

# Glossary of Terms

## **Section 1: Financial Terms**

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|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Assessment            |                                      |
| 2. Chapter 70            | 8. MSBA                              |
| 3. Charter School        | 9. Required Local Contribution (RLC) |
| 4. Foundation Enrollment | 10. Excess of RLC                    |
| 5. Hold Harmless         | 11. School Choice                    |
| 6. Operating Capital     | 12. Super Town Meeting               |
| 7. Major Capital         | 13. Transportation Reimbursement     |

### **1. Assessment**

A Regional School Communities Committee develops the budget for the regional school district. The amount of funding proposed to member towns at town meeting is the town's assessment. This amount is calculated via the procedure outlined in the regional agreement.

The Ayer/Shirley Regional Agreement uses the "statutory method" which is the sum of the following:

- RLC (Required Local Contribution)
- Capital Expense
- Transportation Expense
- Budget in Excess of RLC

### **2. Chapter 70**

The education funding provided to communities and regional school districts by the state (funded through the DESE budget) is called Ch. 70 Funds and is based on the section of state law which authorizes it. In FY 2010, Ayer received approximately \$4,253,000 and Shirley received approximately \$4,395,000.

### **3. Charter School**

The 1993 Education Reform Act allows for the creation of approved alternative schools which although funded through public dollars are allowed to operate on a model described in their charter. Students who attend charter schools are funded by a reduction in their home community's Ch. 70 aid, which is sent to the charter school.

#### **4. Foundation Enrollment**

Foundation enrollment is a count of the number of pupils for whom a school district is financially responsible on October 1st of any given year. It is comprised primarily of local resident school children attending their community's local or regional school district. However, it also includes students for whom the district is paying tuition, such as those at Commonwealth charter schools, other public school districts, vocational schools special education schools and other settings. It does not include tuitioned-in students from other districts, because their home districts are paying for those students' costs.

#### **5. "Hold Harmless"**

The Regional Planning Board realized that it was highly unlikely that the implementation of the assessment model would work perfectly in the early years of a region. In fact, that realization proved to be correct. The RPB, in anticipation of this, developed the "Hold Harmless" language that appears in the agreement. The language guarantees that each community will pay as its base amount, the total spent for the school budget in the year prior to regionalization. The language further provides for a 20% per year change in assessment in order to provide a smooth financial transition for the town required to pay a higher assessment.

#### **6. Operating Capital**

Equipment needs which are funded in the operating budget. This could include photocopiers, vehicles, computers and technology that are replenished on an annual basis, often on a rotating basis by building, department or grade level, for example. Minor building repairs and upgrades could also be included.

#### **7. Major Capital**

Equipment and facility needs which are long term in nature. This includes the buildings and facilities. Large capital expenditures (e.g., the addition/renovation of the middle/high school) like these are often funded by "debt exclusion" overrides.

#### **8. MSBA**

This is the Massachusetts School Building Authority. This independent state authority controls/approves school building projects. It reimburses school districts (region and local) based on a formulaic model. Ayer as a standalone district would receive a reimbursement rate of 54%; Shirley alone would receive 59%. Together, as a region, the base rate would be 57% - plus, as a new region, Ayer/Shirley would get an additional 6% with an additional a 3-5% building renovation credit and green building credit bringing the total to 66 to 68%.

#### **9. RLC (Required Local Contribution)**

The DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) utilizes a formula based on several factors (primarily income and property wealth) which determines the minimum amount that a community must spend on education.

## **10. “Excess of RLC”**

Region member towns are required to fund its school budget by a minimum amount determined by the DESE. This is called the Required Local Contribution (RLC). Most regional school district member towns find that amount to be insufficient to meet the educational needs of the students in the region. The amount that the district spends beyond the RLC is called the “excess” of RLC. It is the only discretionary amount in the calculation of the “assessment”.

## **11. School Choice**

The school choice program allows parents to send their children to schools in communities other than the city or town in which they reside. Tuition is paid by the sending district to the receiving district. The base tuition is \$5,000/yr plus any additional Special Education costs. Districts may elect not to enroll school choice students if no space is available. Once a student is admitted he/she may remain through graduation. It is an additive revenue stream for the receiving school district.

## **12. Super Town Meeting**

In order to have an approved regional budget, both towns have to vote “yes” to their assessment. If one or both reject the assessment, the first step is to return to the Regional School Committee for review and budget modification; assessments are then brought back to the two towns. If either or both reject, the School Committee has the power to call a single joint town meeting for both communities. This “Super” town meeting then votes a budget and appropriate assessments.

## **13. Transportation Reimbursement**

Regional School Districts are reimbursed for some of the costs of transportation for students more than 1.5 miles from school. The rate in 07-08 was near 90%. It fell to 29% during the current economic crisis and is currently at 50-55%. This would bring \$200,000+ to the new region. Local districts receive no reimbursement.

## Section 2: Educational/Regional Terms

1. Advisor/Advisee Program
2. AP Course
3. Charter School
4. DESE
5. Regional Planning Board (RPB)
6. Regional School Committee (RSC)
7. Teaming
8. Transitional School Committee (TSC)
9. Virtual High School (VHS)

### 1. Advisor/Advisee Program

This program is designed to assist middle school students in connecting with an adult in the learning community. Students meet with advisors on a weekly basis in small groups so that they can become known as individuals in the building. The goal of an advisee/advisor program is to address the social and emotional needs of middle school students through activities focused on communication practice, ownership/responsibility, recognition, citizenship and belonging.

### 2. AP Course

AP is an acronym for Advanced Placement. These are high level challenging courses for high school students. AP exams, offered through the College Board, are offered once a year in May. If the student scores a 3, 4, or 5, he/she receives credit which is accepted at most colleges and universities. AP courses help students to gain skills that allow an edge in the college admission process and demonstrate an ability to complete college level work. Some of the AP courses that could be available include: Biology, Chemistry, Calculus, Computer Science, English Literature, French, German, Spanish, Physics, Psychology, U.S. History and World History.

### 3. Charter School

A charter school is a public school that is governed by a board of trustees and operates independently of any school committee under a five year charter granted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. For each child that a Commonwealth charter school enrolls, it receives a tuition amount from the state equal to a per-pupil amount calculated by the Department's School Finance Unit. The state then deducts the same amount from the sending district's (school district pertaining to the municipality in which the student resides) state aid account. Like other public schools, Commonwealth charter schools are eligible to receive federal and state grant funds.

### 4. DESE

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (formerly call the "DOE", Department of Education).

**5. Regional Planning Board (RPB)**

Regional Planning Board - This is the six member group (three from each town) who have studied regionalization and who have produced the regional agreement. This group, originally formed in 2007, is made up of one school committee member from each district and 2 members from the community.

**6. Regional School Committee (RSC)**

The Regional School Committee will consist of six (6) members; three (3) from Ayer and three (3) from Shirley. They will become the governing body of the Regional School District on July 1, 2010. The initial election will contain staggered durations of service resulting in one member being elected each year in each town.

**7. Teaming**

This is a model of school organization, often associated with middle schools. It is designed to make a larger entity present itself on a smaller scale which allows students to better manage the academic environment. A “team” of content area (math, science, ELA, social studies, etc.) teachers are assigned to the same group of students which allows the teaching group to better know and understand individual student needs. Both Ayer and Shirley currently utilize this model as local districts and plan to continue the practice as a region.

**8. Transitional School Committee (TSC)**

The Transitional School Committee (TSC) will come into existence shortly after the March 6<sup>th</sup> vote. If regionalization passes in each community, the agreement details how a TSC will be formed. Each town’s School Committee will appoint two of its members and one community member to serve from March through June 30, 2010. The TSC will be the governing body for the Regional School District during this period.

**9. Virtual High School (VHS)**

VHS, Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides online courses to participating schools. Course offerings include a wide variety of high school level courses, as well as professional development courses.

VHS courses offer students opportunities to gain proficiency in online collaboration, accessing, and processing data in an online environment. In addition to the academic benefits of each course, students learn how to use the Internet and its vast resources in their search for information. Schools benefit from participation in VHS by increasing the number of faculty and students on campus who have a high degree of technological skills. VHS offers a variety of courses rich in content and bearing high school credit to students 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Once logged in, a student may be learning from an instructor halfway around the world or collaborating on an assignment with diverse learners from across the country.