

# GILL COMMISSION ON EDUCATION

TOWN OF GILL  
M A S S A C H U S E T T S



[www.gillmass.org](http://www.gillmass.org)

*REPORT TO TOWN MEETING*

*GILL, MASSACHUSETTS*

May 4, 2009

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**COMMISSION MEMBERS**

- Ted Castro-Santos, Co-Chair
- Peter Conway
- Kyle Maurer
- Joanne Rabideau
- Sue Sibley
- Dorothy (Doff) Storrow, Co-Chair
- Jennifer Waldron
- Joanne Wallace
- Tracy Rogers (Administrative Assistant)

## SUMMARY

In November of 2008, the Gill Selectboard and Gill Finance Committee established the Gill Commission for Education. Volunteers were solicited and appointments were made by the Town Moderator, the Selectboard, and the Finance Committee. The Education Commission was instructed to study the public educational options available for the Town's children, identify the ramifications of each option and draft a report for the Town. The Commission was specifically instructed *not* to make recommendations concerning the various options.<sup>1</sup> The Commission was directed to investigate and report on the following issues:

- Explore all possible configurations for educating Gill students grade K-12
  - Leaving Gill Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) entirely
  - Joining another District
  - Maintain Gill Elementary and tuition students to high school
  - Tuition students to K-12 to other schools
  - Remain in GMRSD without any change
- Review the District Agreement
- Review applicable Massachusetts laws
- Investigate financial ramifications for all alternatives
- Investigate how Chapter 70 would be affected
- Investigate alternative proposed by Franklin County Public School Project
- Review minutes of meetings in 1982 when Regionalization was first considered
- Review the file from the 1992 committee that studied leaving the District
- Investigate demographic trends and projections for the future
- Investigate Special Education ramifications of each alternative
- Investigate how transportation and its funding would be affected.

The Selectboard and Finance Committee established this Commission against a backdrop of turbulent educational times for the Gill Montague School District and for Franklin County schools as a whole. Townspeople were coming to town officials with numerous concerns. Some were concerned about the spiraling cost of education and its impact on the Town, others were concerned about educational quality in the District, and still others were concerned about the lack of local control. These somewhat disparate concerns stem from the difficulties encountered by the District in the last several years.

Since 2000, Gill's assessment for the GMRSD has increased by \$487,421 or 61% from \$788,658 in 2000 to \$1,276,079 in 2008.<sup>2</sup> Despite the increasing assessments, in January of 2007 the District was declared an "underperforming district" in need of formal state intervention by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. The GMRSD drafted and submitted a "Turnaround Plan" to the Board in January 2008. The original report notes that the towns in the District have increased their annual assessments by an average 9.5% per year over the previous nine years, while state Chapter 70 Aid increased less than 1% per year. The Plan concedes that even after making the tough choice to close Montague Center Elementary School and after joining the state GIC health insurance plan, these two measures would "at best buy [the District]

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<sup>1</sup> See Letter of Selectboard, December 2, 2008

<sup>2</sup> The substantial increase in the school budget has been matched by an increase in other town services, such that the School budget has remained at about fifty percent of Gill's total budget (excluding debt and the Tech school.)

one year or two of modest restoration of educational programming before [the District] is again faced with double digit local assessment increases just to maintain level services budgets,” ([www.gmrtd.org/index.php/superintendentscorner/turnaroundplan](http://www.gmrtd.org/index.php/superintendentscorner/turnaroundplan), Original Turn Around Plan, 4).

The School Committee has been faced with a daunting challenge. It confronts rising nondiscretionary costs including utility and maintenance costs, health care and retirement contributions; increased salary costs that reflect the District’s struggle to provide competitive salaries necessary to attract and retain well-qualified teachers; and declining revenues. During this same period, the student population in the district has declined (see Demographics Chapter). The reduction in student population triggers further reductions in state aid. This cycle of declining revenue, flat state aid, and increasing costs has caused the spiraling increases in the town’s assessments. All too often, voters are informed that even with their increased financial support, the budgets provide only level funded services.

The spiraling cost of education has done much to create an adversarial environment between town government and the District. The FY 2008-2009 budget cycle produced an unusually divisive budget battle between the school district, the towns, and the state. The School Committee set a budget that represented a substantial increase in Gill’s assessment. Both Gill voters and Montague Town Meeting members voted down the budget.<sup>3</sup> This prompted a district-wide meeting (the second year in a row), where voters again voted down various modified budgets. An amended budget was adopted at a second district-wide meeting. This budget was rejected by the school committee, however, which argued that the budget approved by the District meeting would have required significant and devastating cuts at a time when the school was trying to turn the District around and address the loss of students and revenue through school choice. The State Commissioner of Education then moved in and set a budget that resulted in a 5.7% increase in Gill’s assessment from the prior year. Even with the additional funds from the State mandated budget, the School Committee reported that they were still not able to fully implement their Turnaround Plan. The State provided an additional \$10,000 in aid to Gill to help offset the budget increase. Nonetheless, the combined impact of the State mandated school budget and the costs of town services necessitated a Proposition 2 ½ override vote.

In addition to the budgetary woes, some townspeople were concerned with MCAS scores, dropout rates, and the State’s decision to declare GMRSD an “underperforming district” in 2007. Additional concerns focused on the impact of cuts made due to budget constraints beginning in the 2002-2004 fiscal years. Gill Elementary lost its full time principal and had to share a principal with the now-closed Montague Center School. Teachers were laid off, grade levels were combined without associated curriculum development or support, and reading and other specialists were removed from the school. Staff and faculty were laid off throughout the District and programs were cut back. Some of these positions and programs, including the full-time position for principal at Gill Elementary, have since been reinstated. But the cuts were not without cost to the reputation of the District. There was a sharp increase in the numbers of children “choicing out” of the District as many families chose to educate their children elsewhere. The District now loses over one million dollars annually from resident students who attend schools outside District. This loss in state revenue is only partially offset by a smaller number of students who “choice” into the District.

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of this vote, state aid numbers were not yet available, and voters were assured that they would have another chance to address the issue when more information was available.

Finally, townspeople were concerned by the loss of local control occasioned by the Commissioner of Education setting the GMRSD budget in FY 08. Voters were distressed when the state overrode their decisions on a budget that significantly impacted their property tax assessments.<sup>4</sup> The state's decision to label the District "underperforming" in 2007 could also potentially lead to a loss of local control. The state has authority to take control of underperforming districts. In actuality, however, according to GMRSD Interim Superintendent Kenneth Rocke, the State has not exercised this power. Instead, the state has audited the District and provided expertise and assistance to the School Committee and the school's administrators and faculty as the District charts a course to improve its schools and address its weaknesses. The District has received additional grant funding and technical assistance due to its designation as an underperforming school.

The turbulent times at Gill Montague were not the only motivating factors that led the Selectboard and Finance Committee to form a Commission to study Gill's educational options. The state is also applying significant pressure to consider changes in educational structure. State officials have been pressuring Franklin County towns and school districts to find ways to collaborate, economize, and potentially further regionalize their educational institutions. State officials believe the Commonwealth has too many school districts, when compared to states with similar student populations<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, they maintain that school districts in Franklin County are too small. The state contends that consolidating school districts could build "educational capacity" while potentially saving on costs. Assistant Commissioner for Education for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jeff Wulfson, informed the Commission that Gill Montague was too small in its present form. According to Wulfson, school districts would ideally have 5,000 to 6,000 students to be viable and efficient. He maintained that size permits the districts to pay competitive salaries, have adequate staffing and provide extracurricular programs. Franklin County currently has nine school systems, with a total combined student population of approximately 10,000 students. He noted that the State is encouraging Franklin County communities to work together to design a "solution" that addresses the Commonwealth's concerns. He and Senator Rosenberg have each cautioned that if the towns and school districts cannot fashion changes that increase efficiency and capacity, the Commonwealth will have to impose its own "solution"<sup>6</sup>.

In an effort to find a local solution, local legislators formed the Franklin County Public Education Study Group to "explore ways to make education in Franklin County sustainable," (<http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/>). The Study Group is composed of state legislators representing communities within Franklin County and Franklin County superintendents and local officials<sup>7</sup>. It is chaired by Bob Pura, the President of Greenfield Community College. The Study Group obtained grant funding for studies of collaboration/consolidation options for school

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<sup>4</sup> This distress was only exacerbated when the Associate Commissioner of Education for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced that if the towns and school committee failed to come to an agreement for the upcoming FY09-10 school district budget by July 1, 2009, the state would move in to set a budget, which would likely be adopted as the final budget.

<sup>5</sup> Assistant Commissioner Wulfson likens Massachusetts to Maryland. He notes that while Maryland has 26 school districts, Massachusetts has 325.

<sup>6</sup> In nearby Maine, the school districts were forced to consolidate. The Maine Governor is seeking to shrink the states number of school districts from 260 to 80. *See*

[http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec\\_final\\_4\\_3\\_09.pdf](http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec_final_4_3_09.pdf), page 14.

<sup>7</sup> Gill Selectboard member Ann Banash is a participating member of this Committee.

systems within Franklin County. Most recently, NESDEC (New England School Development Council) published its study detailing potential savings that could be realized under various consolidation plans. The NESDEC study finds that 2.79 million dollars could be saved if the county schools were governed by one county school committee, with one superintendent, and assistants for academic, technical and business operations.<sup>8</sup> Consolidating to three districts (East, West and Technical School) would purportedly save 1.7 million dollars.<sup>9</sup> Consolidating to six districts would purportedly save 852 thousand dollars.<sup>10</sup> The study notes that high schools of 400-800 students enjoy good graduation rates, attendance, and family support. Turners Falls High School has 318 students enrolled for the in the FY 2008-2009 school year. Pioneer has 309 high school students, Greenfield has 393, Mohawk has 373, Mahar has 495 and Athol has 456.<sup>11</sup> The study finds that school districts with between 3,000 and 5,000 students are the most efficient and economical. The study also notes that focus groups of stakeholders revealed strong support for small schools, but some openness to consider consolidation.<sup>12</sup>

## **II. EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS**

The Commission was asked to look into the feasibility and ramifications of staying in the GMRSD as well as leaving the District and either operating our own schools, tuitioning our students to other schools, or joining another district. Research revealed that operating our own schools or tuitioning our students are not politically feasible choices at this time. Staying in the District is clearly an option. Nonetheless, the State has made it clear that maintaining the status quo is not an option. GMRSD is under significant pressure to change. This report lists some of the changes under consideration. The final option considered is whether to leave the district and join another. The report delineates the steps necessary to further study and implement this option.

### **OPTION A: STAY IN GMRSD**

#### **1. CHANGES THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MAY CONSIDER**

##### **a) Collaboration**

One avenue for change that the School Committee is currently studying involves collaboration with other school systems in the County to provide efficiency and economies of scale. The School Committee has had several meetings with the Greenfield School Committee and officials to discuss possible collaboration on issues ranging from transportation and bookkeeping to special education. The School Committee is also exploring a relationship with the Hampshire Educational Collaborative, or forming a satellite with them, to address similar issues. Outgoing Interim Superintendent Kenneth Rocke believes that “regional educational

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<sup>8</sup> See [http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec\\_final\\_4\\_3\\_09.pdf](http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec_final_4_3_09.pdf) at page 24.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec\\_final\\_4\\_3\\_09.pdf](http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec_final_4_3_09.pdf) at page 25.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec\\_final\\_4\\_3\\_09.pdf](http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec_final_4_3_09.pdf) at page 26.

<sup>11</sup> Enrollment data can be downloaded at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/?yr=0809>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec\\_final\\_4\\_3\\_09.pdf](http://www.franklincountyeducation.info/webdocs/nesdec_final_4_3_09.pdf) at page 8.

collaboration seems to provide the most promising avenue for achieving positive educational change linked with savings in operational cost.”<sup>13</sup>

#### **b) Superintendency Union**

Changes could also take the form of sharing a superintendent with other Districts. Unlike consolidation with another district, sharing a superintendent by creating a superintendency union does not require the approval by Town Meeting or the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.<sup>14</sup> In a superintendency union, the local school committee retains control over individual budgets, school buildings and bargaining. The union school committee hires the superintendent and decides on his/her salary.

#### **c) Consolidation with another School District/ Adding Towns to the District**

Change could also take the form of consolidating our district with another school district, or adding additional towns to our district. Consolidating two school districts or adding towns to the existing district would require negotiating a new District Agreement, approval of all the member towns in the proposed new district, and the approval of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (603 CMR 41.03, MGL c. 71 §§ 14, 14A).

Union 28 towns including Wendell and Erving have come under pressure from the State to join a school district. GMRSD is a district they could consider. Greenfield is also facing pressure to regionalize or collaborate.<sup>15</sup> Currently Erving is not a member of our district, but pays tuition for its students to attend our middle School and high School. Presumably, it would be financially advantageous to the GMRSD if Erving joined the District in that Erving would likely pay more as a member than it currently pays in tuition. Erving would gain a role in governance of the district, in that it would have a voting position on the school committee (it currently has two non-voting representatives who attend regular School Committee meetings and are allowed input into deliberative processes). This may add to the complexity of passing a District budget, as Erving’s Town Meeting would also vote on the District budget.

Another option for change would be consolidating the GMRSD with another school district. The Gill Montague Regional School Committee recently voted to initiate discussions about possible consolidation with the Pioneer Valley Regional School District. An initial meeting is expected to be scheduled soon. There are obvious benefits to the two districts – through the elimination of school choice penalties and potential savings from consolidating administrative positions. Obviously, there are huge logistical issues involved, not the least of which concern school governance issues and determining the configuration of the two high schools. It remains to be seen whether all of the affected towns will embrace the concept of a larger school district. Pioneer has established a task force to explore its options and engage in talks with interested towns and districts.

#### **d) Innovative Approaches**

In an effort to improve educational quality at Gill Elementary School and/or Turners Falls High School there are some innovative changes that may be considered. Among the possibilities for change are Commonwealth Charter Schools, Horace Mann Charter Schools, and Commonwealth Pilot Schools. A chart comparing some of the aspects of these schools follows. Much of the information for these comparisons was drawn from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)’s websites (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/qanda.html>), and

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<sup>13</sup> See Superintendent’s Budget Statement <http://www.gmrtd.org/index.php/superintendentscorner/budget> ,

<sup>14</sup> M.G.L. c. 71 § 61-64

<sup>15</sup> GMRSD School Committee and officials have met with Greenfield officials on several occasions to discuss possible ways to collaborate. The school committee has been somewhat cool to the idea of sharing a superintendent or regionalizing with Greenfield.



<http://www.doe.mass.edu/redesign/copilot/> ). A more detailed exploration of these options may require a separate planning committee(s).

Another developing option is Governor Patrick's recently proposed Readiness Schools as a part of his Readiness Project (<http://www.mass.gov/Eeoe/docs/ma-edplan-finalrev1.pdf> ). Though still mostly conceptual in nature, Readiness Schools are modeled largely after Pilot Schools. The defining feature of these schools, and charter schools, too, for that matter, is a change in governance structure. Decision-making power is shifted from district school committees overseeing all the schools in the district to individual councils, or boards, of individual schools. A report posted on the DESE website from The Boston Foundation, "Informing the Debate: Comparing Boston's Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools"

([http://tbf.org/uploadedFiles/tbforg/Utility\\_Navigation/Multimedia\\_Library/Reports/InformingTheDebate\\_Final.pdf](http://tbf.org/uploadedFiles/tbforg/Utility_Navigation/Multimedia_Library/Reports/InformingTheDebate_Final.pdf) ) found that charter and Pilot schools decidedly improved students' academic achievement. This finding suggests that by allowing those who most value the school to be more involved in key decision-making, the link between the governing body and the school community is strengthened, which increases the value each places on the other, and allows the school to be more responsive to its students, thus improving academic achievement and the educational value of the school. Whatever the mechanisms may be, the structure of charter and pilot schools has shown to have large positive effects for the school.

The power to make this change in governance structure is already available to the school community; without even becoming a charter or pilot school. The powers and duties of the School Committee are summarized in MGL c.71§ 37 :“The school committee... shall have the power to select and terminate the superintendent, shall review and approve budgets for public education in the district and shall establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district...” Likewise, MGL c. 71§ 59C describes the powers and duties of individual school councils. “The school council [...] shall assist in the review of the annual school budget and in the formulation of a school improvement plan.” It goes on to say, “Nothing contained in this section shall prevent the school committee from granting a school council additional authority in the area of educational policy” provided that school councils have no authority in collective bargaining. Simply put, there is nothing stopping the GMRSD from putting more decision-making power with the school councils.

The GMRSD already has the ability to implement some of the changes that make charter and pilot schools so successful in improving student achievement. If improving the educational quality of our schools and increasing the value placed on our schools is the goal, then one option to pursue is to empower school councils. In doing this, local control is increased down to the smallest units possible. The school community becomes more involved in setting educational policy for themselves. And the people most familiar with the needs of a particular school have a say in how resources are allocated. There may be some concern about the lack of consistency between schools in letting individual schools set their own policy. But, the aforementioned study suggests that variability between schools can have positive results.



<b>School type:</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Charter</b>	<b>Horace Mann</b>	<b>Pilot</b>
How:	In place	Board of Trustees applies for charter from state Board of Ed.	Board of Trustees applies for charter from state Board of Ed. as well as approval from school committee and teachers union.	Decision by superintendent, school committee, and union leadership to pursue, followed by 2/3 vote of faculty of under performing school.
Governance:	School committee presides over district, hires superintendent. Individual school councils recommend action to district school committee.	Board of Trustees determines policy, budget, educational practices, etc.	Board of Trustees, working within some of the policies of the district school committee, oversees the school.	School council of faculty, parents, and community set mission, curriculum, and policy, as well as approve budget, evaluate principal, and approve working conditions of faculty
Funding:	State Ch.70 aid and local assessments, as well as state and federal grants	State aid, state and federal grants as well as private contributions	Through the local school district receiving no less than it would otherwise. Also may directly receive state and federal grants and private contributions	Within local school district receiving no less than it would otherwise, with authority over spending of funds
Accountability:	State and federal educational laws and standards: NCLB and “Adequate Yearly Progress” based on MCAS	Responsible for producing results set forth in charter as well as following the same state and federal educational standards as other public schools.	Responsible for producing results set forth in charter as well as following the same state and federal educational standards as other public schools.	Same state and federal educational standards as other public schools, and following specific school practices to lift school out of under performing status.
Part of Regional School District?	Yes.	No. Not eligible for school building assistance funds and outside of teachers union	Yes, employees remain part of collective bargaining unit and accrue seniority, but school may be exempt from some agreements.	Yes, employees remain part of collective bargaining unit and accrue seniority, but school may be exempt from some agreements.
Transportation:	Provided by district, mostly reimbursed by state	Provided by sending district similar to School Choice	Provided as part of district	Provided as part of district
Quantitative limits:	N/A	Only 72 may operate in the commonwealth at any one time	Only 48 may operate in the commonwealth at any one time	None. Designed as an alternative for schools labeled “Chronically Under-performing” with student populations between 250 and 450

## **2. CHANGES ALREADY UNDERWAY AT GMRSD**

Aside from changes that may take place in the future, it should also be noted that the School Committee and school officials, faculty and staff have already worked long hours crafting a Turnaround Plan to improve the quality of the District's schools. School officials expect that this hard work will soon be reflected in test scores and achievement, and believe that the District has much to offer to retain students within the District and to attract students from outside the District to "choice in".

Outgoing Interim Superintendent Kenneth Rocke reports that the Gill Montague Regional School District has developed several school improvement initiatives over the past two years, despite the fiscal constraints the District has been operating within. A brief listing would include: district-wide adoption of Responsive Classroom practices; Math Expressions curriculum and teacher coaching for our elementary classrooms; Developmental Designs training for teachers in the middle school; Renzulli Learning, a web-based student-centered group of websites to teach to students' areas of interest and skill; introduction of the Freshman Academy at the high school; Galileo computerized assessment of math and ELA skills at the middle school; district-wide use of the Collins writing system in the elementary grades; Keys to Literacy program in the middle school; Skills Tutor, a computer-based tutorial program for students in the middle school; and Tools of the Mind, an innovative and effective Early Education program.

School officials hope that these efforts will result in significantly improved classroom performance of our students, increased retention of students at every level, and a team of professional educators with the necessary skills and training to assist all students with their learning needs. If successful, achievement levels of students will increase. This in turn could lead to a substantial decrease in numbers of families choosing to send their children to other districts.

## **3. CHANGES TO CONSIDER IN THE DISTRICT AGREEMENT**

When the District Agreement was first ratified, inter-district and intra-district school choice did not exist. Educational Reform had not yet been enacted – which brought changes to the way each town's share of the school assessment is calculated. Students attended community schools, and the District was not running a pre-kindergarten/kindergarten program at Hillcrest Elementary.

Today, 44% of the students attending Gill Elementary school are not residents of the Town. Nonetheless, the town of Gill is entirely responsible for the costs of any capital improvement at that school. Currently the school has an aging boiler and floors that need replacement. It seems inequitable for Gill to shoulder the entire burden of these expenses, when the elementary school is educating many Montague youth and brings in hundreds of thousands of dollars of school choice revenue for the District.

Today, under formulas created by the State under Educational Reform, Gill is being asked to shoulder more than its proportional share of the GMRSD budget, despite our District Agreement, which provides that operational costs are assessed according the percentage of district students attending from each town. Gill may want to encourage Montague and the School Committee to adopt an alternative assessment method (as is used by the towns in the

Amherst School District) that would ensure Gill pays only its proportional share. Unfortunately, both Towns must vote annually to accept the alternative assessment formula.

Today, the District pays for the operation of the Hillcrest Elementary School, which houses only a Pre-Kindergarten and a Kindergarten program. The District has signed a three-year contract for a full time principal for this school. Gill does not have a pre-kindergarten program, and only five Gill students attend the Hillcrest school. It is difficult to assess how much of the cost of the pre-kindergarten program is actually covered by the District, as it is a fee-based program that also receives grant funds. Gill and the School Committee should however, review this carefully to determine if Gill is being assessed for this program, and to determine if Gill residents have equal access to this program.

The Town might also seek to ensure greater local control over the elementary school, by seeking amendments in the Agreement that recognize the authority of School Community Councils to make certain decisions, along the lines suggested by the Governor's Readiness Project, and Pilot Schools. This may be particularly important if the District considers consolidation with other districts or enters into contracts for shared superintendents.

Finally, the Town might consider changes to the composition of the school committee and changes to its role. Currently, the Agreement provides for three of the nine-member school committee to come from the Town of Gill. All School Committee members are elected by a vote of the entire school district. In other districts, member towns have similar numbers of School Committee members, irrespective of the relative populations of the member towns. Currently, our School Committee members diligently endure an exhausting schedule of frequent and long meetings. Other School Committees meet less often and for shorter periods. The Town, together with the School Committee, should explore the role of our school committee, how to make it more efficient, and what decisions should be delegated to local school community councils.

## **OPTION B: LEAVE GMRSD**

### **1. Remove Gill Elementary From The District and/or Tuition High School Students**

As noted above, the state is seeking to improve educational capacity and economies of scale by collaboration and/or consolidation of school districts. The state wants fewer and bigger school districts. The state would not therefore look favorably on a town's decision to leave a regional school district and operate its own elementary school. The state also frowns on arrangements where towns tuition their children to various high schools, without joining a district. State approval is required to leave an existing school district. Assistant Commissioner Wulfson reported that it was highly unlikely that the State would approve Gill's withdrawal from the GMRSD if Gill planned to run its own elementary school, or if Gill planned to tuition its children to various high schools. Under the present administration then, these are not viable options.

### **2. Leave Gill Montague And Join Another District**

The Commission investigated the option of leaving Gill Montague and joining the Pioneer Valley Regional School District. The co-chairs had preliminary discussions with the Pioneer Valley Superintendent and two school board chairs. The Pioneer High School currently has 535 students grade 7-12. It is designed to accommodate 650 students and thus has room for more students. It currently has 145 school choice students (24 from Gill) and 48

tuition students from Vernon, Vermont. It has capacity to add Gill as a member town. This would be advantageous to Pioneer, in that it would receive more from a District resident student than it does from school choice students. Since our meeting, Pioneer has been approached by several other towns who are exploring the potential of joining the Pioneer District (Wendell, Erving, and New Salem). Most recently, the Gill Montague Regional School District approached Pioneer to discuss possible consolidation. Pioneer has formed a task force to address potential suitors.

**a) Procedural Hurdles to Leave the District**

The process for withdrawing entirely from the K-12 Gill Montague Regional School District is outlined in Section IX of the Agreement Between the Towns of Montague and Gill with Respect to the formation of a Regional School District (hereinafter referred to as “the Agreement”). First, the Town must vote at Town Meeting to request that the Gill Montague Regional School Committee draw up amendments to the Agreement, setting forth the terms of withdrawal. The Agreement does not specify what portion of the Town Meeting must approve such an article—presumably a simple majority vote of Town Meeting voters would suffice.

Once the G-M School Committee drafts the appropriate amendments, the School Committee sends the proposed amendments to the selectboard of **each** town (Gill and Montague). The Selectboard puts the amendments on the warrant for each town’s Town Meeting. **Both** towns must approve the amendments by a simple majority vote for the amendments to take effect and for withdrawal to occur.

In addition to complying with the Agreement, the town must also obtain approval from the Commissioner of Education in order to reorganize an existing school district or join another (603 CMR 41.03 (2)). In order to obtain approval from the Commissioner, the involved towns must each form regional school district planning committees, which together form a regional school planning board. The board studies the “fiscal and educational advisability” of establishing a regional school district, drafts a plan for operation, control, and financing of the schools, and drafts a proposed district agreement. This agreement is then submitted to the Department of Education for its approval, and then to the several towns for their acceptance (see attached flow chart).

State regulations require a “reorganization needs conference” in order to reorganize an existing regional school district. The Department of Education convenes a reorganization needs conference upon a written request of a regional school district planning board (603 CMR 41.02).<sup>16</sup> The conference reviews a long-range plan that addresses the expected impact of reorganization. The Department evaluates the plan by considering its compliance with state and federal law and its potential for enhancing learning opportunities and improving student performance. If the Department eventually approves the plan, it then directs the regional school district planning board to draft a district agreement, or to draft an amendment to the existing district agreement (in the case of an expansion to an existing District) (603 CMR 41.03).

A new member may be admitted to a district as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, provided that the towns and the Commissioner have all approved the admission or withdrawal by December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous year (603 CMR 41.03 (2)). The agreement cannot be submitted to the Commissioner,

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<sup>16</sup> The regulation could be interpreted to require the reorganization needs conference only when expanding a district or creating a new district. Arguably, this conference is not required when leaving a regional district without forming a new district. As the DESE has informed the Gill Education Committee that the state will not fund Gill as its own school district, the town can only leave Gill Montague if it joins another district. Thus, any change will need to be blessed by a reorganization needs conference.

until all the participating towns have approved the amended agreement (603 CMR 41.03(3)). The decision of the Commissioner is final.

It is apparent that Gill must work in concert with Montague – even if it ultimately decides it wants to leave the School District, as Montague voters must approve the dissolution. Moreover, the State has warned that it is unlikely to approve a move for Gill without a plan for Montague. The State will not look favorably on a plan that leaves Montague in a smaller school system.

#### **b) Financial Implications of Leaving the District**

The Gill Commission was asked to review the financial ramifications of leaving Gill Montague to join another district. The District Agreement leaves several critical issues concerning dissolution unanswered. It does not spell out how the District's assets would be distributed among the member towns. Thus, it is unclear who would own the high school/middle school building that is currently owned by the District. It is unclear who would own everything from the desks to the textbooks if the District dissolved. Of critical importance, the Agreement does not dictate answers to a myriad of questions concerning the District's contractual obligations. Teacher's retirement, health care benefits, and rights under their contracts would need to be studied. These critical questions must be answered before voters can make an informed choice about whether it makes financial sense to leave the District. Under Section 9 of the District Agreement, the voters can pursue answers to these questions by voting to request the School Committee to draw up an amendment to the Agreement setting forth the terms under which the Town may withdraw from the District. Until the amendments of withdrawal are drafted, the cost of dissolution cannot be fairly calculated.

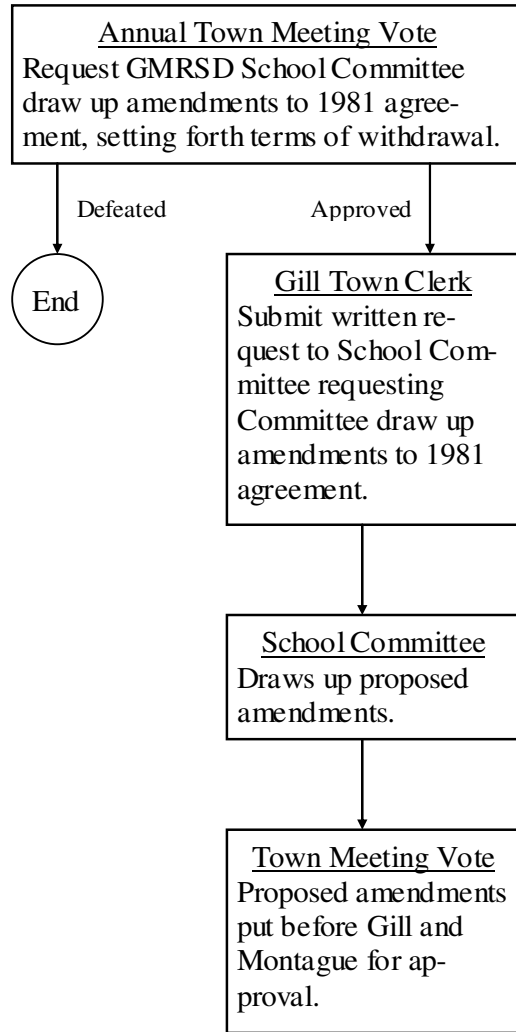
The District Agreement does spell out quite clearly that Gill would remain liable on any outstanding indebtedness existing at the time of withdrawal. Gill is liable for 14% of the District's debt for the renovations to the middle school/high school. Unless restructured, this debt will be paid off over the next seventeen years, with the final payment due in May of 2026. The debt plus interest that remains as of June 1, 2009 is \$2,503,674. Gill's share of this debt is \$350,514. The District Agreement does not, however, spell out who will own the District's buildings– i.e. the high school and middle school building, and what the town owning the building after dissolution will pay the other town for that town's share of the equity in the building. This issue would have to be negotiated and could potentially offset debt obligations.

The state has only a few precedents for dissolving school districts, and some of these cases have come to look like very bad divorces. Given Gill's historic ties to Montague, we would want to handle this process with considerable diplomacy and care, so as not to poison an important and valued relationship. If Gill is truly interested in studying all its educational options, voters at town meeting would need to vote to ask the School committee to draw up articles for withdrawal. This vote should be taken with the understanding it is **not** a vote to withdraw from the district, but only a vote to obtain critical information through negotiations with the District. The vote puts the onus on the school committee to study the issues involved in dissolution and draft proposed amendments. Once the information is in hand, the matter would come back to Town Meeting, and voters could determine if it made financial and educational sense to separate.

It should be noted that withdrawing from the district could have far ranging implications for our district's teachers and staff. Input was sought from the teachers, and their concerns are summarized in an addendum to this report.

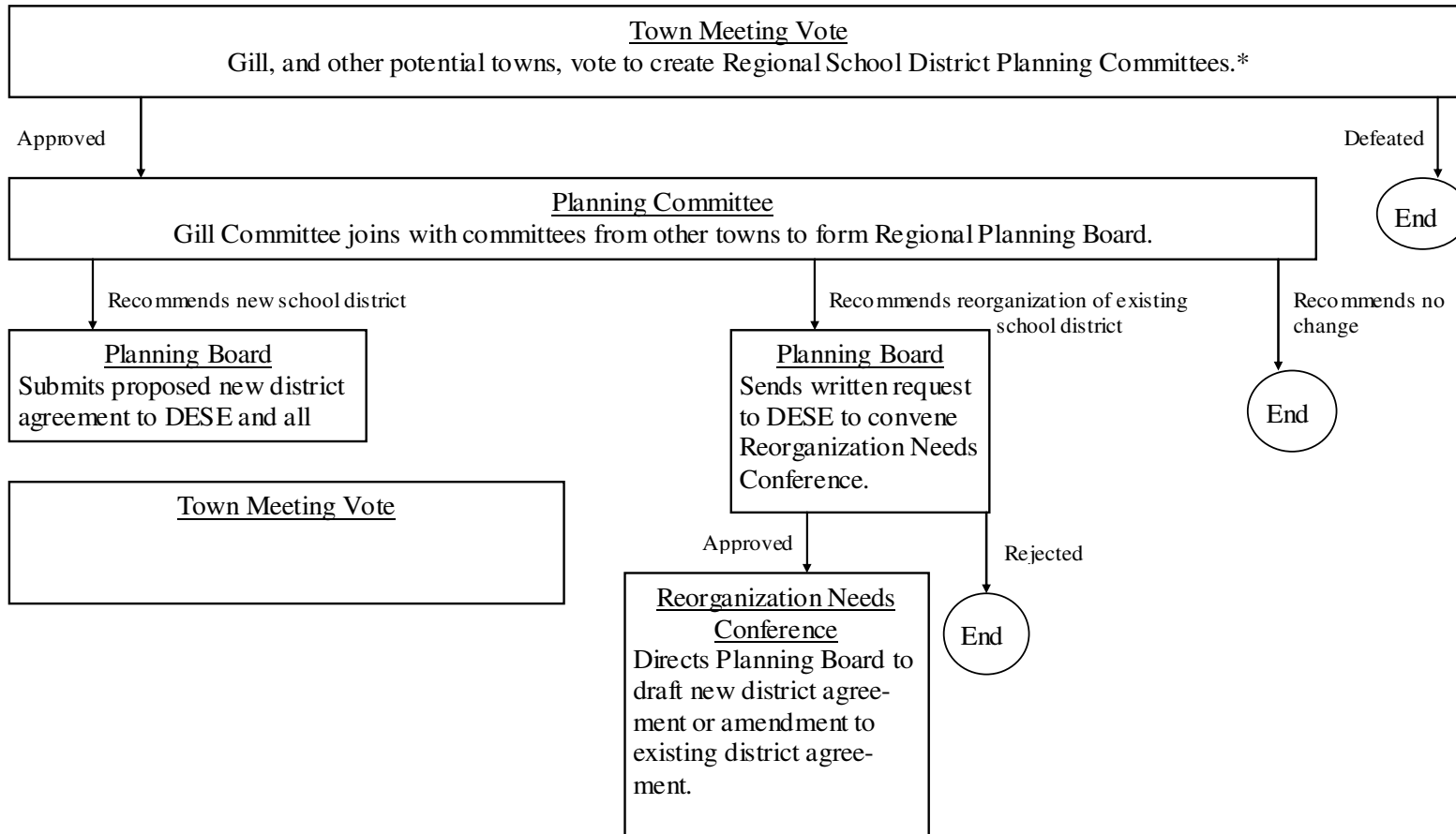
The remainder of this report will summarize the information collected by the Gill Education Commission at the request of the Selectboard and Finance Committee. It is hoped that this information is useful in identifying the educational options available to the Town. It does not purport to detail all the benefits and costs associated with each option, as this was simply not possible in the three months the Commission was given.

Process for Withdrawing from the Gill Montague Regional School District\*



\*It makes the most sense to have this process happen concurrently with the process for joining another district or reorganizing the Gill Montague District (see page 2).

Process for Joining Another District or Reorganizing the Gill Montague District





## **HISTORY OF K-12 REGIONALIZATION**

of the Gill-Montague Regional School District (from the file at Gill Town Hall)

In October 1978 the Gill Board of Selectmen expressed interest in full K-12 regionalization having regionalized for grades 7-12 in 1970-71. In light of the failure of past initiatives for regionalization, the Superintendent and School Committee requested that true community interest be assessed and later agreed to meetings on the topic. Budget comparisons in March of 1980 indicated that state benefits for regionalization were currently at \$1,242,978 and could be increased by \$1,747,198 by regionalizing at the elementary level. At this time a study committee was formed with members from the school committee, Montague, and Gill.

Topics addressed in the committee's report include the financial benefits through the Ch. 492 regionalization laws, and administrative functions being shifted from Gill's central office to Montague at no additional cost. A stable situation for teachers would result without mandatory union membership and no changes to accumulated benefits (by MGL). The GMRSD School Committee, with representatives from both towns, would control all schools following a revision of the current 7-12 regional agreement to K-12 regionalization, and town advisory committees would maintain a close contact between the School Committee and elementary school community (similar to current School Community Councils). The curriculum would vary between schools and classrooms, this variance being seen as having educational benefits.

The report summarizes the main reasons for regionalization as 1) financial benefits through state regionalization funds, 2) development potential for program areas, 3) program articulation and coordination, and 4) greater communication.

## **GILL SCHOOL STUDY COMMITTEE JUNE 1, 1992 REPORT**

Over a nine month period, the Study Committee polled townspeople; interviewed educators, teachers, parents, and administrators; visited Gill-Montague schools and other schools; and examined literature on assessing educational quality. This research resulted in a recommendation "to continue to pursue public education as a member of the Gill-Montague Region." The Study Committee found a highly qualified and dedicated staff and principals in a respectful and safe atmosphere in the middle and high schools. Townspeople had expressed concern about "disruptive behavior and a lack of discipline." The schools were found to be underfunded in comparison with the state average which hampered the development of needed programming and broad curriculum offerings and townspeople felt that education should be funded above state average levels. Thus, the Study Committee presented the need to re-think the town's financial responsibilities to the education of their children. Also suggested was the need for Gill parents to be more involved in the educational process and to help children value education by showing "that we value it enough to be active participant." The Study Committee found that the School Committee was perceived to need "more efficiency, responsiveness, creativity, and vision" and needed to "devote more energy to long range planning, taking an active role in such areas as creative financing, coordinating and improving parental involvement, aggressively improving community and public relations, and planning for future growth and facility upkeep." Although not an exhaustive report, the Study Committee also touched on the role of the media, desiring a more objective and informative role by media in reporting events in public schools. In summary, the Study Committee was pleased with the basic education and

called for the administration and School Committee to reach out and accept professional and community support to enrich, enliven, and ensure the quality of education.

## **CURRENT STATUS AND CONDITION OF GILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

As of January 13, 2009, Gill Elementary has two kindergarten classrooms and grades one thru six with a total enrollment of 135 pupils. Only seventy-five of these pupils are from Gill, whereas thirty-two come from Montague. Twenty-eight students choice in to Gill Elementary from out-of-district: twenty-six from Greenfield, one from Warwick, and one from Shutesbury. These out-of-District students bring to the GMRSD a total of approximately \$140,000 per year. Assuming that the intra-district choice students from Montague would otherwise choice out of the District, the total School Choice Dollars being provided to the District by Gill Elementary totals \$300,000.

The children are very well behaved and attentive to the teachers, respectful to each other, and work diligently. This school gives one the sense of a safe environment. The teacher-pupil ratio is just over 16 to 1, assisted by six paraprofessionals and one special education teacher. The school shares specialists with the rest of the District, including instructors in reading, art, music, instrumental music, physical education, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a speech and language therapist, and a school counselor.

Gill Elementary was built in 1955 on a site that invites learning. Improvements since then include an addition of four classrooms in 1986 and window/door replacements in 1994. What's most impressive however is the location—this has to be one of the most ideal locations for a school, with adequate acreage (12.5), shaded areas, and various playground activity sites.

At the upper grades (4, 5, 6) there are the four basic core subjects: Math, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. In Math and Language Arts, textbooks are the same as used in Montague. Other topics required by DESE Frameworks, such as World Languages, are not covered.

### ***Budget***

It is difficult to isolate the cost of running Gill Elementary if the Town of Gill were to assume this task. Specific costs of full-time teachers and on-site administration are available: in FY2009 this was \$947,772. This is an increase over the FY08 cost, which was \$801,018, and amounted to an additional \$146,754. These figures do not include the additional cost for benefits: insurance, out of district costs, SPED tuitions, school choice, charter school, high school debt, Franklin County Technical School assessment, and transportation. Attempting to analyze the GMRSD budget for the above items and taking Gill's ratio of students in the Region (16%) to arrive at a figure proved misleading, as the dollar figures in the GMRSD budget covered K-12 and there is no easy way to isolate Gill's K-6 portion of this value.

Another cost to consider is transportation (see Transportation section, below). Costs are figured on single, double, and triple tiered routes. The present contracted cost is \$241 per day per bus and are doubled tiered – two trips in the morning, two trips in the afternoon with grades 7-12 first then back for grades K-6. For Gill for 180 days this amounts to \$43,380. By comparison, the District figures this value to be closer to \$60,000.

## **COMPARISON OF AREA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

Three School systems/districts were visited and surveyed for the following information in regard to their elementary programs. The same information was requested from each administration, and each was given equal time for presentation. This is a compilation of the information received from the three school systems: Gill-Montague Regional School District, Greenfield Public School System, and Pioneer Valley Regional School District.

### ***Gill-Montague Elementary Schools***

Gill Montague Regional School District has a K through 5/6 grade configuration. The three elementary schools in the District are: Hillcrest, which houses a preschool and kindergarten in Turners Falls; Sheffield, which houses first through fifth grades in Turners Falls; and Gill Elementary, which houses kindergarten through sixth grade in Gill.

The Responsive Classroom approach is practiced K- 6 district wide. Elementary curriculum is consistent district wide. The Math program is Houghton Mifflin's Math Expressions; this program includes teacher coaching and training. Collins Writing Program is used for handwriting and Renzulli Learning is a database enrichment learning system that students can access from school and home. MCAS preparation is done within the classroom setting, with curriculum focused on MCAS guidelines.

Breakfast is served from 8:30-9:00 a.m. Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. Sheffield and Gill Elementary offer the following specials for 30-40 minutes on a weekly basis: Music, Physical Education, Computer Lab, and Library. Gill has "All School Sing" every Tuesday. In grade 5 students are exposed to musical instruments and are offered lessons during the school day. Sheffield offers a before- and after-school program, with enrichment offerings available.

### ***Greenfield Elementary Schools***

The Greenfield Public School System has a K-3/4 elementary configuration with a tuition-based preschool at North Parish School that runs daily with extended hours provided by the YMCA from 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. The two elementary schools currently are: Newton Street School, which houses grades K-3; and Federal Street School, which houses grades K-4. Breakfast is free for all students in both elementary schools. Newton Street School has an extended day learning program, running from 7:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. The extended day includes enrichment programs throughout the day. Federal Street School offers an enrichment program daily after school, from 3:00 p.m. - 3:45 p.m. Elementary school curriculum was unavailable at the time of report, as Greenfield is undergoing much change in coordination and consistency within its elementary schools. Online math and reading enhancement programs have been introduced and are being updated and configured for elementary and middle school grades.

### ***Pioneer Valley Regional School District***

Pioneer Valley Regional School District has a preschool (full day) through sixth grade configuration. The four elementary schools in the district are: Bernardston Elementary School, which houses pre-K – 6 in Bernardston; Northfield Elementary School, which houses Pre K – 6 in Northfield; Pearl Rhodes Elementary School, which houses Pre K – 6 in Leyden; and Warwick Community School, which houses Pre K – 6 in Warwick. Classes begin between 8:45 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. and end between 3:00 p.m. and 3:15 p.m., with a tiered busing schedule.

Breakfast is available before classes begin. The Responsive Classroom approach is practiced on the elementary school level throughout the District. Elementary curriculum is consistent district wide. The writing curriculum is Lucy Calkins Writing for K-3, and Ralph Fletch's TQW (Teaching the Qualities of Writing). The math program is Scott Foresman/TERC Investigations math program. There is a literacy committee district wide. All elementary schools offer the following specials for 30-40 minutes on a weekly basis: Music, Physical Education, Computer Lab, and Library. There is also one music specialist and one vocal specialist who work with all of the students weekly.

PVRSD offers a before- and after-school program in its elementary schools district wide and is programmed around parent need and student interest. The following have been program offerings in the past: band, chorus, peer mediation, jump rope club, drama club, and science and math group. MCAS preparation and tutoring are done in two different ways: in daily course work and curriculum coordination, and with before- and after-school programming for tutoring and some preparation.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### ***Funding/reimbursement***

GMRSD's transportation costs are partially reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as is true for every other regional district in the state. The rate of reimbursement is determined by the Commonwealth on an annual basis. The following is the percentage amounts for the past three fiscal years:

FY 08-- 89.9%  
FY 07-- 90.76%  
FY 06 – 78.08 %

Gill does not pay specifically for its own transportation. Transportation is instead included in the District's operating budget, of which Gill pays a portion partially determined by the number of Gill students versus Montague students in the District.

If Gill left the District, the transportation reimbursement rate would not change as long as Gill continues to be a part of a regional district. Montague, too, would need to be part of a regional district to continue to receive transportation reimbursement through the Commonwealth. State funding would not change if Gill and Montague went to separate regions, or together to a new region. There would only be an impact if either town stood alone. Costs would not differ much if Gill were to move from one school district to another although, at this point, each region awards its own busing contract. GMRSD's contract is currently up for bid. Cost seems to be just about the same from district to district. It is almost impossible to say what will happen across the board if transportation were to be further regionalized countywide.

### ***Other towns***

Erving currently has an agreement with GMRSD to tuition its students to Turners Falls High School. Erving only provides bus transportation to their students who attend Turners Falls High School. If parents choose to send a student to a different high school, it is the parents'

responsibility to transport that student to and from school. Erving contracts with FM Kuzmeskus (with no reimbursement from the Commonwealth).

Transportation does not seem to be the most important piece of the puzzle when parents decide where to educate their children. All but four Montague students that are choosing into Gill Elementary are transported by their parents from Millers Falls, Montague Center, Turners Falls, Montague City, and Lake Pleasant. Absent intra-district choice, these families would have access to District busing to Hillcrest and Sheffield. All of the Students that have choiced in from Greenfield are transported by their parents.

Although transportation does not seem to be a huge factor driving school choice, some school districts do provide an incentive by offering transportation to out-of-district students. Pioneer has made transportation easier for Greenfield students choicing in by creating a bus stop at the beginning of their route at the Yetter's Building in Greenfield.

Although the impact is hard to measure due to the inability to break out exact numbers, it is clear that a large majority of transportation costs are reimbursed to towns that are part of a regional district. That being said, no matter what Gill as a town decides to do, the fiscal ramifications of transportation seem minimal.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS AND SCHOOL CHOICE: RECENT TRENDS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL CONFIGURATION**

### **Overview**

This section summarizes recent trends in demographics of the Town of Gill and attendance of Gill residents at schools in the Gill Montague Regional School District (GMRSD). Numbers of students attending GMRSD has declined across grade levels. Although some of this decline may be due to a declining population, the available evidence suggests that the dominant factor is that families are choosing to send their children to other districts or to private schools. District wide, this fact costs the District well over \$1 million annually in reduced state aid, and has been a significant factor affecting District budgets and educational quality. This chapter assesses the available data on demographics in the community and the town and explores likely causes for the observed patterns. Losses to the district of Gill students occur primarily in the first two years of elementary school, and as students transition from elementary to middle school, and from middle to high school. Most Gill students leaving the District attend Pioneer Valley Regional School District. Numbers attending private and home schools are also a significant factor contributing to reduced state aid.

### ***Introduction***

Student populations have been declining in the Town of Gill, and in the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD), generally. Studies performed for the District have suggested that this trend is a result of demographics and is likely to continue into the foreseeable future. This has significant implications for the future of the District in general, as well as for the options available to Gill. For example, if Gill wished to join a school district that had 50 vacant

seats in their 7-12 grades and Gill typically sends 100 students to this level, then this could preclude that option.

This section summarizes data for the student population of the Town of Gill, and provides some analysis regarding recent trends and their implications for the size of this population today and in the near future.

### ***Population Demographics of the Town of Gill***

Evaluation of demographic trends is complicated by an apparent error in the U.S. Census, from which these trends are estimated. Decadal Census data are presented in Table 1. These data suggest a slow rate of growth over the last four decades. However, the data indicate rapid growth from 1990, followed by a 14% decrease the following decade. Note also that the 1990 Census indicates 670 housing units (up from 484 in 1980), but then only 560 units in 2000. Although the 1990 data are consistent with other towns in the region, it appears that this was an error. The 2000 data are consistent with previous trends and there is no record of a loss of 120 housing units from 1990-2000. From this we conclude that the 1990 data contain an error, perhaps due to duplicate counts. If this is correct, then Gill has experienced steady growth over this period. If, on the other hand, the official data are correct, then a rapid decline has occurred. The weight of evidence appears to favor the former interpretation. To correct for this apparent error, an adjustment factor was calculated based on the midpoint between the 1980 and 2000 estimates. This yields a corrected population estimate of 1311. Taking the ratio of this value to the official estimate produces an adjustment factor of 0.828, by which data from 1990-2000 can be multiplied to produce a revised population estimate for these years.

Demographic trends provide context for understanding recent trends in the number of Gill students attending District schools. It is important to understand that even with a growing population, a small town like Gill is subject to random changes in age distribution, which can cause fluctuations in the size of the student population. The Census data from 1980-2000 shed some light on this issue. The number of children 18 years and younger in this period was 367 in 1980, 414 in 1990, and 352 in 2000. Note, however, that the 1990 value probably reflects an over count; applying the same correction factor used in Table 1, this estimate is adjusted down to 342 children.

The difference between the official and adjusted estimates of the population of Gill is shown in Figure 1. Clearly the uncertainty surrounding the Census data make it difficult to characterize population trends in our community. Because of this we offer two interpretations of attendance trends, based on official and adjusted numbers.

Table 1. Decadal Census data for Town of Gill, MA. Note evident discrepancies from 1980-2000. The combined evidence of census estimates and housing units suggest an over count in 1990. To adjust for this, an adjustment factor was included in formulating revised estimates of population size during the 1990's.

Year	Census Population	Total Housing Units	Adjustment Factor	Revised Estimate
1960	1,203		1	1,203
1970	1,100	361	1	1,100
1980	1,259	484	1	1,259
1990	1,583	670	0.828	1,311
2000	1,363	560	1	1,363

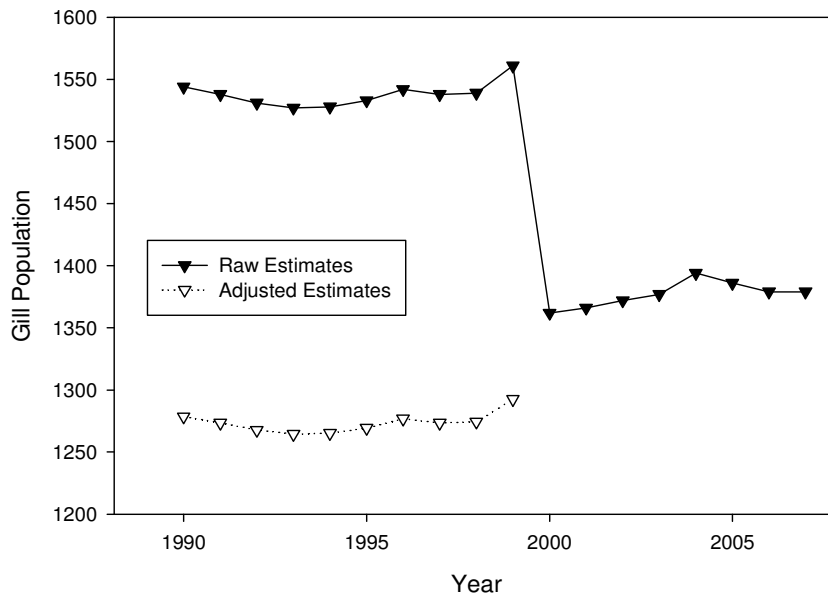


Figure 1. Census data for the Town of Gill, 1990-2007. Inconsistencies identified in Table 2 suggest an error in the estimates from 1990-1999. Adjusted values are included as open triangles; raw estimates are included as filled triangles.

***Trends in Attendance at Gill Elementary***

Since 1996 the population of Gill students has declined by nearly 40%, from 245 in 1998 to 151 in 2007. The relative decline has occurred at both elementary and secondary levels, with the steepest decline happening between 2002 and 2004, a period of dramatic reductions in services offered by the District (Figures 2; Table 2).

But is this decline merely a function of demographic changes in the larger population? As stated previously, this seems unlikely. Even if the Census data are correct, this would only predict a 14% reduction in population, not 40%. Importantly, 1997 marked the beginning of school choice for many schools in this area. Numbers of students choosing both into and out of the district initially increased in proportion, but the trends diverged after 2003; since then the number of students choosing out of the district has continued to increase in both absolute



numbers and relative to the number choosing in. Clearly, a large part of the decline in student population is a result of students choosing to other districts. In addition to school choice, students attending private and home schools can also contribute to a declining student population.

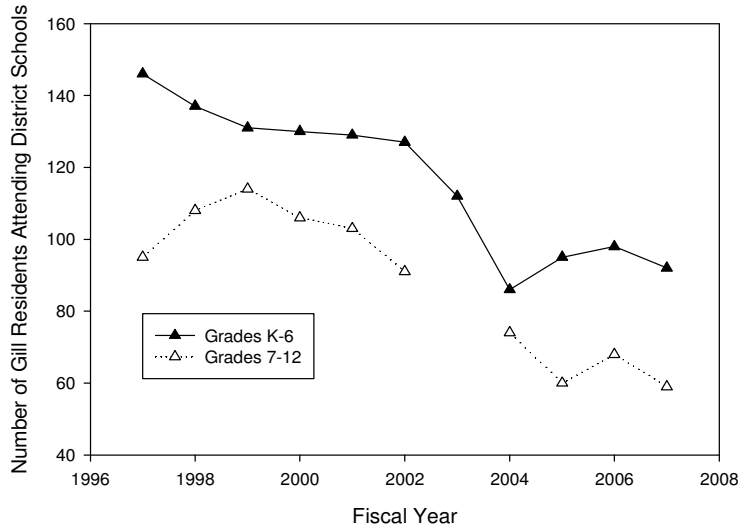


Figure 2. Number of Gill Residents attending GMRSD schools, FY1997 – FY2007. No data were available for the 7-12 grades in 2003.

This pattern of school choice has had a serious impact on the School District. When students choose to other districts, more than \$5,000 of state aid follows that student to his/her new district, and is deducted from the sending district’s budget. In FY2009 the cost to the GMRSD was greater than \$900,000. This is not the entire story, however. This number only indicates students that choose to other public schools. When students attend private schools or homeschool this also leads to reductions in state aid. This is because the Chapter 70 formula, which governs the amount of state aid received, is calculated based on the number of students that matriculate in the district. When students do not attend public schools the District loses, on average, about \$6,000 per student in state aid (more for high school students, slightly less for elementary students).

This leads to a positive feedback loop: as students leave the District, aid decreases and the town’s total commitment increases. School buildings need to be maintained, regardless of the number of students attending, and so the cost per student rises. This forces the District to spend less on education, and the decline in services causes more families to leave the system. All the while, the proportional share of the total budget that must be borne by the local communities increases, leading to resentment and resistance to increasing assessments. This is the situation in which the GMRSD finds itself today, and is a significant motivating factor behind this report.

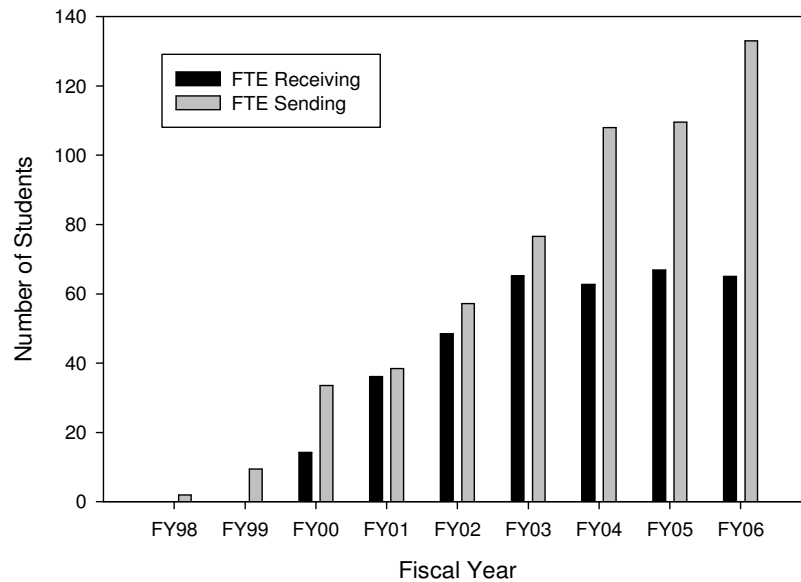


Figure 3. Numbers of students (FTE's) choosing in (Receiving) and out (Sending) of GMRSD.

But what role has Gill played in this spiral of choice? Historically, Gill Elementary was viewed as an excellent school. Since 1997, however, and especially since 2002, this reputation has faltered. In 2003, faced with serious declines in state aid, the District determined that Gill Elementary did not require a full-time principal. At the same time, teachers were laid off or transferred to other schools, classrooms were combined across grade levels without serious commitment to a curriculum and educational strategy that could take advantage of this structure, and reading and math specialists were removed. Similar cuts were made at the secondary level, leading to the declines shown in Figure 2. Almost certainly as a consequence of these cuts, performance of the school also declined. MCAS scores have decreased and Gill has failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress, causing it to be labeled an Underperforming School under the federal No Child Left Behind law.

In an effort to stem the loss of students through school choice, the District amended its agreement to allow students to choose to other schools *within* the District. This move met with some success. In FY2008 the GMRSD closed the Montague Center School. This led to an immediate increase in the number of families exercising this new privilege, and Gill Elementary saw a steep rise in its student body. This was further fueled by similar events in Greenfield—school closures there likewise led to a rapid increase in students choosing in to Gill, from 5 in FY2007 to about 65 in FY2009. As a consequence, in FY2009 Gill Elementary once again has a student body of 135 students, and a full staff to serve those students.

This must be viewed as a positive development for the school; however, there have been side effects of this success that should be of concern to the Gill Community. Specifically, although the school population has recovered, Gill Elementary has become a *de facto* regional school: with only 56% of the students attending actually being Gill residents.

Clearly it is in the interest of both the District and the Town for Gill to maximize the representation of its own students in the District, and at Gill Elementary in particular.

Furthermore, if Gill were to consider joining a different district, it is important that the new district have a sense of the number of students that would likely come from Gill. Because of the high rate of choice-out and students attending private schools, the current number of students under-represents the population. Presently, Gill sends 154 students to the GMRSD, and sends more than 64 (>29% of the total student population) to other schools. Moreover, were Gill to join a different district, it is possible that some students would choice back to the GMRSD. Thus it is not possible to gauge consequences of district realignment on choice without performing a rigorous survey.

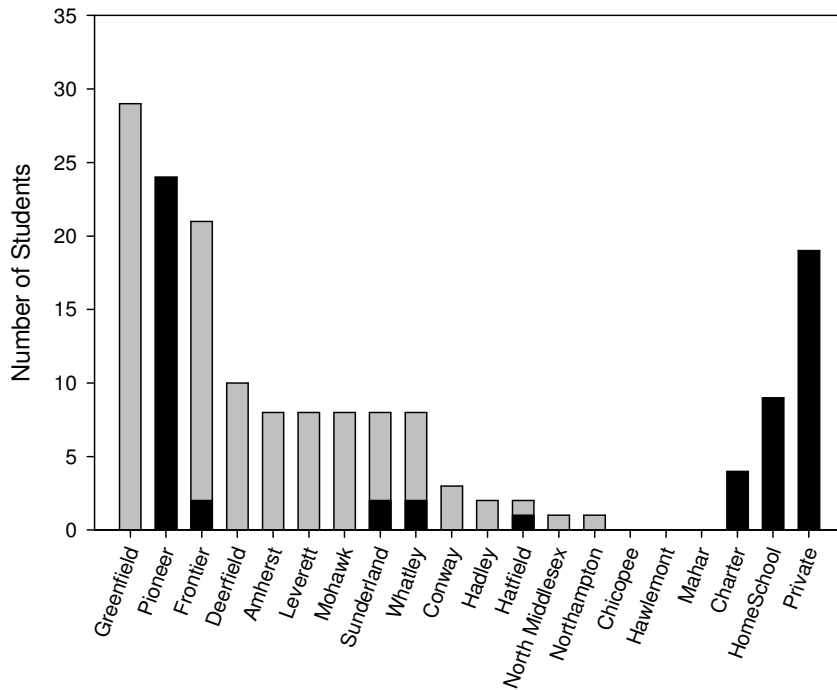


Figure 4. Numbers of students choosing out of the GMRSD by receiving school district. Gray bars represent the entire district in 2006 (current data were unavailable); black bars represent Gill students only and are from the current year. Conservative estimates of numbers of Gill students attending charter, home, and private schools are also included.

The available data for the entire GMRSD do indicate that two districts are consistently the dominant destinations for students choosing out. These are the Greenfield and Pioneer Valley Regional school districts (Figure 4). Geography clearly plays a role in where students choice. All of the students choosing to Pioneer are from Gill, and all of the students choosing to Greenfield are from Montague. Interestingly, these same two towns dominate the source of students choosing in to the District. Although fewer students choice in than out, this still points to a high degree of connectedness among these three school districts.

By evaluating trends in existing data it is possible to infer why and at what grade level people leave the District. For example, from Table 2, it is evident that a broad exodus occurred during 2003 and 2004, and that this exodus occurred at several grade levels. Some grade levels

are more prone to losses than others, however, and where consistent trends occur, it is possible to gauge determining factors. Figure 5 shows average retention between grade levels from 1997-2007. If the number of students increases as a given class moves from one grade level to the next then the retention value is greater than 100%; if the number of students decreases, the retention value is less than 100%. Because this value fluctuates, it is important to identify where mean values are significantly different from 100%. This occurs only at four grade level transitions: Kindergarten to 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

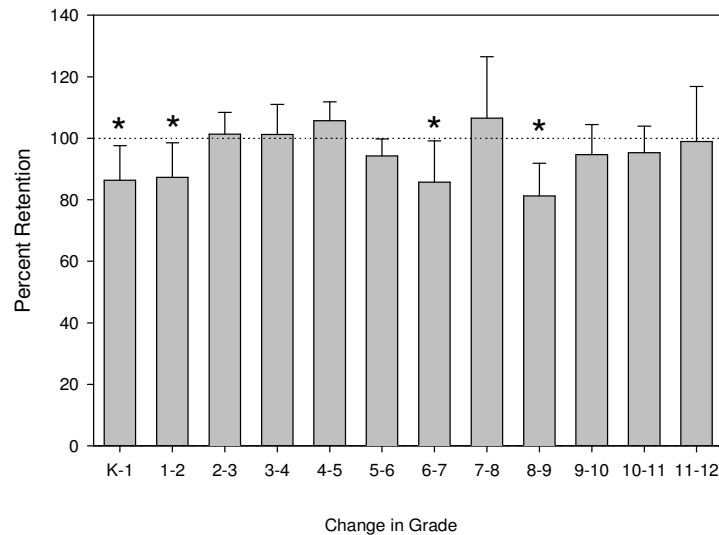


Figure 5. Retention of Gill students in the GMRSD. Data are for all grade levels during the years 1997 – 2007, and so comprise cohorts (Kindergarten class years) from 1986-1996. Bars represent average values, whiskers indicate 95% confidence intervals of the mean. Stars indicate grade levels where retention differs significantly from 100%.

At the middle and high school levels, these changes are probably influenced by the increasing availability of other options to parents (charter and private schools), as well as the fact that children are transitioning at this time anyway, making it a good time to change districts. Particularly troubling are the losses that occur at the early grades, and addressing these losses should be a priority for the District.

Because of the significant impact of losses of children from the District, the District must make a concerted effort to analyze the reasons students leave the District. Exit surveys or interviews should be conducted with the parent of every child who leaves. This sort of analysis can be used to target resources to improve retention and attracting young families to town. To date, no such analysis has been performed by the GMRSD. The information also has relevance to assessing likely consequences of changing the configuration of the School District, and whether alignment with another community will lead to greater retention and service for the Town of Gill.

**Table 2.** Demographics of Gill residents attending GMRSD schools and the Franklin County Tech. School, FY1997 - FY2007. Note the sharp decline in attendance from 2002 – 2004. These occurred across grade levels correspond to a period when services to the schools were dramatically reduced.

	Fiscal Year										
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Grade</b>											
<b>K</b>	26	19	25	25	20	15	17	10	18	19	13
<b>1</b>	20	24	14	21	23	19	12	10	12	15	16
<b>2</b>	17	20	23	12	15	19	14	8	12	10	14
<b>3</b>	15	17	21	21	12	14	18	13	8	14	12
<b>4</b>	17	16	14	21	22	15	14	18	15	8	11
<b>5</b>	25	18	16	14	22	25	16	14	17	16	10
<b>6</b>	26	23	18	16	15	20	21	13	13	16	16
<b>Total K-6</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>7</b>	22	26	24	14	15	15		14	7	13	12
<b>8</b>	17	24	24	21	23	15		15	13	8	12
<b>9</b>	16	14	20	20	17	12		11	12	13	7
<b>10</b>	15	14	17	19	17	16		11	9	12	12
<b>11</b>	13	14	13	20	16	17		10	10	9	10
<b>12</b>	12	16	16	12	15	16		13	9	13	6
<b>Total 7-12</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>91</b>		<b>74</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Tech School</b>											
<b>9</b>	1	1		2	1	2		1	2	5	1
<b>10</b>	1	1	1		1	3		4		2	5
<b>11</b>		1	1	1	1	1		3	4	3	2
<b>12</b>	2	3	2	3	3	1		4	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

**COMPARISONS OF GMRSD SCHOOLS WITH NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS:** Selected District Profiles from the state website: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

**2007-08 Plans of High School Graduates Report**

Plan	Gill-Montague % of District	Pioneer % of District	Greenfield % of District	% of State
4-Year Private College	18	0	11	30
4-Year Public College	14	60	24	27
2-Year Private College	1	0	1	2
2-Year Public College	47	21	49	21
Other Post-Secondary	3	0	0	2
Work	14	18	9	9
Military	3	1	3	2
Other	1	0	0	1
Unknown	0	0	4	6

***Student Indicators (2006-07)***

	Gill-Montague	Pioneer	Greenfield	State
Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate	6.5	3.7	5.1	3.8
Attendance Rate	94.2	96.6	94.1	94.6
Average # of days absent	9.7	5.8	9.9	9.3
In-School Suspension Rate	8.3	5.5	4.7	3.2
Out-of-School Suspension Rate	9.1	3.2	9.7	5.8
Retention Rate (2005-06)	3.2	1.4	2.9	2.5
<a href="#">Graduation Rate</a>	69.1	86.8	68.4	80.9
Truancy Rate	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.4

**Cohort 2008 Graduation Rates: 4-Year Graduation Rate (2008)**

All Students	Gill-Montague	Pioneer	Greenfield
# in Cohort	116	84	139
% Graduated	64.7	88.1	74.8
% Dropped out	19.8	6.0	12.2

**2007 Per Pupil Expenditures Report--TOTAL EXPENDITURES Function**

(Per Pupil Expenditures are calculated by dividing a district's operating costs by its average pupil membership.)

Function	Gill-Montague			Pioneer			Greenfield			State
	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil
Admin.	563,255	3.09	484	400,858	2.84	389	843,174	3.34	471	401
Instructional Leadership	1,050,766	5.77	\$902	826,296	5.85	801	1,654,770	6.55	924	770
Classroom & Specialist Teachers	5,507,448	30.23	4,728	4,705,872	33.29	4,563	7,860,412	31.13	4,388	4,514
Other Teaching Services	1,173,331	6.44	1,007	1,341,973	9.49	1,301	1,549,794	6.14	865	819
Professional Development	130,967	0.72	112	140,149	0.99	136	61,024	0.24	34	222
Instructional Materials, Equipment & Technology	701,755	3.85	602	632,717	4.48	614	356,109	1.41	199	356
Guidance, Counseling & Testing	475,256	2.61	408	290,500	2.06	282	187,698	0.74	105	328
Pupil Services	1,374,046	7.54	1,180	1,397,062	9.88	1,355	2,001,486	7.93	1,117	1,080
Operations &	1,314,261	7.21	1,128	988,125	6.99	958	1,870,966	7.41	1,044	1,014



Function	Gill-Montague			Pioneer			Greenfield			State
	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil
Maintenance										
Insurance, Retirement Programs & Other	3,325,034	18.25	2,854	2,284,977	16.16	2,216	5,042,354	19.97	2,815	1,928
Payments To Out-Of- District Sch.	2,601,363	14.28	12,702	1,127,499	7.98	17,319	3,819,537	15.13	10,938	19,341
TOTAL EXPEND.	18,217,482	100.	13,300	14,136,028	100.	12,893	25,247,324	100	11,795	11,858

**Teacher Data (2007-08)**

	Gill-Montague	Pioneer	Greenfield	State
Total # of Teachers	89	88	142	70,717
% of Teachers Licensed in Teaching Assignment	96.1	95.9	95.9	95.8
Total # of Classes in Core Academic Areas	363	408	602	275,949
% of Core Academic Classes Taught by Teachers Who are Highly Qualified	85.4	95.1	94.0	95.7
Student/Teacher Ratio	12.6 to 1	12.6 to 1	12.0 to 1	13.6 to 1

**Teacher Salaries**

2007	Gill-Montague	Pioneer	Greenfield	State
Salary Totals	5,507,448	\$4,774,576	7,860,412	\$4,298,145,779
Average Salary	54,855	\$47,794	49,343	\$58,257
FTE Count	100.4	99.9	159.3	73,779.0

**Technology (2006-07)**

	Gill-Montague	Pioneer	Greenfield	State
Students per "modern" Computer	2.1	2.1	3.1	3.4
Classrooms on the Internet (%)	100.0	97.7	94.4	98.7

## Gill-Montague - 2008 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data

A district will be newly identified for improvement if it fails to make AYP in the same subject area and all grade-spans, for students in the aggregate or any subgroup, for two consecutive years. A district will have no accountability status if it makes AYP in the same subject area for at least one grade-span for two consecutive years.

District: Gill-Montague (06740000)

Title I District: Yes

### ***2008 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data - Summary***

	<u>NCLB Accountability Status</u>	<u>Performance Rating</u>	<u>Improvement Rating</u>
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	No Status	High	No Change
MATHEMATICS	No Status	Low	No Change

### ***2008 AYP By Grade Level***

		2007	2008	2008 Subgroups Not Making AYP
<b>English Language Arts</b>				
Grades 3-5	Aggregate	No	Yes	
	All Subgroups	No	Yes	
Grades 6-8	Aggregate	Yes	No	White -Special Education -Low Income
	All Subgroups	Yes	No	
Grades 9-12	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	
	All Subgroups	Yes	Yes	
<b>Mathematics</b>				
Grades 3-5	Aggregate	No	No	White -Low Income -
	All Subgroups	No	No	
Grades 6-8	Aggregate	Yes	No	White -Special Education -Low Income
	All Subgroups	No	No	
Grades 9-12	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	
	All Subgroups	Yes	Yes	

**AYP History (District-Wide)**

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		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	NCLB Accountability Status
ELA	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Status
	All Subgroups	-	-	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
MATH	Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Status
	All Subgroups	-	-	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	

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**MCAS Tests of Spring 2008:** Percent of Students at Each Performance Level for Gill-Montague. Performance level percentages are not calculated if student group less than 10. Data Last Updated on September 24, 2008.

Grade and Subject	Advanced/ Above Proficient		Proficient		Needs Improvement		Warning/ Failing		Students Included	CPI
	District	State	District	State	District	State	District	State		
	<b>Grade 03</b>									
Reading	5	15	51	41	37	33	7	11	76	83.6
Math	12	25	39	36	33	25	16	14	76	78.0
<b>Grade 04</b>										
English Lang. Arts	5	8	33	41	50	39	12	13	58	73.3
Math	5	20	17	29	48	38	29	13	58	57.3
<b>Grade 05</b>										
English Lang. Arts	4	13	40	48	46	30	11	8	85	76.8
Math	1	22	21	30	43	30	35	17	82	57.0
Science & Tech.	1	17	24	33	62	38	12	12	82	65.2
<b>Grade 06</b>										
English Lang. Arts	1	15	49	52	37	24	13	8	68	78.7
Math	11	23	20	33	32	26	38	18	66	62.1
<b>Grade 07</b>										
English Lang. Arts	5	12	59	57	28	23	8	8	107	86.0
Math	8	15	23	32	28	29	41	24	111	58.8
<b>Grade 08</b>										
English Lang. Arts	6	12	60	63	23	18	11	7	93	84.1
Math	13	19	30	30	27	27	30	24	93	66.4
Science & Tech.	1	3	42	36	42	39	14	22	90	72.2
<b>Grade 10</b>										
English Lang. Arts	8	23	58	51	27	21	8	4	90	86.7
Math	36	43	29	29	20	19	15	9	89	85.1
Science & Tech.	5	14	46	43	38	31	11	12	74	80.7

**MCAS Annual Comparisons –Gill Montague Regional School District**

**GRADE 10**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>											
ADVANCED	3	3	10	14	12	12	12	19	8	5	8
PROFICIENT	48	27	45	46	38	41	47	59	42	61	58
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	34	47	24	29	31	35	25	16	40	31	27
FAILING	15	24	21	10	18	12	15	6	9	3	8
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>											
ADVANCED	2	3	10	10	8	9	22	35	29	28	36
PROFICIENT	17	16	19	43	24	30	23	38	30	41	29
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	38	30	32	29	37	35	33	17	27	26	20
FAILING	43	51	39	17	31	27	21	10	13	5	15
<b>SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY</b>											
ADVANCED	2	0	1	No test administered in these years							5
PROFICIENT	18	21	22	No test administered in these years							46
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	63	46	53	No test administered in these years							38
FAILING	17	33	23	No test administered in these years							11

**GRADE 08**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>												
ADVANCED	1	1	4	2	No test administered in these years				2	10	6	
PROFICIENT	50	59	55	50					63	62	60	
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	34	32	29	33					19	19	23	
FAILING	14	7	12	16					16	9	11	
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>												
ADVANCED	8	1	6	3	2	3	2	3	3	16	13	
PROFICIENT	22	29	23	14	20	23	21	12	16	36	30	
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	26	40	33	41	34	39	32	38	32	22	27	
FAILING	45	30	38	42	44	34	44	47	50	27	30	
<b>SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY</b>												
ADVANCED	0	3	3	No test administered in these years			2	2	1	0	3	1
PROFICIENT	19	25	26				37	21	20	29	38	42
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	36	29	33				37	39	46	49	42	42
FAILING	45	43	38				24	38	33	23	17	14

**GRADE 07**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>											
ADVANCED	No test administered in these years			2	8	6	3	0	2	3	5
PROFICIENT				38	55	52	59	46	56	53	59
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT				46	32	36	32	44	32	36	28
FAILING				14	5	7	7	11	9	8	8
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>											
ADVANCED	No test administered in these years								2	13	8
PROFICIENT									23	20	23
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT									37	30	28
FAILING									37	37	41



**GRADE 06**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>											
ADVANCED			No test administered in these years						9	6	1
PROFICIENT									46	54	49
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT									37	31	37
FAILING									8	9	13
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>											
ADVANCED				10	2	10	13	3	6	9	11
PROFICIENT				19	24	30	19	37	26	27	20
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT				32	30	30	38	28	31	36	32
FAILING				39	45	30	31	32	37	27	38

**GRADE 05**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>											
ADVANCED			No test administered in these years						8	4	4
PROFICIENT									39	33	40
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT									40	44	46
FAILING									14	19	11
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>											
ADVANCED			No test administered in these years						3	6	1
PROFICIENT									18	13	21
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT									35	42	43
FAILING									44	39	35
<b>SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY</b>											
ADVANCED		No test administered these years				9	16	11	9	4	1
PROFICIENT						28	28	30	18	25	24
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT						51	40	39	50	45	62
FAILING						12	16	20	22	25	12

**GRADE 04**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>											
ADVANCED	0	1	0	1	5	7	4	1	1	0	5
PROFICIENT	6	12	7	34	42	43	39	30	33	36	33
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	60	65	71	51	38	42	46	54	42	51	50
FAILING	34	21	22	14	15	9	11	14	23	14	12
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>											
ADVANCED	4	7	4	3	6	8	8	2	6	2	5
PROFICIENT	17	12	23	12	18	30	25	15	14	20	17
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	34	46	43	55	53	44	44	53	49	49	48
FAILING	45	36	30	30	24	18	24	29	32	28	29

**GRADE 03**

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	<b>GRADE 03 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>										
<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>											
ABOVE PROFICIENT	No test administered in			NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6	7	5
PROFICIENT	these years			55	62	72	52	52	44	44	51
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT				36	32	20	33	36	43	43	37
FAILING				9	6	8	15	12	8	6	7
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>											
ABOVE PROFICIENT			No test administered in these years						2	12	12
PROFICIENT									36	26	39
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT									36	37	33
FAILING									26	25	16

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**Comparative MCAS Scores for Pioneer Regional School District and Greenfield Public Schools**

**GRADE 10**

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>Pioneer</b>				<b>Greenfield</b>			
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>								
ADVANCED	28	25	16	27	22	7	13	13
PROFICIENT	49	60	66	58	38	59	43	59
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	21	12	18	13	27	28	33	24
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>								
ADVANCED	36	54	44	39	33	33	28	45
PROFICIENT	31	26	34	43	28	30	32	25
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	23	18	20	11	23	25	27	22
FAILING	11	2	2	7	16	12	13	8
<b>SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY</b>								
ADVANCED				20				12
PROFICIENT				51				53
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT				24				23
FAILING				5				12

**GRADE 08**

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	<b>Pioneer</b>				<b>Greenfield</b>			
<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>								
ADVANCED		7	6	13		6	3	5
PROFICIENT		73	55	54		62	58	51
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT		18	33	24		19	29	29
FAILING		2	6	9		13	10	15
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>								
ADVANCED	8	8	4	16	8	9	11	12
PROFICIENT	18	30	20	30	20	28	18	20
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	41	30	37	32	39	27	34	30
FAILING	33	32	39	22	33	35	37	37
<b>SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY</b>								
ADVANCED	2	0	0	0	3	2	2	0
PROFICIENT	25	23	16	34	18	24	16	12
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	50	54	51	43	46	48	47	49
FAILING	23	22	34	22	33	26	36	39

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**GRADE 07**

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<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>Pioneer</b>				<b>Greenfield</b>			
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>								
ADVANCED	7	1	2	3	4	6	4	19
PROFICIENT	64	47	67	62	61	50	59	52
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	27	41	27	28	26	26	22	24
FAILING	2	11	4	7	8	18	15	4
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>								
ADVANCED		3	11	12		6	6	10
PROFICIENT		20	30	38		28	17	29
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT		39	34	31		33	44	42
FAILING		38	24	19		33	33	20

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**GRADE 06**

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	<b>Pioneer</b>				<b>Greenfield</b>			
<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>								
ADVANCED		3	4	11		10	9	9
PROFICIENT		63	72	48		37	56	42
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT		29	19	38		36	24	36
FAILING		5	6	3		17	10	14
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>								
ADVANCED	10	22	16	25	7	9	9	14
PROFICIENT	18	20	41	25	27	19	36	24
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	43	37	33	38	37	37	31	29
FAILING	29	22	10	13	30	36	24	32

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**GRADE 05**

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<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>Pioneer</b>				<b>Greenfield</b>			
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>								
ADVANCED		3	4	12		9	8	10
PROFICIENT		55	52	38		48	51	45
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT		36	39	46		36	34	34
FAILING		6	4	4		6	7	11
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>								
ADVANCED		6	13	19		20	14	15
PROFICIENT		30	30	19		24	28	19
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT		36	45	37		32	47	41
FAILING		27	12	25		24	11	25
<b>SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY</b>								
ADVANCED	11	13	12	9	13	12	12	11
PROFICIENT	40	38	35	26	34	47	38	27
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	38	45	49	55	38	30	44	51
FAILING	11	4	4	9	15	11	5	11

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**GRADE 04**

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<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>Pioneer</b>				<b>Greenfield</b>				
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>									
ADVANCED	0	2	4	1	6	7	10	5	
PROFICIENT	41	26	37	34	40	35	45	37	
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	55	60	51	53	46	49	39	44	
FAILING	4	12	8	11	8	10	6	14	
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>									
ADVANCED		5	6	14	14	12	11	21	19
PROFICIENT		22	23	26	35	32	24	28	23
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT		55	55	46	39	39	53	39	47
FAILING		17	17	13	11	16	12	12	11

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**GRADE 03**

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<b>PERFORMANCE LEVEL</b>	<b>Pioneer</b>				<b>Greenfield</b>			
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>								
ABOVE PROFICIENT	NA	6	7	6	NA	18	7	6
PROFICIENT	53	43	45	47	53	44	35	40
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	47	44	43	40	42	32	46	38
FAILING	0	6	5	7	6	6	11	15
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>								
ABOVE PROFICIENT		NA	11	15		4	7	21
PROFICIENT		45	46	37		50	39	38
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT		33	26	32		34	33	28
FAILING		22	17	16		12	22	13

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## High School Comparisons: Course offerings, physical plant, etc. by District

	Gill-Montague Regional School District <a href="http://www.gmrtd.org">www.gmrtd.org</a>	Pioneer Valley Regional School District <a href="http://www.pioneervalley.k12.ma.us/PVRSD">www.pioneervalley.k12.ma.us/PVRSD</a>	Greenfield Public Schools <a href="http://www.gpsk12.org">www.gpsk12.org</a>
High School Name	Turners Falls High School	Pioneer Valley Regional School High School	Greenfield High School
Grade Levels	9-12	9-12	9-12 (FY09) 8-12(FY10)
Physical Plant:			
Built-	1972	N/A	1958
Renovated-	2004	2002	N/A
Houses-	Grades 7-12	Grades 7-12	Grades 8-12 (FY10)
Capital Needs	None	Unexplored	Renovation
Administration:	Principal, Assistant, Dean of Students	Principal, Assistant, Dean of Students	Principal Other positions unknown
Daily Scheduling	4 blocks Semester courses	7-8 periods Full-year courses	7-8 periods Full-Year courses
<u>Course of Study*:</u>			
# of course offerings-	96	109	96 (2007-08)
Advanced Placement-	5	3	4
Work Study-	No	Yes	Not avail.
School To Work-	Yes	Yes	Yes
College Tech Prep-	Yes	Yes	Not avail.
Independent Study-	Yes	Yes	Yes
Freshman Program-	Yes	No	Not avail.
Highlights	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Academy, Reconnecting Youth Prog., Dual Enrollment with GCC (18 stu.)	Small, Safe, Fair compliment of Academic Courses, Athletics, Music/Band, Chorus	Virtual Classes in Political Science, Stats., Computer Aided Design, Intro to Sustainable Constr.
MCAS Support	Course offering	As needed—program after school and in-math school workshop	Unknown

Extracurricular Sports and Activities vary, please see District and School web sites listed above.

**Middle School Comparisons: Course offerings, physical plant, etc. by District**

	Great Falls Middle School <a href="http://www.gmrtd.org">www.gmrtd.org</a>	Pioneer Valley Regional School Middle School <a href="http://www.pioneervalley.k12.ma.us/PVRSD">www.pioneervalley.k12.ma.us/PVRSD</a>	Greenfield Middle School <a href="http://www.gpsk12.org">www.gpsk12.org</a>
Grade Levels	6-8	7-8	4-8 (FY 09) 4-7 (FY10)
Physical Plant	Separate wing and some common areas with high school	Separate wing and some common areas with high school	Separate building renovated ~2004
Capital needs	Recently Renovated	Recently Renovated	Recently Renovated
Daily Scheduling	Team teaching 8 periods	Team teaching 8 periods	Team teaching (8 <sup>th</sup> ) Extended Day Program
Please see District Profile Charts for MCAS data analysis taken from Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Ed. Web site: <a href="http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/">http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/</a>			

## **CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE GILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STAFF**

The following are concerns expressed by the Gill Elementary School staff should there be changes in Gill's educational relationships within or beyond the GMRSD. The topics brought forth are of three categories: personnel-based, school-based, and community-based.

Personnel concerns include protection of the contract such as carrying accumulated sick days and sick day buy-back upon retirement into a new situation. How would seniority or pay levels, employee insurance premiums, and participating in the GIC be affected? Would employees have the option to remain in Gill or go to Montague by preference? How would working conditions change? Would there be lay-offs? How would the specialists (art, music, etc.) be affected; would their FTE be maintained in some way? How would professional development be handled and provided for?

School concerns included an inquiry about how Gill Elementary School would be governed—board of directors (how chosen) or school committee? How would Gill's students be served in the curriculum areas of art, music, P.E., technology? Would there be a full-time nurse? How would the school identity change? At the high school level there is concern that students have access to a sufficient number of Honors and Advanced Placement courses.

Community-based concerns include the how the changing school community would affect the town community. How will Gill facilitate any change for the staff, families, and students? What types of forums for potential new members or affected members need to happen to hear concerns before any decision is made?

**REGIONAL AGREEMENT (AS AMENDED)**

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWNS OF MONTAGUE AND GILL  
WITH RESPECT TO THE FORMATION OF A REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**SECTION I - THE REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**(A) COMPOSITION**

The Gill-Montague Regional District School Committee, hereafter sometimes referred to as the "Committee", shall consist of nine members, six of whom shall be residents of the Town of Montague and three of whom shall be residents of the Town of Gill. When the term of the Initial Committee, as specified in (B) of this Section, has been completed, elected members shall be chosen by all of the voters of the Gill-Montague Regional School District, hereinafter referred to sometimes as the "District" voting in annual elections to be conducted as specified in (C) of this Sections.

**(B) INITIAL COMMITTEE**

The Committee in effect on July 1, 1981 shall continue to serve until their terms of office are completed and until their respective successors are elected and qualified. Vacancies in the Committee occurring until that date shall be filled in accordance with Section I (D).

**(C) ELECTIONS**

At every annual District election there shall be elected to membership on the Committee for terms of three years, or for any unexpired term as outlined in Section I (D), such persons as shall maintain the Committee at nine members and preserve the residency requirements as stated above.

Nominations for membership on the Committee shall be made in accordance with all the procedures prescribed by law for nomination of town officers voted on in the annual election in the town in which the nominee resides, except that the District secretary shall provide the nomination papers, that petitions may be signed by any ten voters of each of the towns of the District and that such papers shall be filed with said secretary instead of the town clerk, at least 35 days prior to the date of the annual District election and such papers or other notification of nomination shall be filed with said secretary.

Each nomination petition or a certified photocopy shall be presented to the respective registrar of voters of the town in which the candidate resides and of each town in which any signer of the petition resides for certification of signatures not later than 30 days prior to the date of the annual District election. Each such registrar of voters shall return the petition or photocopy with the certification of signatures appearing thereon to the District secretary not later than 25 days prior to the date of the annual election.

In addition, any town caucus, primary election, or other nominating procedure may, but need not, place in nomination a candidate for any opening on the Committee, which candidate must satisfy the residency requirements stated above. The town clerk of any town making such a nomination shall certify such nomination to the District secretary.

The annual District election shall be called pursuant to a warrant issued by order of the Committee which shall set forth the date of the election, the polling place or places in each town, the hours during which the polls are to be open and the office or offices to be filled thereat. The annual District election shall be held concurrent with the annual election in each town. The number and location of polling places and the hours during which the polls will be open for District elections will be identical to those specified for the annual elections in the towns of the District. Notice of the election shall be given by posting a copy of the warrant therefor in at least one public place in each member town and by publishing a copy thereof at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the District, such posting and publication to be accomplished at least seven days before the date of the election. A certificate of the secretary shall be conclusive evidence that the warrant was duly posted and published.

Voting in each member town shall be conducted at the polling places and during the times stated in the Warrant and votes shall be cast on ballots prepared by the District which ballots shall, in a separate question for each office or offices to be filled from a particular member town, state the residency requirements applicable thereto and the number of offices to be filled and list the candidates who satisfy that residency requirement. The election shall be conducted and apparatus provided in each town to the same extent and in the same manner as provided for annual town elections, except as otherwise provided herein.

All expenses of the annual District elections shall be paid by the District as an operating expense.

The clerk of each member town shall promptly after each election certify to the Committee the results of the voting in that town. In the event that the annual town elections in one town predate the annual town elections in the others(s), then all District ballot boxes will remain sealed until such time as voting has been completed in all member towns. Thereupon, the clerk of each member town shall promptly certify to the Committee the results of the voting in that town. Newly elected or appointed members of the Committee shall be sworn to the faithful performance of their duties by the District secretary or by the clerk of the town in which he resides, who shall file a record of such oath with the District secretary. Any recount petitions shall be filed with the District secretary and recounts shall be conducted in each member town in accordance with the laws applicable thereto.

The Committee may, but need not, name one or more Election Supervisors who shall be authorized to inspect, observe and otherwise insure compliance with this Agreement and general and special law in connection with any election or portion thereof under this Agreement.

(D) VACANCIES



Vacancies which occur on the Committee shall be filled by the remaining members of the Committee, always observing the residency requirements, and said appointee shall serve until the next annual election.

(E) MEETINGS

The Regional District School Committee shall fix the time and place for its regular meetings paying appropriate attention to both elementary and secondary education, provide for the calling of special meetings, and specify the notice required for meetings.

(F) POWERS AND DUTIES

The Committee shall have all the powers and duties conferred and imposed upon School Committees by law and conferred and imposed upon by this Agreement, and such other additional powers and duties as are specified in Section 16 through 16 I, inclusive of Chapter 71 of the General Laws and any amendments thereof or additions thereto now or hereafter enacted, or as may be specified in any other applicable general or special laws.

(G) ORGANIZATION

Promptly upon the election and qualification of the initial members and annually thereafter upon the election and qualification of their successors, the Committee shall organize and choose by ballot a chairman and a vice chairman from its own membership. At the same meeting or at any other meeting, the Committee shall appoint a treasurer and secretary who may be the same person but need not be members of the Committee, choose such other officers as it deems advisable, determine the terms of office of its officers (except the chairman and vice chairman who shall be elected annually as provided above) and prescribe the powers and duties of any of its officers, fix the time and place for its regular meetings, and provide for calling of special meetings.

(H) QUORUM

A majority of the members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may adjourn.

SECTION II - TYPE OF REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Regional School District shall include all grades up through grade 12. The Committee shall have the right to establish adult evening education courses. The Committee is hereby authorized, in its discretion, to establish and maintain state-aided vocational education, acting as trustees therefore in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 74 of the General Laws and acts amendatory thereof, in addition, thereto or dependent thereon and any other special educational classes in accordance with the provision of the General Laws and acts amendatory thereof, in addition thereto or dependent thereon.

SECTION III - LOCATION OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOLS

(A) Children in grades seven through twelve shall attend schools within the geographic limits of the School District, and within a radius of five miles of the center of the Montague-Gill Bridge. Children in grades kindergarten through six shall attend schools in their towns of residence. Should parents/guardians of children grades kindergarten through six wish to send their children to schools not in their town of residence (but within the District), intra-district choice may be made available, contingent upon and consistent with District policy. Damage to physical plant which would make a facility unusable for intended purposes would be the circumstance under which the Committee would make an exception.

Excepted from the above are children who are in special education classes who shall attend schools as designated by the Committee.

Additional exceptions may be made for specialized educational programs on the recommendation of the Superintendent and by vote of the Regional School Committee.

As Amended May 3, 2007

(B) LEASE OF THE PRESENT SCHOOLS

The town of Montague and/or the town of Gill is hereby authorized to lease to the Regional School District any buildings, facilities and grounds presently used by the towns for school purposes. Each lease shall be for a term of twenty years and the term shall commence on the date when the Committee assumes jurisdiction over the pupils in all grades of the District. The leases may contain provisions for an extension in accordance with provisions under Section 14C of Chapter 71 of the General Laws as amended. The town of Montague and/or the town of Gill shall receive no rental for the leases. The leases shall contain provisions authorizing the District to repair, improve, alter or remodel the buildings or any part thereof. The District shall pay all expenses of maintaining and operating the buildings and keeping them in good repair during the terms of the leases. Nothing contained in the leases shall prevent the Committee from permitting the use of the buildings or premises by the town of Montague or the town of Gill. Each lease involving a member town shall be on such other terms as may be determined by the selectmen thereof and the Regional School District Committee, who shall execute the lease for the member town and the Regional School District respectively.

The Regional School District shall insure at its expense the buildings so leased. Details of such insurance shall be determined after consultation with those empowered to sign the leasing agreement by the town owning the buildings.

The town of Montague is authorized to lease to the Regional School District Committee, the premises and buildings presently known as:

NAME AND LOCATION OF SCHOOL

1. Hillcrest Elementary School  
Griswold Street, Turners Falls
2. Montague Center School

- School Street, Montague Center  
3. Sheffield Middle School  
Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls

The town of Gill is hereby authorized to lease to the Regional School District Committee, the premises and buildings presently known as:

NAME AND LOCATION OF SCHOOL

1. Gill Elementary School  
Boyle Road, Gill

(C) CLOSING OF SCHOOL(S)

Schools located in the District can only be closed permanently or for a period of one or more school years upon the affirmative vote of at least two thirds (2/3rds) of the members of the full Committee, and at least a majority of the eligible voters present at a town meeting called for such purpose in the member town in which the school is located.

As Amended January 23, 2008  
(Montague) and February 25, 2008  
(Gill)

SECTION IV - APPORTIONMENT AND PAYMENT OF COSTS INCURRED BY THE DISTRICT

(A) CLASSIFICATION OF COSTS

For the purpose of apportioning assessments levied by the District against the member towns, costs shall be divided into two categories: capital and operating costs.

(B) CAPITAL COSTS

Capital costs shall include all expenses in the nature of capital outlay such as the cost of acquiring land, the cost of constructing, reconstructing and adding to buildings, and the cost of remodeling or making extraordinary repairs to a school building or buildings, including the cost of the original equipment and furnishings for such a building or additions, plans, architects' and consultants' fees, grading and other costs incidental to placing school buildings or additions and related premises in operating condition. Capital costs shall also include payment of principal of and interest on bonds, notes or other obligations issued by the District to finance capital costs.

(C) OPERATING COSTS

Operating costs shall include all costs not included in capital costs as defined in subsection IV (B), but including interest on temporary notes issued by the District in anticipation of revenue.

(D) APPORTIONMENT OF CAPITAL COSTS

All capital costs in connection with any particular district school shall be apportioned annually for the ensuing fiscal year among the member towns on the basis of each member town's pupil enrollment in such school. Each member town's share shall be determined by computing the ratio which its pupil enrollment in such school on the October 1 next preceding the first day of the fiscal year for which the apportionment is made bears to the total pupil enrollment from all the member towns in such school on that date. If there is no enrollment in such school on a regional basis on the aforesaid October 1, the apportionment of capital costs with respect thereto shall be made on the basis of the estimated pupil enrollments from each member town in such school on the aforesaid date had there been regional enrollment, such estimate to be made by the Committee. Intra-district choice shall not affect the method of apportionment of capital costs stated above (i.e. the calculations above shall be made as if intra-district choice has not occurred).

As Amended May 3, 2007

(E) APPORTIONMENT OF OPERATING COSTS

Operating costs shall be apportioned annually for the ensuing fiscal year among the member towns on the basis of their respective pupil enrollments in the Regional District Schools. Each member town's share for each fiscal year shall be determined by computing the ratio which the town's pupil enrollment in the Regional District Schools on the October 1 next preceding the first day of the fiscal year for which the apportionment is made bears to the total pupil enrollment from all the member towns in Regional District Schools on the same date. In the event that enrollment in the Regional District Schools on a kindergarten through grade twelve basis has not been accomplished by October 1 of any year, operating costs shall be apportioned on the basis of enrollment in all grades from kindergarten through grade twelve of pupils residing in each member town and receiving education at such town's expense on October 1 of that year.

(F) TIMES OF PAYMENT OF APPORTIONED COSTS

The fiscal year or period of the District shall be the same as the fiscal period of the member towns as provided by law, and the work year or fiscal year as it relates in this Agreement to a fiscal or budget year shall mean the fiscal year of the District.

Each member town shall pay to the District in each year its proportionate share, certified as provided in subsection V (C), of the capital and operating costs. Except as otherwise provided in subsection V (A) the annual share of each member town shall be paid in such amounts and at such times that at least the following percentages of such annual share shall be paid on or before the dates indicated, respectively:

July 10 - 25%  
October 10 - 50%  
January 10 - 75%  
April 10 - 100%

## SECTION V - BUDGET

### (A) INITIAL BUDGET

Within sixty days after the initial Committee is organized, it shall prepare a reasonably detailed operating and maintenance budget covering expenses, if any, for the balance of the then calendar year. Copies of such proposed budget shall be submitted to the chairman of the finance or advisory committee of each member town, or if there is no finance or advisory committee in a member town, to the chairman of the board of selectmen of such town for its consideration. Within ten days from the date of submission of said initial budget, such board or committee may request a hearing with the Regional District School Committee, and the Regional District School Committee shall grant such request and hold said hearing within seven days. A budget shall be adopted not earlier than fourteen days but within thirty days after the proposed budget has been so submitted. The amount of the said budget shall be apportioned between the member towns according to the provisions of Section IV hereof. The treasurer shall certify to each member town its respective share of said budget. The sums thus certified shall be payable forthwith by each member town to the Committee but only from funds which may be or may have been appropriated or transferred from the reserve fund by each member town for such purpose, if any.

### (B) TENTATIVE MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING BUDGET

Thereafter, on or before February 1, the Committee shall annually prepare a tentative maintenance and operating budget for the ensuing fiscal year, including therein provision for any installment of principal or interest to become due in such year on any bonds, notes or other obligations of the District and any other capital costs to be apportioned to the member towns in such year. The said budget shall be in reasonable detail, including the amounts payable under the following classifications of expenses and such other classifications as may be necessary:

1. Administration
2. Instruction
3. Other School Services
4. Operation and Maintenance of Plant
5. Fixed Charges
6. Community Services
7. Acquisition of Fixed Assets
8. Debt Retirement - Debt Service
9. Programs with other Districts and  
Private Schools

Copies of such tentative budget shall be mailed to the chairman of the board of selectmen of each member town and to the chairman of the finance and advisory committees, if any, of

each member town. Not later than February 15, the Regional District School Committee shall hold a public hearing on the matter.

(C) FINAL MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING BUDGET

The Committee shall adopt a final maintenance and operating budget for the ensuing fiscal year in accordance with Sections 16 and 16B of Chapter 71 of the General Laws as amended. The classifications so listed in Section V (B) shall be considered separate items when adopted. For the purpose of this Agreement, separate items are defined as items from which funds cannot be transferred without express approval of the School Committee. These provisions, insofar as they pertain to the transfer of separate items so listed in Section V (B) would be effective with the budget adopted for the third operating year of said District.

(D) INCOME

Income received by the District from tuition pupils as well as all other income, except as otherwise provided for by law, shall be credited to estimated receipts of the District in the year said income is received.

(E) SURPLUS FUNDS

The District may retain in a surplus account, an amount not in excess of five (5%) per cent of the operating budget and the capital cost budget for the succeeding fiscal year. Any remaining surplus shall be used to reduce the amount to be raised by assessment on the member towns, in accordance with Section IV of this Agreement.

SECTION VI - TRANSPORTATION

School transportation shall be provided by the Regional School District and the cost thereof shall be apportioned by the Regional School District to the member towns as an operating cost.

SECTION VII - AMENDMENTS

(A) LIMITATION

This Agreement may be amended from time to time in the manner hereinafter provided, but no amendment shall be made which shall substantially impair the rights of the holders of any bonds or notes or other evidences of indebtedness of the District then outstanding, or the rights of the District to procure the means for payment thereof, provided that nothing in this section shall prevent the admission of a new town or towns to the District and the reapportionment accordingly of capital costs of the District represented by bonds or notes of the District then outstanding and of interest thereon.

(B) PROCEDURE

Any proposal for amendment, except a proposal for amendment providing for the withdrawal of a member town (which shall be acted on as provided in Section IX), or for a proposal for an amendment providing for a reversion to a grades 7-12 Regional School District (which shall be acted on as provided for in Section X), may be initiated by a vote of a majority of all the members of the Committee or by a petition signed by ten per cent of the registered voters of any one of the member towns. In the latter case, said petition shall contain at the end thereof a certification by the town clerk of such member town as to the number of registered voters in said town according to the most recent voting list and the number of signatures on the petition which appear to be the names of registered voters of said town and said petition shall be presented to the secretary of the Committee. In either case, the secretary of the Committee shall mail or deliver a notice in writing to the board of selectmen of each of the member towns that a proposal to amend this Agreement has been made and shall enclose a copy of such proposal (without the signatures in the case of a proposal by petition). The selectmen of each member town shall include in the warrant for the next annual or special town meeting called for the purpose an article stating the proposal or the substance thereof. Such amendment shall take effect upon its acceptance by all of the member towns, acceptance by each town to be by a majority vote at a town meeting as aforesaid.

#### SECTION VIII - ADMISSION

By an amendment of this Agreement adopted under and in accordance with Section VII above, any other town or towns may be admitted to the Regional School District upon adoption as therein provided of such amendment and upon acceptance by the town or towns seeking admission of the Agreement as so amended also upon compliance with such provisions of law as may be applicable, and such terms as may be set forth in such amendment.

#### SECTION IX - WITHDRAWAL

##### (A) LIMITATIONS

The withdrawal of a member town from the District may be effected by an amendment to this Agreement in the manner hereinafter provided by this section. Any member town seeking to withdraw shall, by vote at an annual or special town meeting, request the Committee to draw up an amendment to this Agreement setting forth the terms by which such town may withdraw from the District, provided (1) that the town seeking to withdraw shall remain liable for any unpaid operating costs which have been certified by the district treasurer to the treasurer of the withdrawing town, including the full amount so certified for the year in which such withdrawal takes effect and (2) that the said town shall remain liable to the District for its share of the indebtedness of the District outstanding at the time of such withdrawal, and for interest thereon, to the same extent and in the same manner as though the town had not withdrawn from the District.

##### (B) PROCEDURE

The clerk of the town seeking to withdraw shall notify the Committee in writing that such town has voted to request the Committee to draw up an amendment to the Agreement (enclosing

a certified copy of such vote). Thereupon, the Committee shall draw up an amendment to the Agreement setting forth the terms of withdrawal in accordance with the limitations contained in subsections VII (A) and IX (A). The secretary of the Committee shall mail or deliver a notice in writing to the board of selectmen of each member town that the Committee has drawn up an amendment to the Agreement providing for the withdrawal of a member town (enclosing a copy of such amendment). The selectmen of each member town shall include in the warrant for the next annual or a special town meeting called for the purpose an article stating the amendment or the substance thereof. Such amendment shall take effect upon its acceptance by all of the member towns, acceptance by each town to be by a majority vote at a town meeting as aforesaid.

(C) APPORTIONMENT OF CAPITAL COST AFTER WITHDRAWAL

The withdrawing town's annual share of any future installment of principal and interest on obligations outstanding on the effective date of its withdrawal shall be fixed at the percentage prevailing for such town at the last annual apportionment made next prior to the effective date of the withdrawal. The remainder of any such installment after subtracting the shares of any town or towns which have withdrawn shall be apportioned to the remaining member towns in the manner provided in subsection IV (D) or as may be otherwise provided in the amendment providing for such withdrawal.

(D) CESSATION OF TERMS OF OFFICE OF WITHDRAWING TOWN'S MEMBERS

Upon the effective date of withdrawal, the terms of office of all members serving on the Regional District School Committee from the withdrawing town shall terminate, and the total membership of the Committee shall be decreased accordingly.

(E) PAYMENTS OF CERTAIN CAPITAL COSTS MADE BY A WITHDRAWING TOWN

Money received by the District from the withdrawing town for payment of funded indebtedness or interest thereon, shall be used only for such purpose.

SECTION X - WITHDRAWAL OF ELEMENTARY GRADES

(A) By a majority vote at an annual or special town meeting called for the purpose, any member town may withdraw its elementary grades K-6 from the Regional School District. In such event, the Regional School District shall automatically revert to a grades 7-12 jurisdiction as if the K-12 Regional District had not been formed. The provisions of the Regional Agreement which were in effect prior to the formation of the K-12 Regional District, shall automatically be in effect immediately following the actual return of the K-12 District to a grades 7-12 District, except that the provisions of Section I of the K-12 Regional School District Agreement shall continue to remain in force and effect.

(B) Any such vote by a member town to return to a grades 7-12 Regional School District shall take effect commencing with the next fiscal year following the first full fiscal year after which the vote to withdraw had been taken. The clerk of the town seeking the return to a grades 7-12



Regional shall notify the Committee in writing that such town has voted to withdraw its elementary grades (up to grade six) from the Regional School District.

(C) The member towns shall continue to be liable for all operating and capital costs including any indebtedness and interest thereon that were outstanding at the time of elementary withdrawal to the same extent and in the same manner as though the towns had not returned to a grades 7-12 District, until such obligations have been completed.

#### SECTION XI - PUPILS

##### (A) PUPILS ENTITLED TO ATTEND THE REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOLS

The Regional School District Schools shall accept all children who reside in the District.

##### (B) ADMISSION OF PUPILS RESIDING OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT

The Committee may accept for enrollment in the Regional District School, pupils from towns other than the member towns on a tuition basis at a rate that shall not exceed the average expense per student per Chapter 76, Section 12 and 12B of the General Laws.

#### SECTION XII - EMPLOYMENT OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL WITHIN THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

All personnel in positions to be superseded by the establishment and operation of the Regional District School shall be given preferred consideration for similar positions in the Regional District School to the extent that such positions exist therein; and any teacher who on the date of his contract of employment with the District is then on tenure, shall continue thereafter to serve on a tenure basis. The Committee shall observe Chapter 71, Section 42B of the General Laws governing employment of school personnel provided for thereunder.

#### SECTION XIII - JURISDICTION OF PUPILS

(A) The establishment of the K-12 Regional School District shall not affect the obligation of the member towns to provide education in grades K-6 until such time as the Regional School District Committee shall notify the School Committees of the respective member towns that the Regional District is prepared to assume jurisdiction over the pupils in grades K-6, whereupon the Regional District School Committee shall assume jurisdiction over education of the pupils in grades K through twelve, inclusive.

(B) The provisions of this amended agreement shall become effective as of July 1, 1981 if prior approval is given at duly called town meetings by the towns of Montague and Gill pursuant to Section VII of the Agreement, and as of July 1, 1981 all pupils attending public schools in the towns of the District shall be under the jurisdiction of the Committee.

#### SECTION XIV - ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Regional District School Committee may, to assist it in the construction of any Regional School building, appoint a building committee to advise it with respect to plans, specifications, appointment of architects, engineers, the awarding of contracts, the supervision of construction, and any other assistance which the Regional District School Committee may desire. The members of any such Committee shall serve in an advisory capacity only and without compensation.

#### SECTION XV - ADVISORY COMMITTEES ON ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The Advisory Committees shall serve the Gill-Montague Regional School District Committee. The Gill Advisory Committee (GAC) shall be comprised of the members of the Gill-Montague Regional School Committee from Gill, plus three additional members appointed at-large by Gill's Town Moderator. The Montague Advisory Committee (MAC) shall be comprised of the members of the Gill-Montague School Regional Committee from Montague, plus three additional members appointed at-large by Montague's Town Moderator. The at-large members shall serve one year terms.

The Advisory Committees shall recommend to the Gill-Montague Regional School Committee on matters affecting the elementary education of Gill and Montague children including:

1. Recommendation on budget
2. Recommendation on personnel
3. Recommendation on curriculum

## RELEVANT MASSACHUSETTS STATUTES AND REGULATIONS

### [Massachusetts General Laws](#)

#### [CHAPTER 71. PUBLIC SCHOOLS.](#)

##### [Section 14. Regional school district planning committee; creation; membership.](#)

Section 14. Regional school district planning committee; creation; membership.

Section 14. Any town, by vote in town meeting duly called therefor, may create a special unpaid committee to be known as a regional school district planning committee, to consist of three members, including one member of the school committee, to be appointed by the moderator; and may at the same meeting or at a subsequent meeting appropriate for the expense of said committee such sum or sums, not exceeding one tenth of one per cent of the assessed valuation of such town in the preceding year, as it may deem necessary. Regional school district planning committees from any two or more towns may join together to form a regional school district planning board or boards. Such regional school district planning board shall organize forthwith upon its formation by the election of a chairman and secretary-treasurer.

### [Massachusetts General Laws](#)

#### [CHAPTER 71. PUBLIC SCHOOLS.](#)

##### [Section 14A. Duties of board.](#)

Section 14A. Duties of board.

Section 14A. It shall be the duty of the regional school district planning board to study the fiscal and educational advisability of establishing a regional school district, its organization, operation and control, and of constructing, maintaining and operating a school or schools to serve the needs of such district; to estimate the construction and operating costs thereof; to assess the educational soundness of establishing such school or schools, to investigate the methods of financing such school or schools, and any other matters pertaining to the organization and operation of a regional school district; and to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the selectmen of the several towns.

Section 14B. Regional school districts; formation; procedure.

Section 14B. The said regional district planning board may recommend that there shall be established a regional school district which may include all the towns represented by its membership, or alternatively, any specified combination of such towns. If the said regional district planning board so recommends, it shall submit a proposed agreement or agreements setting forth as to each alternative recommendation, if such be made, the following:

- (a) The number, composition, method of selection, and terms of office of the members of the

regional district school committee.

(b) The town or towns in which, or the general area within the regional school district where, the regional district school or schools are to be located.

(c) The type of regional district school or schools. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the type of regional school may, if it is so stated in the agreement, consist of a vocational school or schools offering such kinds of education as may be provided by towns under the provisions of chapter seventy-four; and any other type of regional school may, if it is so stated in the agreement, offer said kinds of education. A town may simultaneously be a member of a vocational regional school district and any other type of regional school district provided, however, that when a vocational school district is in operation, no member town of such district, and no other type of regional school district of which such a town is a member shall, without the approval of the commissioner of education, offer the same kinds of education as offered by said vocational school district.

(d) The method of apportioning the expenses of the regional school district, and the method of apportioning the costs of school construction, including any interest and retirement of principal of any bonds or other obligations issued by the district among the several towns comprising the district, and the time and manner of payment of the shares of the several towns of any such expense.

(e) The method by which school transportation shall be provided, and if such transportation is to be furnished by the district, the manner in which the expenses shall be borne by the several towns.

(f) the terms by which any city or town may be admitted to or separated from the regional school district; provided, however, that in the case of admission such terms shall not be inconsistent with the provisions of section sixteen of chapter six hundred and forty-five of the acts of nineteen hundred and forty-eight.

(g) The method by which the agreement may be amended.

(h) The detailed procedure for the preparation and adoption of an annual budget.

(i) Any other matters, not incompatible With law, which the said board may deem advisable.

Copies of such agreement shall be submitted to the department of education, and subject to its approval, to the several towns for their acceptance.

[Massachusetts General Laws](#)

[CHAPTER 71. PUBLIC SCHOOLS.](#)

[Section 15. Regional school districts; acceptance of organization provisions by electorate.](#)

Section 15. Regional school districts; acceptance of organization provisions by electorate.

Section 15. The selectmen or council of each of the several towns shall, upon receipt of the recommendation that a regional school district should be formed and of a proposed agreement therefor submitted in accordance with the provisions of sections fourteen to fourteen B, inclusive, or otherwise in the form and with the approval required by said sections, cause to be presented the question of accepting the provisions of sections sixteen to sixteen I, inclusive, and the proposed agreement or agreements. Said question shall be determined, in a town having an open town meeting, by vote with printed ballots at an annual or special town meeting to be held

in either case within thirty days after receipt of such recommendation by the selectmen and, in a town having a representative town meeting or council, at an annual or special town election to be held in either case not less than thirty-five nor more than fifty days after receipt of such recommendation. The article in the warrant for such annual or special town meeting or election and the question on the printed ballots to be used at such meeting or election shall be in substantially the following form:

Shall the town accept the provisions of sections sixteen to sixteen I, inclusive, of chapter seventy-one of the General Laws providing for the establishment of a regional school district, together with the towns of \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, etc., and for construction, maintenance and operation of a regional school by said district in accordance with the provisions of a proposed agreement filed with the selectmen- YES

NO

*(Amended by 1996, 454, Sec. 27 eff. 4-2-97.)*

If a majority of the voters present and voting on said question in each of the several towns shall vote in the affirmative, said sections sixteen to sixteen I, inclusive, shall become effective, and the proposed regional school district shall be deemed to be established forthwith in accordance with the terms of the agreement so adopted notwithstanding any defect or omission in the creation or organization of any regional school district planning committee or regional school district planning board.

[Code of Massachusetts Regulations](#)

[603 CMR DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION](#)

[41.00: REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS](#)

[41.02: Reorganization Procedures](#)

41.02: Reorganization Procedures

(1) Reorganization Needs Conference. In order to establish the need for a proposed school district reorganization and to ensure that all alternatives for satisfying said need are fully addressed, the Department shall convene a Reorganization Needs Conference. For a proposed new regional school district, the Reorganization Needs Conference shall be requested in writing by the Regional School District Planning Board, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, s. 14. For an existing regional school district expanding its grade level structure or enlarging its membership, the Regional School Committee shall

submit the written request for the Reorganization Needs Conference.

(2) Long Range Education Plan. The Reorganization Needs Conference shall include consideration of a Long Range Education Plan to determine whether the proposed project is in the best interest of the applicant and of the Commonwealth. The Long Range Plan shall be a written plan which addresses the expected educational benefits of reorganization; current and projected enrollments; an inventory of all educational facilities under the jurisdiction of the various school committees (current and proposed) and any construction efficiencies; the administrative structure, including a current and proposed organization chart; the fiscal benefits; the geographical and physical characteristics; and the transportation economies which would result from a school district reorganization.

(3) Department Review. The review and evaluation of the Long Range Educational Plan by the Department shall include consideration of compliance with state and federal law and potential for enhancing learning opportunities and improving student performance for all students within the proposed district.

#### 603 CMR 41.03: Department of Education Approval

(1) After the Reorganization Needs Conference the Department will either give written notification to proceed or make a written request for additional information or modifications. In the case of an approved proposal to establish a new region, the Department shall direct the Regional School District Planning Board to draft a District Agreement, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, s. 14B. In the case of an approved proposal to expand or enlarge a regional school district, the Department will direct the regional school committee to draft an amendment to the existing District Agreement.

(2) Admission and Withdrawal of Members.

(a) A new member may be admitted to, or an existing member withdraw from, a regional school district as of July 1<sup>st</sup> of any fiscal year, provided that all requisite approvals for such admission or withdrawal, including the Commissioner's approval, shall be obtained no later than the preceding December 31<sup>st</sup>. The authorizing votes may provide for the deferral of said admission or withdrawal until July 1<sup>st</sup> of a subsequent fiscal year.

(b) Following the approval of a prospective member for admission into a regional school district and continuing until the actual date of such admission, the local school committee of the prospective member may designate a non-voting representative to the regional school committee.

The following text is effective 02/09/07

(3) When a proposed Regional School District Agreement or Amended Agreement has been accepted by all of the participating municipalities, the Regional School District Planning Board or Regional School Committee shall submit to the proposed Agreement or Amended Agreement, together with the certified votes of the participating municipalities, to the Commissioner for approval.

(4) The Commissioner shall approve or disapprove a Regional District Agreement, and any subsequent amendments to the Agreement, based on review and recommendation by the Department that the Agreement meets the standards in 603 CMR 41.00 and applicable law. The decision of the Commissioner shall be final.

[Massachusetts General Laws](#)

[CHAPTER 71. PUBLIC SCHOOLS.](#)

[Section 16D. Aid from state.](#)

Section 16D. Aid from state.

Section 16D. (a) A regional school district shall be entitled to receive state aid for construction of regional schools. Each city or town in a regional school district whether established under special or general law shall continue to receive such state aid for educational purposes as it would be entitled to receive if such district had not been formed. In addition, the state treasurer shall, subject to the provisions of subsection (c), upon certification by the commissioner of education annually pay on or before November twentieth to each regional school district an amount computed as follows:

(i) seventy per cent multiplied by the product of the regional school aid percentage multiplied by the regional reimbursable expenditures of the regional school district, for such districts which include grades kindergarten through twelve; or

(ii) fifty per cent multiplied by the product of the regional school aid percentage multiplied by the regional reimbursable expenditures of the regional school district, for all other regional school districts.

(b) The definitions in section two of chapter seventy shall apply to this section and the following words and phrases as used in this section shall have the following meanings:-

"Regional reimbursable expenditures", the total amount expended by a regional school district during a fiscal year for the support of public schools during said year exclusive of expenditures for transportation, for food for school food service programs and for capital outlays, after deducting therefrom any receipts for tuition, receipts from the federal government, the proceeds of any invested funds, and grants, gifts and receipts from any other source, to the extent that such receipts are applicable to such expenditures; provided, however, that in the first year that a regional school district is formed or the year in which a regional school district expands "regional reimbursable expenditures" shall mean the total amount expended by a regional school district in the fiscal year during which time the regional school district becomes operative or during which time the regional school district expands for the support of the public schools during said year exclusive of expenditures for transportation, for food for school food service programs, and for capital outlays, after deducting therefrom any receipts for tuition, receipts from the federal government, the proceeds of any invested funds and grants, gifts and receipts from any other source, to the extent that such receipts are applicable to such expenditures; provided however that amounts received by a regional school district under this section as school aid shall not be so deducted. The commissioner of education may, by regulation, further define the expenditures and receipts that may be included hereunder.

"Regional school aid percentage," the amount by which one hundred per cent exceeds the product, to the nearest tenth of one per cent, of sixty-five per cent multiplied by the regional valuation percentage; provided, however, that in no instance shall the regional school aid percentage be less than fifteen per cent.

"Regional valuation percentage," the proportion, to the nearest tenth of one per cent, which the total equalized valuation of all cities and towns in the regional school district divided by the total school attending children in all cities and towns in the district bears to the average equalized valuation per school attending child in the cities and towns in regional school districts in the entire state.

(c) The receipt of the regional school aid as set forth in clauses (i) and (ii) of subsection (a) shall be subject to the following conditions:

(i) the formation of new regional school districts and the expansion of currently existing regional school districts shall be subject to the approval of the commissioner of education;

(ii) except as provided in clause (iii) of this subsection, no regional school aid shall be paid prior to the date of award of a contract for the construction of a regional school by the regional district school committee or prior to the date the regional district school committee enters into a lease of land and buildings or portions of buildings in lieu of such construction; and



(iii) in the case of regional school districts formed for administrative purposes only, no regional school aid shall be paid prior to the date on which the regional school district has assumed jurisdiction over the pupils in the district and the commissioner of education has made a determination that member cities and towns have provided sufficient and adequate school facilities for each grade level included in the regional school district.

(d) In the event that the member communities of a proposed regional school district should vote on or before July first of any year to establish a regional school district on or before September fifteenth of that same calendar year, then such regional school district shall be entitled to receive, subject to appropriation, on or before November twentieth of that same calendar year, twenty-five per cent of an amount of regional school aid computed in accordance with the provisions of this section. For purposes of this paragraph, regional reimbursable expenditures shall mean the total amount expended by the member communities for the support of public school students who will be served by the newly established regional school district, during the fiscal year in which the member communities voted to establish the regional school district, minus the exclusions currently provided for in this section.

In the event that all of the member communities of a partial regional school district should vote on or before July first of any year to amend their regional school district agreement to allow for expansion into a full kindergarten through twelve regional school district on or before September fifteenth of that same calendar year, then such expanded regional school district shall be entitled to receive, subject to appropriation, on or before November twentieth of that same calendar year, twenty-five per cent of an amount of regional school aid calculated upon the basis of an existing kindergarten through twelve regional school district. The regional school aid shall be computed in accordance with the provisions of this section. For purposes of this paragraph, regional reimbursable expenditures shall mean the total amount expended by the partial regional school district and the member communities for the support of their public schools during the fiscal year in which expansion is voted, minus the exclusions currently provided for in this section.

(e) Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this section, for the fiscal year ending on June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and ninety-four, regional schools shall receive the same amount of state aid that they received in the fiscal year ending on June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and ninety-three; provided, however, that any regional school that received in the fiscal year ending on June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and ninety-three less than seventy-six percent of the amount of state aid that it would have been entitled to pursuant to the foregoing provisions of this section if the full amount had been appropriated for such state aid in said fiscal year nineteen hundred and ninety-three shall receive an additional state aid payment in fiscal year nineteen hundred and ninety-four such that the total state aid for each regional school pursuant to this section shall be no less than seventy-six percent of the amount of state aid that it would have been entitled to pursuant to the foregoing provisions of this section if the full amount had been appropriated for such state aid in said fiscal year nineteen hundred and ninety-three; provided, further, that any regional school district that is newly reorganized pursuant to section fifteen subsequent to June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and ninety-two but prior to January first, nineteen hundred and ninety-four shall receive seventy-six percent of the amount it would otherwise have been entitled to receive for expenses incurred in the first year of operation as a reorganized school district

pursuant to the foregoing provisions of this section; provided, further, that any regional school district whose member communities hold meetings on regionalization prior to January first, nineteen hundred and ninety-four and becomes newly organized prior to April first, nineteen hundred and ninety-four shall receive seventy-six percent of the amount it would otherwise have been entitled to receive for expenses incurred in the first year of operation as an organized school district pursuant to the foregoing provisions of this section.

(f) For fiscal years nineteen hundred and ninety-four and subsequent fiscal years, the amount of state aid distributed as base aid pursuant to chapter seventy shall be deemed to be in full satisfaction of the provisions of subsection (e).

(g) Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions, regional bonus aid, but no other aid pursuant to this section, shall be paid to any regional school district formed after fiscal year nineteen hundred and ninety-three for the immediate five fiscal years following the establishment of said regional school district. Regional bonus aid shall be payable in an amount equal to fifty dollars per foundation enrollment, in the first fiscal year following the establishment of said regional school district; forty dollars per foundation enrollment in the second fiscal year following the establishment of said regional school district; thirty dollars per foundation enrollment in the third fiscal year following the establishment of said regional school district; twenty dollars per foundation enrollment in the fourth fiscal year following the establishment of said regional school district; and, ten dollars per foundation enrollment in the fifth fiscal year following the establishment of said regional school district.

[Massachusetts General Laws](#)

[CHAPTER 71. PUBLIC SCHOOLS.](#)

[Section 37. Powers and duties.](#)

Section 37. Powers and duties.

Section 37. The school committee in each city and town and each regional school district shall have the power to select and to terminate the superintendent, shall review and approve budgets for public education in the district, and shall establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district consistent with the requirements of law and statewide goals and standards established by the board of education.

[Massachusetts General Laws](#)

[CHAPTER 71. PUBLIC SCHOOLS.](#)

[Section 59C. School councils; members; meetings; duties.](#)

Section 59C. School councils; members; meetings; duties.

Section 59C. At each public elementary, secondary and independent, vocational school in the

commonwealth there shall be a school council consisting of the school principal, who shall co-chair the council; parents of students attending the school who shall be selected by the parents of students attending Such school who will be chosen in elections held by the local recognized parent teacher organization under the direction of the principal, or if none exists, chosen by a representative process approved by the school committee. Said parents shall have parity with professional personnel on the school councils; teachers who shall be selected by the teachers in such school; other persons, not parents or teachers of students at the school, drawn from such group, or entities as municipal government, business and labor organizations, institutions of higher education, human services agencies or other interested groups including those from school age child care programs; and for schools containing any of the grades nine to twelve, at least one such student; provided, however, that not more that fifty percent of the council shall be non-school members. The principal, except as otherwise provided herein, shall have the responsibility for defining the composition of and forming the group pursuant to a representative process approved by the superintendent and school committee and for convening the first meeting no later than forty days after the first day of school, at which meeting a co-chairman shall be selected. School councils should be broadly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the school building and community. For purposes of this paragraph the term "non-school members" shall mean those members of the council, other than parents, teachers, students and staff of the school.

Nothing contained in this section shall require a new school council to be formed if an existing school council fulfills the intent of this section, the parent and teacher members thereof were selected in a manner consistent with the provisions of this section and the membership thereof complies with the aforesaid fifty percent requirement.

Meetings of the school council shall be subject to the provisions of sections twenty-three A, twenty-three B and twenty-three C of chapter thirty-nine.

The school council, including the school principal, shall meet regularly and shall assist in the identification of the educational needs of the students attending the school, make recommendations to the principal for the development, implementation and assessment of the curriculum accommodation plan required pursuant to section 38Q 1/2 shall assist in the review of the annual school budget and in the formulation of a school improvement plan, as provided below. Parent advisory councils, established under section 3 of chapter 71A, may, at their request, meet at least once annually with the school council.

The principal of each school, in consultation with the school council established pursuant to this section, shall on an annual basis, in conformity with the provisions of section 11 of chapter 69, develop and submit for approval by the district superintendent a plan for improving student performance. Said plan shall be prepared in a manner and form prescribed by the department Of education and shall conform to any policies and practices of the district consistent therewith.

Nothing contained in this section shall prevent the school committee from' granting a school council additional authority in the area of educational policy; provided, however, that school councils shall have no authority over matters which are subject to chapter one hundred and fifty E.

**TOWN OF GILL**  
**M A S S A C H U S E T T S**



[www.gillmass.org](http://www.gillmass.org)

December 2, 2008

Dorothy Storrow  
Gill, MA 01354

Dear Doff,

Thank you for accepting appointment as chair or co-chair of the new Commission for Education in Gill. The Selectboard and Finance Committee considered the possible need for co-chairs, but will leave that decision up to the Commission.

The Selectboard has asked me to serve as staff for the committee, so I offer my services to you in whatever way you feel will be most helpful. The Selectboard and Finance Committee issued some objectives and guidelines for the Commission that I'd like to share with you. They are as follows:

- The Committee shall explore all possibilities of configuring education for children in Gill grades K-12. These possibilities shall include, but not be limited to:
  - Leave the Gill-Montague Regional School District entirely
  - Join another district
  - Maintain the Gill Elementary School and tuition students to high school
  - Tuition students K-12 to other schools
  - Remain in the GMRSD without any change
- Review the district agreement
- Review applicable MA General Laws
- Investigate financial ramifications for all alternatives
- Investigate how Chapter 70 would be affected
- Investigate the alternatives proposed by Senator Rosenberg's commission on regionalization
- Review minutes of meetings in 1982 when regionalization was first considered
- Review the file from the 1992 committee that studied leaving the district
- Investigate demographic trends and projections for the future
- Investigate the special needs population (how many special needs students are in Gill and what would happen to them in each alternative)

- Investigate how transportation (and its funding) would be affected.

The Selectboard and Finance Committee also made very clear that they **do not wish the Commission to make any recommendations, only to lay out possible alternatives and research and present related facts and considerations.** They also expressed interest in meeting with the Commission in late January to get an update on its progress and having all the work finished in March, followed by public meetings before Town Meeting.

Lastly, the question was raised about how to deal with Commission members who do not participate fully. The following is the policy the Selectboard and Finance Committee agreed upon:

We hope that all members participate fully. If the chair or co-chairs of the Commission believe that a member is insufficiently participating, they are encouraged to speak to said member and ask him if he/she would like to continue on the Commission. If a seat should become vacant, the co-chairs may appoint a replacement at their discretion.

Enclosed are the current list of members on the Commission and a copy of the findings of the 1992 Commission. I have also enclosed a copy of the district agreement and the minutes from our special town meeting in February 2008 where the Town voted to amend that agreement (see Article 2).

Sincerely,

Tracy Rogers, Administrative Assistant  
Gill Selectboard

enc: 4