

# ALTERNATIVE PLAN SUBMITTAL SHEET

School Administrative Unit Submitting Alternative Plan:

- Islesboro School Department

Contact Information:

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Date Plan Submitted by SAU: July 14, 2008

**The intent to submit an alternative plan has been approved by the Commissioner in the approval of the Notice of Intent?**

YES       NO

(If NO, please explain.)

## Alternative Plan Cover Sheet

(Please attach Alternative Plan as Exhibit A)

| Plan Requirements  |                                     |                          |                                     |                              |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Item   | Complete                            | In Progress              | Not Yet Started                     | Need Assistance <sup>1</sup> |
| Plan addresses how the SAU will reorganize administrative functions, duties and noninstructional personnel so that projected expenditures of RSU in fiscal 2008-2009 for the following areas will not have an adverse impact on the instructional program. |                                     |                          |                                     |                              |
| <b>system administration</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| <b>transportation</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| <b>special education</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| <b>facilities and maintenance</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| Plan addresses how cost savings will be achieved in fiscal 2008-2009 for the above four areas.   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| Parameters for Plan Development  |                                     |                          |                                     |                              |
| Enrollment meets requirements (2,500 except where circumstances justify an exception)  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| When viewed in conjunction with surrounding proposed units, may not result in one or more municipalities being denied the option to join an RSU  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| Includes at least one publicly supported high school   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| Consistent with policies set forth in section 1451   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| No displacement of teachers  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| No displacement of students  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| No closures of schools existing or operating during school year immediately preceding reorganization, except as permitted under section 1512   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>     |
| Collaborative Agreements   |                                     |                          |                                     |                              |
|  |                                     |                          | Yes                                 | No                           |
| Does your plan currently include information/documentation on collaborative agreements?<br><i>(not required, but encouraged)</i>   |                                     |                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>     |

<sup>1</sup> Please explain what assistance you need to complete this portion of your plan, and state from whom you need assistance, on the next page.



# Islesboro School Department

## Alternative Plan



Presented to State of Maine Department of Education

July 2008

## **Exhibit A**

### **Islesboro School Department Alternative Plan**

#### **A. Introduction**

The Islesboro School Department is submitting this Alternative Plan as allowed under the school reorganization law as an offshore island (PL 2007, c. 240, Pt. XXXX, § 36(2)(B)(1)). This Plan is an update of the plan which was submitted to the Maine Department of Education on November 30, 2007.

#### **B. 2008-2009 Costs for System Administration, Transportation, Special Education, and Facilities and Maintenance**

The Islesboro School Department budget referendum was held on July 10, 2008 and the 2008-2009 budget was approved by the voters.

##### **1. No Adverse Impact on Instructional Program**

The administration and School Committee have thoroughly examined the School Department's educational services and the needs of island students, and the 2008-2009 school budget was developed with an eye to preserving and enhancing the instructional program. The administration and School Committee believe that this budget is fiscally responsible and that it will result in no adverse impact on the instructional program.

There is no doubt that island schools face unique challenges in terms of being able to share services and reduce costs. In addition, it is difficult to recruit and retain qualified administrators, teachers and staff to a remote island location without competitive salaries. Island schools will never be able to achieve the efficiencies that are more easily available to schools on the mainland, but the Islesboro School Department is committed to continuing to explore opportunities to share resources and cut costs, so long as such efforts do not diminish the quality of education for our students.

## **2. System Administration**

|                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| <u>2007-2008</u> | <u>2008-2009</u> |
| \$51,727         | \$94,582         |

The apparent increase in system administration from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 is misleading. Up until the 2007-2008 school year, superintendents in Islesboro worked part-time and were paid a salary of \$30,000 per year (this amount had not increased for the last eight years). In 2007-2008, Michael Wright agreed to serve both as principal and superintendent, and he was paid a stipend of only \$10,000 for his superintendent responsibilities. Thus the system administration costs for 2007-2008 were unusually low compared to prior years. Mr. Wright has now resigned from the principal position, but he retained the superintendent position. For 2008-2009, his salary is \$40,880. This salary represents the State average superintendent salary of \$365 per diem for 2007-2008 for 112 days, which certainly represents a very good value for superintendent services.

The Islesboro School Department has tried to hold the line on system administration costs and will continue to explore ways to provide cost efficient but effective administrative and non-instructional services.

## **3. Transportation**

|                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| <u>2007-2008</u> | <u>2008-2009</u> |
| \$63,018         | \$56,243         |

The reduction in the transportation budget from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 is primarily due to shifting the extracurricular transportation costs to the new cost center. Nevertheless, the School Department has been vigilant in exploring ways to reduce its transportation costs, even as fuel costs skyrocket. For example:

- The School Department has explored the possibility of contracting with mainland schools (MSAD #5 and MSAD #34) or private organizations to provide transportation for extracurricular mainland trips. Unfortunately, we have found that it is actually more expensive, not less, to contract with other organizations for these services on a permanent basis.

However, we do collaborate with other schools regarding transportation for field trips and activities whenever possible to save costs and will continue to do so.

- When planning off-island trips, we seek the most efficient mode of transportation, consistent with student safety and within insurance company constraints.
- The School Department continues to monitor the cost of our transportation program to seek ways of cutting or containing costs.
- The School Department continually evaluates transportation routes and student pick-up and drop-off points. Whenever necessary and feasible we change our routes to make them the most cost efficient possible.

**4. Special Education**

2007-2008  
\$124,469

2008-2009  
\$125,239

The School Department has been able to hold the line on special education costs, while still providing appropriate services for our students. Islesboro Central School currently has 18 special education students. Services are provided through a special education teacher and a special education educational technician III.

- Because of the relatively small number of special education students, the School Department does not employ a special education director. Instead, the special education resource room teacher is paid a stipend to perform these duties, which is very small in comparison to a director's salary. This teacher is supported in attending several training sessions each year and stays in close communication with special education directors in the Mid-Coast area and on the other islands about important issues.
- We recently combined a non-instructional position with a special education support position. This allowed us to cut our school-wide special education positions from three to two, while at the same time increasing the quality of instructional support for our students.

- The School Department continually explores ways to provide quality speech therapy, occupational therapy and other specialized services to students through the most cost-effective measures possible. Each year we reexamine how these services will be provided, where they will be provided, and how this will impact the student involved. Our goal is do what is best for the student in the most cost-effective way.
- The School Department is committed to providing effective literacy support to students and does so with a part-time literacy support person. This person provides many remedial services to students who might otherwise only receive it through a special education resource room program.

The School Department will continue to explore ways to deliver cost-efficient and effective special education services to its students.

## **5. Facilities and Maintenance**

|                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| <u>2007-2008</u> | <u>2008-2009</u> |
| \$150,867        | \$179,443        |

There are two factors driving the increase in the facilities and maintenance budget. The first is simply the shift of the School Department's \$5,000 contingency fund to this cost center as directed by Department of Education. The second is the skyrocketing cost of insurance premiums, electricity and heating oil.

The Islesboro Central School is located in an old stone mansion built in 1928. While beautiful and unique, the school facility presents many maintenance challenges. The School Committee has undertaken studies to identify facilities concerns and possible solutions.

The Islesboro School Department is currently exploring the option of renovating our building instead of building a more costly new school. This will result in a more cost-effective, energy efficient building and improved educational space for our students and staff.

While building options have been explored, the School Department has taken steps to improve the energy efficiency. Storm windows, doors and programmable thermostats were installed. These resulted in 3,000 less gallons of fuel oil burned last winter as compared to the winter before. Obviously, however, we still spent more money.

Additionally, the school department applied for and received assistance through the State's Revolving Renovation Fund to put a new roof on our school. Pursuing this option saved our community roughly \$90,000 due to forgiveness percent of loan as well as zero interest rate. This will also help our building become more energy efficient as additional insulation will be part of the ultimate plan.

In addition, in an effort to control rising heating oil costs, the School Department explored the possibility of joining the Region Eight Consortium to purchase heating oil. Unfortunately, we discovered that Maritime Oil, the Consortium's provider, will not deliver to the island because of cost and insurance issues. However, the School Department continues to put our purchase of heating oil to bid so that we may attain the best possible price given our remote island location. We will continue to explore the most cost-efficient means to purchase our heating oil and reduce consumption.

### **C. Additional Steps to Achieve Cost Efficiency Goals**

The Islesboro School Department will continue to pursue further collaborative relationships as discussed below.

#### **1. Maine Island Schools Collaborative**

Islesboro will participate, to the extent feasible, in the Maine Islands School Collaborative with the goal of sharing services, resources, and expertise to maintain and promote the excellence of education on Islesboro and the other islands. Islesboro will partner with other island schools and the Island Institute to develop proposals for sharing services and costs in the following areas:

- Technology and technology support
- Student assessment
- Library services
- Insurance coverage
- Energy conservation and management
- Staff development
- Curriculum development
- Bulk purchasing of supplies
- Shared purchasing or contract agreements
- Distance learning
- Student inter-island programming
- Transportation to mainland activities
- Grant Writing

- CREST Technology initiatives

## **2. Other Collaborative Efforts**

Aside from the Maine Island Schools Collaborative, the Islesboro administration and staff will continue to develop other collaborative efforts, including the following:

- Superintendents and other representatives from each of the participating islands will meet twice a year to discuss and review existing organizational structures and possibilities for collaboration.
- Islesboro Central School will participate in inter-island professional development activities on an on-going basis.
- Islesboro Central School will continue to investigate cooperative agreements with neighboring mainland school units where feasible.

## **D. Conclusion**

The Islesboro Central School is an essential fixture in the community, and to a large extent, island life revolves around the school and education. The School is well-supported in the community, offers a rigorous education for students K-12, and includes a magnet school that enrolls students from the mainland who want to take advantage of the excellent educational program.

The Islesboro School Committee believes this request for approval of an Alternative Plan is warranted and meets the criteria set forth in the school reorganization law. The School Committee is committed to maintaining an effective school system that is as efficient as possible given the challenging logistics of an island location. The School Committee also believes that the quality education program provided to our students is sustainable within our community.

The School Committee would be pleased to answer any questions or to submit any other information that Commissioner Gendron deems necessary to assist in approving this Alternative Plan.

## **EXHIBIT B**

### **EXCEPTIONS TO 2,500 STUDENT MINIMUM**

The Islesboro School Department meets the requirements for an exception to the 2,500 student minimum because the school reorganization law specifically excludes coastal islands from the 2,500 student minimum requirement.