



MDIRSS / AOS #91

Reorganization Plan – Core Elements



<https://www.mdirss.org/page/aos-reorganization>

This reorganization plan proposes unifying the school administrative districts (MDIRSS/AOS #91) into a single **Regional School Unit (RSU)**. This RSU will manage all public schools for the participating towns: Bar Harbor, Mount Desert, Cranberry Isles, Frenchboro, Southwest Harbor, Swan's Island, Tremont, and Trenton.

☀ The Big Picture: Our Goals

The new RSU aims to create a stronger, unified, and more efficient school system for the next generation.

- **Better Education:** Provide equitable access to the best educational programs for all PK–12 students.
- **Empower Educators:** Give teachers and staff the resources, support, and professional collaboration they need.
- **Financial Sense:** Deliver financial fairness and operational efficiency (saving money) for all towns.
- **A Unified Future:** Strengthen our shared commitment to excellence with a sustainable system.

Examples of Problems with the current structure that an RSU will solve:

- **Specialized Program Gaps:** Programs like Gifted & Talented or Students with Unique Needs (SUN) are stretched thin in small schools and can't always provide the full range of services students deserve.
- **Unequal Educational Access** to opportunities means some students miss out on advanced classes, hands-on learning, or enrichment programs.
- **Staffing shortages** make it difficult to cover positions and put a heavy strain on schools.
- **Transportation inefficiencies** and driver shortages impact families and students.

REQUIRED PLAN ELEMENTS AS PRESCRIBED BY THE MAINE DOE

III How the RSU Will Be Governed

1. RSU Board of Directors (District-Wide)

This 15-member board will be the main governing body for the entire RSU.

- **Structure:** 15 members elected with residency requirements from across the towns.
- **Voting:** All 15 members have equal voting authority.
- **Seat Apportionment:** Seats are assigned based on population/residency. This apportionment mirrors current high school voting, with the addition of Trenton and Outer Islands having a seat at the table:

○ Bar Harbor - 3	○ Southwest Harbor - 2
○ Cranberry Isles - 1	○ Swan's Island - 1
○ Frenchboro - 1	○ Tremont - 2
○ Mount Desert - 3	○ Trenton - 2

2. Local School Advisory Councils (Per School)

These councils will replace existing local school boards.

- **Purpose:** To provide local input and advice to the RSU Board and the school principal. They are a dedicated avenue for **community feedback**.
- **Responsibilities:** Reviewing school budget priorities (including capital improvements) and providing input on the hiring process for school administration.
- **Members:** Principal, RSU Board Member, Teachers, Support Staff, Parents, and Students (HS and MS).

💰 Finances & Property: What Changes

1. Property & School Closures

- **School Buildings:** The RSU will assume ownership (title) of all school buildings.
- **Important Protection:** The RSU Board **CANNOT** unilaterally close a school. A school can be closed only

if it is replaced by a new building and approved by the town's voters.

2. Assumption of Current Debt

- **Capital Debt (construction/renovation):** TBD - The RPC is using feedback to revise this part of the plan.
- **Operational Debt** (e.g., bus and copier leases): assumed by the RSU.

3. Cost-Sharing for the Budget (Tax Fairness)

A funding formula determines each town's contribution to the RSU budget.

- 67% Valuation / 33% Enrollment (Current MDI High School Model)
 - Valuation based on **3-year State Valuation Average**
 - Enrollment based on **October 1 - October 1 Average**

4. Existing Funds & Reserves

Most reserves will be combined for RSU-wide use, ensuring maximum benefit for students:

- **PK-8 Bus & Building Reserves: Combined** and used district-wide.
- **MDI High School Reserves: Kept separate** and used *only* for high school purposes.
- **Special Education Reserves (AOS): Retained** for all RSU students.
- **Local Special Education Reserves: Returned** to the towns

5. Personnel and Contracts

- The current teachers' bargaining unit and two support staff agreements remain in place.



PK-12 Educational Programming

- **Programming:** Comprehensive **PK-12 programming will be maintained.**
- **School Structure:** The current configuration **remains unchanged:**
 - 8 Elementary Schools (PK-8) and 1 High School (*A district middle school is not part of the reorganization plan voted in November 2026.*)



Referendum Vote

Yes Votes - Trenton, Bar Harbor, Southwest, Tremont, Mount Desert

No Votes - One or more of the outer island towns

RSU - Goes Forward

- **If Approved:**
 - The Mount Desert Regional School District (MDIHS District) will dissolve.
 - AOS #91 will terminate if at least two of the outer island towns (Cranberry Isles, Frenchboro, Swan's Island) approve the plan.
- **If Approved, but Outer Islands Don't Approve:**
 - The RSU moves forward.
 - AOS #91 will continue to operate only for the outer island towns if two or more outer island towns vote "No."



Proposed Timeline

- **Proposed Referendum Date: November 2026**
- **Transition Period:** If approved, the current AOS board will appoint an interim RSU board to manage the transition (e.g., developing the first-year budget and maintaining current personnel policies).

The Ballot Question

"Do you favor approving the school administrative reorganization plan prepared by the MDIRSS-AOS #91 Reorganization Planning Committee to reorganize Trenton, Bar Harbor, Southwest Harbor, Tremont, Mount Desert, Swan's Island, Cranberry Isles, and Frenchboro into a Regional School Unit with an effective date of 7/1/2028?" **Yes / No**