Assistant Principal for RGS to assist the District Administrator. The rest of the services will be provided as described above in 2a, 2b, or 2c as district employees or contracted services.

A district administrator is the designation given to a school principal who also performs superintendent duties. This is allowable by the NH Department of Education and there are 5-6 very small school districts in the state who use this model.



Advantages of Scenario 3

Advantages:

- As with hiring your own superintendent, the district administrator would be your own employee.
- Educational leadership for your district lies in one person who is both the principal of RGS and is also the superintendent of the district.
- The compensation for the principal to become the district administrator will cost less than a part-time superintendent. District administrators are paid their principal salary and receive an additional salary amount for the added district level responsibilities they take on.
- If the principal becomes the district administrator, SAU 104 would need to hire another administrator to assist with the duties of leading and managing RGS. Having a second administrator in the building would be advantageous to allow both the district and RGS continue to operate smoothly.



Challenges with Scenario 3

Challenges:

- All of the challenges outlined in scenario 2 are also challenges in scenario 3 (i.e., part-time employees, increased cost).
- Not having a separate superintendent puts a tremendous amount of responsibility onto one person.
- Limited administrative structure to review decisions made when all of the decision making lies with one person.
- SAU 104 would not have a certified superintendent, although districts are allowed to function with district administrators performing the functions of the superintendent.
- The principal would need to seek mentorship and guidance from outside of the district as the principal would not have an educational leader above them as a supervisor.
- Hiring an assistant principal may be a challenge. Questions about adding this position:
 - If the assistant principal is full-time, will this person become the de facto principal?
 - If the assistant principal is part-time, how helpful would this be to the principal/district administrator?



Staffing Scenario Cost Analysis - Cost Estimates

Overall Cost Amount Estimates*

Scenario 1	\$266,162.30
Scenario 2c	\$390,043.37
Scenario 3	\$485,574.77

*With all budget processes, initial budgets are educated estimates of what the “actuals” will be.



Staffing Scenario Cost Analysis - Budgeting

Each year, the district's operating budget contains an amount for superintendent services. In FY 25, that amount was \$258,410. (SAU 56 assessment \$238,410 + \$20,000 for feasibility study advisor). It is estimated that the SAU 56 assessment will be approximately \$266,162.30 (3% increase). This is a best guesstimate and has not been provided by SAU 56.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grant, the annual federal entitlement grant to help school districts pay for special education costs can be used to offset the additional cost of special education administration.



Budgeting for Scenarios 2c and 3

Budget Amount	Scenario 2c	Scenario 3
TOTAL COST	\$390,043.37	\$485,574.77
SAU Assessment estimate for FY26	(\$266,162.30)	(\$266,162.30)
IDEA Grant for Special Education	(\$50,000.00)	(\$50,000.00)
Additional budget funds needed	\$73,881.07	\$169,412.47



Ad Hoc Committee's Analysis

1. More input and influence in the process of who is hired as the superintendent. The loss of the joint school board no longer allows Rollinsford to have the level of input the Ad Hoc committee feels is necessary.
2. Provide more direction and feedback on the superintendent's job performance and make recommendations on the superintendent's employment status. The only way to have the level of decision making the committee feels is necessary regarding the superintendent's evaluation and employment status is for the superintendent to be a SAU 104 employee.
3. Have final decision making authority on hiring SAU personnel.
4. Ensure there is increased continuity and organizational stability in the superintendent services provided and the personnel providing those services.
5. Creation of a "right sized" SAU budget for SAU 104.
6. Recognition that the needs of the Rollinsford school district have changed over the last fifteen years. It was time to review the current superintendent services agreement with SAU 56 to determine if that model was still the most appropriate way to provide SAU 104 with superintendent services.
7. Recognition that the Rollinsford school district needs to commit to a set of long-term strategic goals focused on the continuous improvement of its education system. This includes a commitment to the superintendent services model chosen.



Ad Hoc Committee's Recommendation

After much consideration, the Ad Hoc committee is recommending to the Rollinsford school board that Staffing Scenario 2c be adopted with a start date of July 1, 2025.

Staffing Scenario 2c

Job Title	Classification	Term	Status	Hrs or Days/week
<u>SAU 104 Employees</u>				
Superintendent of Schools	Administration	Full-Year	Exempt	20 hrs/week
Accounting/Payroll/HR Assistant	Support Staff	Full-Year	Non-Exempt	37.5 hrs/week
Office Administrative Assistant	Support Staff	Full-Year	Non-Exempt	RGS Admin Assistant will perform these duties for the SAU staff.
<u>Contracted Services</u>				
Special Education Director	Administrator	Full-Year	Contracted service-MSAD #35	As required
Special Education Secretary	Support Staff	Full-Year	Contracted service-MSAD #35	As required
Business Administrator	Administrator	Full-Year	Independent contracted provider	10-15 hours/month



Next Steps

The Ad Hoc Committee will finalize costs that will need to be considered during the current FY 25 budget. (i.e., financial software costs, hiring supt to start in spring 2025) in order for all staff and operational needs are in place for July 1, 2025.

The full school board will consider all factors identified in the feasibility study in order to make a final decision in November or December.

Should Board decide to accept Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation, the board will be begin planning to implement the new model which will include hiring staff and transition of information from SAU 56 to SAU 104.



Questions?