

Ware Regionalization Study

Introduction

The Town of Ware hired the services of The Management Solution, Inc. (TMS) to conduct a preliminary feasibility study of regionalizing with a neighboring school district. This report is in response to several questions put forth in a guidance document from the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS), *Steps to Regionalization* – Steps A-F, which provides the framework outlined in the TMS Proposal.

In order to answer the questions in the MARS guidance document, Dr. Judy Houle, SFO, Vice President of Entrepreneurship, and Michael DeBarge, Associate Consultant for Business Services and Special Projects, conducted a review of pertinent documents and interviewed Ware Public Schools administrators in order to better understand the district's programs and facilities. Town Manager, Stuart Beckley, was also interviewed in order to better understand the genesis of the study and to provide the Board of Selectmen with information in order to inform next steps.

This report is divided into six sections, corresponding to the sections of the MARS guidance document. There are some limitations in this work as there has not yet been a partner clearly identified by Ware to engage in this initial stage. Many of the questions that require answers will not be able to be fully answered without a definitive partner in the process. The research done on this project and the extent to which answers can be generated will be outlined in each of the sections below:

Section A: Begin Discussions and Contact DESE

Section B: Identify Incentives to Regionalize

Section C: Determine Type of Region

Section D: Utilized Self-Assessment Tool for Measuring District Capacity

Section E: Determine Advantages to Regionalization

Section F: Determine Challenges to Regionalization

TMS holds no position regarding whether it is either a positive or a negative for a community to be part of a regional school district or not. In each case there are both opportunities and challenges to a formalized relationship of this kind. For towns considering joining or starting a

region there are significant challenges as well as a number of potential benefits. Each town has its own context that must be considered when making this decision. Any advantages or challenges addressed in this report will be drawn solely from the data collected and do not constitute any formal recommendation on whether or not the Town of Ware should or should not pursue regionalizing with another district.

Section A: Begin Discussions and Contact DESE

The Board of Selectmen engaged in a conversation with the School Committee in 2018. The Ware and Warren Boards of Selectmen held a joint meeting in September 2018 to gauge interest in the possibility of Ware joining the Quaboag Regional School District, which currently includes the towns of Warren and West Brookfield. At that meeting, according to a report posted to MassLive on September 13, 2018, both boards expressed some interest in exploring the possibility of merging:

https://www.masslive.com/news/2018/09/ware_warren_selectmen_express.html.

Inquiries were made of three other neighboring districts: Belchertown, Palmer, and Quabbin Regional. None of these districts were interested in pursuing a merger with Ware. An article posted to MassLive on June 27, 2018, the Belchertown School Committee did receive and briefly discuss a letter of inquiry from the Ware Selectmen, indicating that they were not interested in a merger with Ware:

https://www.masslive.com/news/2018/06/belchertown_school_committee_w.html. The other districts were queried by phone and did not express interest in a merger.

The TMS team charged with this task, Dr. Judith Houle, SFO, and Mr. Michael DeBarge, contacted the School Governance unit at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to alert them that the town was engaging in this preliminary work. When asked if a specific partner had been identified, the team noted that this was a preliminary study and a definitive partner had not yet been named. The DESE representatives on the call stated that it would be difficult to determine the compatibility of the two districts and define the work ahead without that step.

Given that caveat, the School Governance team did state that there are other ways to partner with area districts. The first is a regionalization of the districts wishing to enter into that agreement. The second is through a cooperative agreement, where two or more districts might be able to share some services without fully regionalizing. The School Governance team noted that there may be some efficiencies and cost savings to be had in either scenario. There would also be some challenges that would need to be addressed in either case. Should the town choose to move forward, Christine Lynch, the head of the School Governance Unit at the Department stated that they are willing to offer assistance.

Questions to Consider

The MARS guidance document suggests that the initial stages assess five areas of the district's services: academics, quality of programs and services, technology, physical plant, and fiscal issues. The TMS team gathered relevant documents and met with Michael Brown, Director of Information Services and Tech Support, Christopher Dymon, Director of Buildings and Grounds, and Jan Yardley, Director of Accountability, to gather information for this section of the report.

1. Academics

The academic program is a cooperative effort between the Superintendent of Schools, Director of Accountability and Curriculum, Director of Special Education, and principals and assistant principals of Ware's three schools. While there is no written curriculum cycle, all content areas are reviewed on a bi-annual basis. Teachers work with administrators to crosswalk their core programs and additional curriculum resources to ensure that the materials used with students are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The written curriculum documents are currently shared internally. The goal for the 2019-2020 school year is to review all of the documents, finalize the drafts, and then publish them to the district's web site.

The district recently purchased a new Literacy textbook series for grades K-6 from McGraw-Hill Education, titled *Wonders*, selected after the latest curriculum review. Teachers are now in year 2 of its implementation, under a 5-year agreement with the publisher. This textbook series serves as the foundation of the instructional delivery of the English Language Arts curriculum in those grades.

When considering textbook series, which are a key component of any subject area, the partner districts will want to merge products used to ensure that there is consistency among schools within the new entity. The adoption of a textbook series is easily a six-figure expense to any one district, which includes all hard copy materials. Most textbook publishers also offer online components to the series, which require site licenses. Those fees are already part of the annual budget for most school districts, so the likelihood is that the costs would remain the same or might be slightly higher or lower, depending on the publisher. Consumable supplies (workbooks, etc.) are also part of an annual cost. Depending on the textbooks used, the cost differential would likely be minimal for consumables.

In addition to the core content areas of English-Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, all Ware students have the opportunity to participate in courses in the visual and performing arts, as well as physical education and health. Financial constraints

in prior years led to some interrupted services in these areas in Ware, particularly the arts. The Superintendent and School Committee have worked together to find the resources necessary to ensure that the arts are an integral part of the total educational program across the district and these programs are now flourishing. Students at Ware Junior Senior High School are able to take Spanish courses in order to fulfill a foreign language requirement, as well.

The Ware Public Schools have leveraged the power of The Virtual High School, Inc. (VHS) to allow high school students the ability to enhance their education through this online platform. For students wishing to take courses that would not have enough enrollment to support a teacher, this option allows them the opportunity to engage in a wide range of courses. Credit recovery options are available for students who may need some extra coursework to meet requirements. There are options for the study of foreign languages not available at the high school level (French, German, Italian, Latin, and Russian). Expanded offerings in all other disciplines as well as Advanced Placement level courses are available to students who wish to pursue options not available in their brick and mortar environment. Given that many colleges and universities now offer online options as part of their overall coursework, the ability for high school students to have access to online education is helpful to preparing students for college work. The integrity of this program and access to it would also need to be a consideration in any discussion with a potential partner district.

2. Quality of Programs and Services

Each year, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education publishes an accountability report for every school and district in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Recent changes in the state's assessment system (MCAS) and changes in the Department's criteria for student and school success have changed the rating system. One of the main purposes of MCAS is to assess the quality of the core academic areas in Massachusetts' public schools. In 2018, the district was noted as making partial progress toward targets for student learning growth, as measured by the MCAS assessments. In 2019, the district was rated as making substantial progress toward those targets. It is clear that recent focus by the district on improving student learning have yielded gains. In addition to these overall academic gains, a focus on increasing student readiness for college and career at the secondary level has resulted in the addition of new opportunities, as outlined below.

At the high school level, several new programs have been implemented in order to give students more options as they look toward readiness for college and career. The first of these programs, designed to introduce students to options in the field of emergency

services, includes two electives. The descriptions of these programs were gathered through document and web site review, as well as information from school administration.

One of these options, *Criminal Justice*, is an introduction to the inner workings of the three significant law functions within the United States: Law Enforcement, Courts, and Corrections. Students interact with members of law enforcement, corrections, and the court system as a means for learning from their professional experiences.

In addition to the Criminal Justice Program, Ware Juniors and Seniors can take *Introduction to Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Services*. Students who choose this course are instructed utilizing the same information taught at the Massachusetts Fire Academy. They learn the roles and responsibilities Firefighters and EMTs play in their community. In partnership with the Ware Fire Department (WFD), students travel to the WFD training facilities to learn about firefighting tools, practice search and rescue, and some basic skills necessary as prerequisites to becoming an Emergency Medical Technician. Ware has recently been recognized by the State Fire Marshal's office as a pioneer in this area and a model they would like to replicate in other districts.

In the fall of 2019, Ware High School implemented a Certified Nursing Assistant Program with a \$20,000.00 grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As part of the implementation plan, the district sought and was awarded an additional mini-grant from The Baystate Mary Lane and Baystate Wing Hospital Community Benefit Advisory Council. This grant program is designed to benefit local community-based nonprofit organizations who are helping address unmet health and social needs in the Quaboag Hills Region of Hampshire, Hampden and Worcester County. Grant funds were awarded to the Ware High School Certified Nursing (CNA) Training Program held in collaboration with Holyoke Community College. The funds from the state and Baystate helped to support set up of the CNA program that began in September. The curriculum offers 260 hours of classroom instruction and 48 hours of clinical training for Ware High School students as an elective. The program, which includes career pathway advising and job placement services, also provides the students with Nursing Assistant/Home Health Aide certification, CPR/First Aid, and Healthcare Interactive for basic or advanced dementia care.

Grade 12 students may also enroll in community college courses for dual credit at both the high school and college level. This gives students an opportunity to experience the rigor of college-level content either online at school or on the campus of an area college.

The district has also embarked on an initiative to increase opportunities for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) offerings across the district.

The Ware Middle School was recently awarded a grant to bring Steampunkinetics, teamwork, and creative problem-solving workshops to students in the district. ModVic is excited to be working with the Ware Public Schools on efforts to bring the themes of resiliency and artistic “recycling” to local classrooms. Funding from the Mass Cultural Council – STARS Residency FY20 will be earmarked for selected students from Ware Middle School to participate in the artist-in-residence program with ModVic.

Students in grades 7 and 8 at Ware Junior Senior High School now have the opportunity to study computer science and computational thinking as part of their overall program of studies. A computer science teacher was hired, effective with the 2019-20 school year, to offer these classes to the students. High school students have the opportunity to build on these skills with electives in the areas of computer programming, coding, and principles of engineering. The principles of engineering course are also designed to prepare students for career pathways in the areas of manufacturing and construction.

These recent expansions to the course offerings and opportunities allow students to apply their learning to real-world contexts. The variety of offerings give students the chance to sample college and career pathways, while they pursue their passions. The unique offerings provided by the Ware Public Schools, particularly in the areas of emergency services and health sciences, are not commonly found in other districts and are indicative of the direction into deeper learning that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is promoting since the appointment of its new Commissioner, Jeffrey Riley.

These offerings could be considered advantageous by a partner district, particularly at the high school level. If students from another geographic location wished to participate, there would need to be a consideration for transportation to Ware High School for all or part of those students’ school day.

3. Technology

In recent years, the Ware Public Schools have made significant efforts to expand the availability and use of technology for instructional purposes. These efforts have primarily manifested through exposing teachers to new technology they can, in turn, make available in the classroom, and strongly emphasizing computer and technology safety to staff and students. The district Technology Plan available on the Ware Schools website provides insight into the technology goals and progress made in achieving them.

Wi-Fi access for devices in the Ware Schools is in its final stages. The current focus is on ensuring cell phones and other mobile devices have access to the wireless network.

Continued effort is also being applied to upgrading and maintaining firewalls to ensure safe access and use of the schools' technology resources and compliance with Federal laws for the protection of minors on the Internet. Other developments have included hiring increasing the number of computer and engineering teachers in the district, indicating the district's focus on improving technology instruction for students.

The district's technology goals are primarily focused on increasing accessibility for interested people, whether staff or students. This may not result in 1:1 district technology. Different instructional methods result in varying levels of interest in using technology in the classroom for both teachers and students. The IT staff continues to make use of its available resources, including limited personnel, to service the district's technology needs. The campus location allows for the IT staff to easily move to schools and classrooms where they are needed, and the district maintains its own underground fiber network that ensures greater control and adaptability to new technology needs.

The establishment of a regional school district would pose technology related challenges, as well as potential advantages. Ware has, in addition to its own underground fiber network, unified phone and key card lock systems that are district wide. A new regional district may not be able to take full advantage of the fiber network, and both the phone and key card lock systems would need to be expanded to include the whole district, or Ware would need to adopt the systems of their partner district, which would have to be factored into the cost considerations of a merger. The IT staff would also be unable to access other buildings in the regional district with the same ease as those on the Ware campus, which could result in overextending the IT department and necessitating that new positions be added to this department, which would most likely come from a partner district. However, there would need to be consideration of whether or not a combined IT staff would be sufficient to meet the need of an expanded regional district. Of crucial concern is ensuring that the technology goals established by the Ware Public Schools align with those of potential partners in creating a regional district.

As noted above, key issues to consider in this process are the merging of two networks. There would be two ways of doing this. First is establishing a Wide Area Network (WAN), which would involve the installation of fiber optic wiring between the two districts. Depending on the partner district, a feasibility study would be necessary to determine if and how this could be done. There would be a capital outlay cost that would be borne by the partners as well as routine maintenance that would need to be resourced in both personnel and money. The second method for merging the networks would be to ensure that all district-level applications are cloud-hosted on remote servers, which would not require wiring but would include ongoing costs for hosting these applications.

A merging of systems between the two districts would also be required. For example, reporting requirements by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education mean that each school district in the Commonwealth submit student and staff data by way of an upload from a Student Information System (SIS) to the Department. These data are reported quarterly and annually by district and then broken down by schools within that district. If the partner district and the Ware Public Schools do not have the same SIS, then there would be a need to determine which system the new district would use. If either or both districts' systems were hosted on a local server, there would be the need to host that system on a remote server. This would involve licensing fees that would be an annual recurring cost. Even if the districts were to utilize a WAN, the need to cloud host student data for reporting purposes would be an additional cost.

Another area for consideration is financial accounting systems. Due to key functions such as payroll, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and tracking expenditures, as well as reporting requirements, both districts would need to merge into a single system. Regardless of whether or not the districts were connected by a WAN, this would also require a cloud-hosted solution or a single district-wide server so the transactions and data reporting from both entities can be reported as one.

The third and most important consideration are the systems used by teachers and students for instruction. Currently, the Ware Public Schools use Microsoft Office and its Teams platform for this purpose. The other products that many schools use are Google and Google Classroom. Depending on the partner district, that would also be a potential additional cost to merge them to a common platform. This would be particularly important for Ware students who may attend school in another town or students from another town in the new district attending Ware schools.

4. Physical Plant

The Ware Public Schools are comprised of three academic buildings. Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School serves grades Pre-K through grade 3, Ware Middle School houses grade 4 through grade 6, and Ware Junior/ Senior High School contains grades 7 through 12. The three buildings are located on the same campus, providing easy access for district personnel to all three buildings.

The Ware Public Schools also have several large renovation projects that require immediate and near future attention. First, the boilers at the elementary school are being replaced. The current boilers are originals, making them around 50 years old. The project is estimated to cost around \$1 million. The age of the current boilers makes this project's timely completion imperative. Second, the exterior doors and windows of Ware Middle

School are scheduled to be replaced in the spring of 2020. The doors are about 60 years old, and their replacement is necessary in order to meet safety requirements. There are two other major projects that need to be completed in the near future, which are refurbishing the outside track and repaving the parking lots and driveways. These are all necessary renovations that cannot be postponed, and therefore must be considered in the decision-making process as to whether or not Ware should merge with another partner.

Due to the necessary major renovations scheduled to begin presently and in the near future, the MSBA requires districts to consider regionalizing with a neighboring community as a cost saving method. Closing a building in need of major renovations would cut expenses considerably, but with each academic building in Ware at full capacity, a neighboring community would have to be able to absorb an entire building's worth of students and staff to make that possible. While the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has made providing funds for districts interested in regionalizing a priority, it is unclear whether enough funds would be made available to enable a potential regional district to expand an existing school to accommodate Ware's students and staff or for Ware's school buildings to accommodate students from a neighboring district. A more comprehensive facilities study with a clearly identified partner would need to be conducted to make this determination.

The other cost saving potential for facilities is the ability to close a building. Maintaining an academic building is a major expense for any school district. Utilities alone are a considerable proportion of a district's facilities' budget. Recurring and expected expenses associated with the building's heat, water, sewer, pest control, power/electricity, and general maintenance are also joined with unexpected costs such as damage, vandalism, or unexpected but necessary repairs. Regionalizing a school district presents the opportunity for one or more of the districts to close a building as services are consolidated in the most efficient manner possible. A key question is whether a newly combined regional school district could close a building based on current and future capacities.

Despite facing a slight enrollment decline between 2015-2019 (see Table 1 below), all three of Ware's academic buildings are at full capacity. The enrollment decline would either have to continue at its current rate for several years to begin to open space or the rate of decline would need to increase considerably. At present, this is not an option for Ware Schools unless a new regional district has enough space to absorb an entire building's worth of staff and students. Quaboag Regional School District, as of now the only district which has expressed interest in beginning discussions to form a regional district, would therefore need to have enough space in its buildings to house an entire building's worth of Ware students.

Quaboag has three academic buildings for the entire regional district: an elementary school in each Warren and West Brookfield, and a combined Middle/ High School. The total district student population is 1,303 as of the 2018-2019 school year. The total enrollment rose to around 1,400 students in each 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 before dropping off to its current level. The enrollment trend is less clear in Quaboag than in Ware, but without a more detailed analysis of the potential partner, it is difficult to determine whether the declining enrollment in each district would allow for a building closure in the next few years. As of the time of this report, it appears unlikely that a building could be closed in either Ware or Quaboag in the event the two regionalize.

Table 1: District Enrollment - Ware

Academic Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of students enrolled in WPS	1,241	1,269	1,226	1,213	1,189	1134
Percent change from previous year		2.3%	-3.4%	-1.1%	-2.0%	-4.6%

*Data sourced from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website and Ware Public Schools.

5. Fiscal issues

The fiscal impacts on a combined district, both short- and long-term, are ones that will need to be considered, moving forward. Major considerations are transportation, human resources, computer networks, and facilities. Computer networks and facilities have been addressed in earlier sections of this report, so this section will address the transportation, human resources, and school choice areas. For the purposes of this study, the Quaboag Regional School District has been used as a comparison, as this district is the only one expressing interest in pursuing regionalization with Ware at the current time.

Transportation: This is an area that can prove to have the most financial savings for a regional district. The annual state budget provides for reimbursement of transportation for regional school districts, recognizing the additional miles that are required to bus students across towns within a single entity. State law defines that reimbursement as applicable to students who live one and a half miles or more from the school of attendance. Students who are transported less than that distance are not able to be counted in the reimbursement rate. If a shuttle is required to get a student from one school to another, that shuttle is fully reimbursable, even if the distance traveled on one or the other vehicle is less than 1½ miles (Massachusetts General Law c. 71, §16C).

The amount of the reimbursement by the Commonwealth varies from year-to-year. The maximum amount is 80% of the transportation cost. However, the law states that this is “subject to appropriation,” so it is not a guaranteed rate from year-to-year. It is difficult to quantify a potential savings to the Town of Ware at this point in time.

Looking at the Quaboag Regional School District budget for FY20, the total transportation budget is \$1,584,547.00. According to the budget document reviewed for this report. The anticipated regional transportation reimbursement for FY20 is \$712,421.00 or 45% of the total cost of transportation, which would be indicative of the fact that not all students live at or beyond 1½ miles from their school of attendance. The FY20 transportation budget for Ware is \$1,605,077.00. What percentage of this amount would be reimbursable would be contingent on how many students would reside at or outside of the 1½ mile radius from the school of attendance. Any lengthening of routes due to transporting students to towns within a merged district would also need to be considered as likely increases to overall transportation costs yet could be eligible for additional reimbursement.

Human Resources: The business of education is extremely labor-intensive. School districts require administrators to oversee all operations and drive curriculum and instruction improvements. Classrooms need teachers, students with special needs require specially licensed teachers to meet their needs, and support staff are needed to assist in this work. Students are fed 1-2 times daily, requiring staff to run food service operations. Nursing staff are necessary to ensure the health and well-being of all students. Custodial and maintenance staff are required to ensure that buildings are clean, safe, and properly maintained. Both at the state and national levels, it is estimated that these costs comprise approximately 67% percent of the overall budget for any school district. When looking at the prospect of regionalization through a fiscal lens, this analysis is critical to determine what savings and/or additional costs would be borne by a regional system.

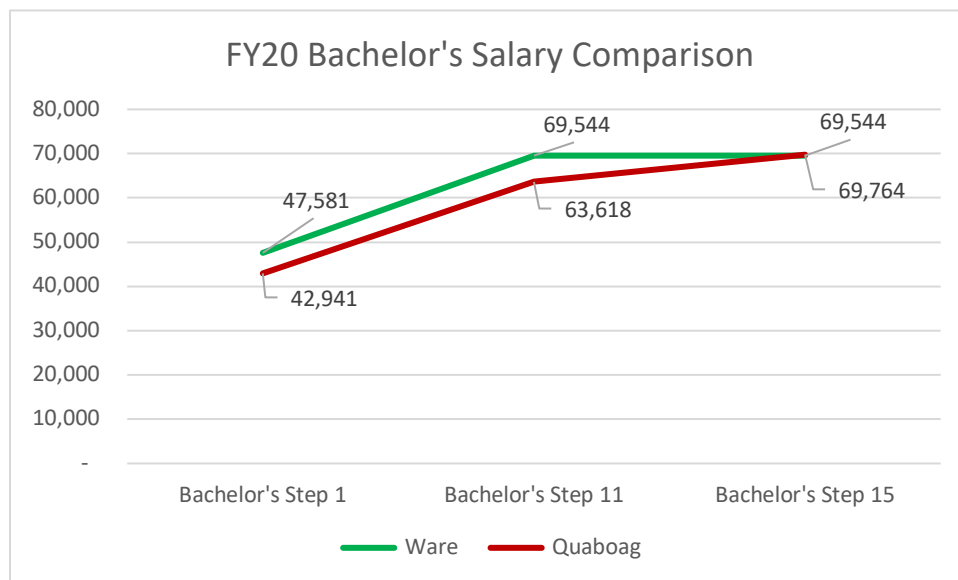
Salaries are the largest portion of this consideration, alongside benefits offered to employees. For the purposes of this exercise, an analysis of the teachers’ salary scales for Ware and Quaboag Regional was conducted, as teachers make up the largest employee group in any school district. Both districts have a similar step/lane structure, with financial incentives for both experience and education built in. The lanes are commensurate with degree earned and extra credits beyond the degree as follows:

- Bachelor’s Degree
- Bachelor’s +15 Credit Hours
- Master’s Degree
- Master’s +15 Credit Hours
- Master’s +30 Credit Hours
- Master’s +45 Credit Hours (or PhD).

It should be noted that teachers must have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree to enter the profession with an initial license. In order to maintain licensure, they are required to get a Master's Degree within 5 years of employment. In order to retain their licenses, they must continually update their training and expertise through professional workshops and/or additional coursework.

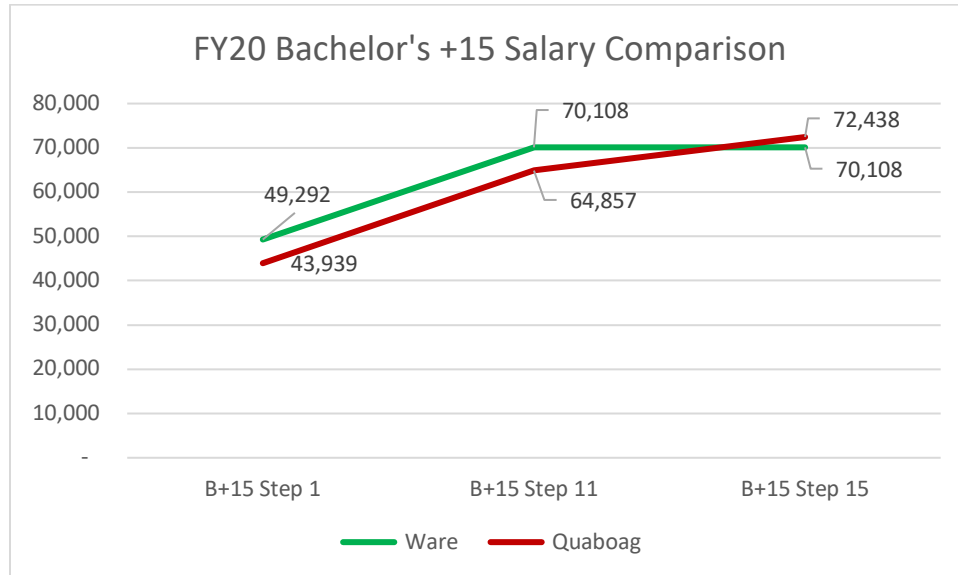
Depending on education, Ware teachers can be on an 11-step, 12-step, or 13-step scale, commensurate with their experience. Quaboag teachers have a 15-step scale for experience at all educational levels. The figures below compare the FY20 salary scales for both districts at the beginning of the scale, the appropriate top of the Ware scale by educational level with a comparison at the same level for Quaboag, and the top step for Quaboag at all levels.

Figure 1: FY20 Bachelor's Salary Comparison



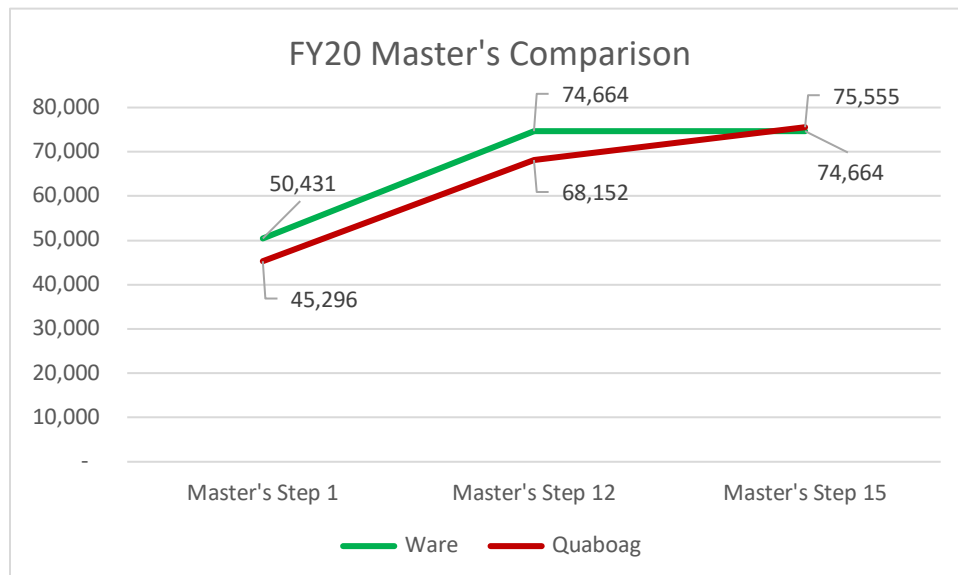
Note: The Ware salary scale at the Bachelor's level peaks at Step 11. Quaboag continues on to Step 15 (each step is equivalent to a year's experience).

Figure 2: FY20 Bachelor's +15 Extra Credit Hours Comparison



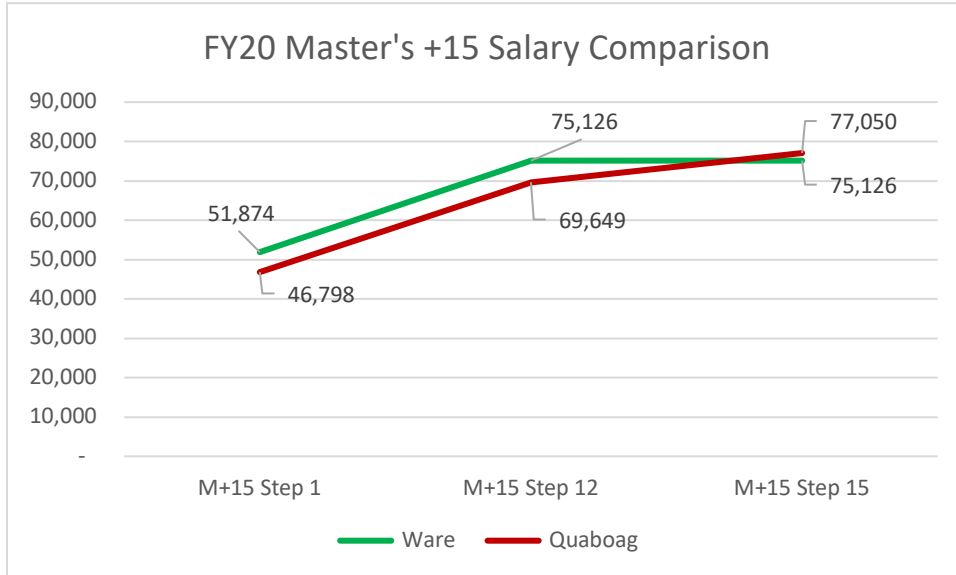
Note: The Ware salary scale at the Bachelor's +15 level peaks at Step 11. Quaboag continues on to Step 15.

Figure 3: FY20 Master's Degree Comparison



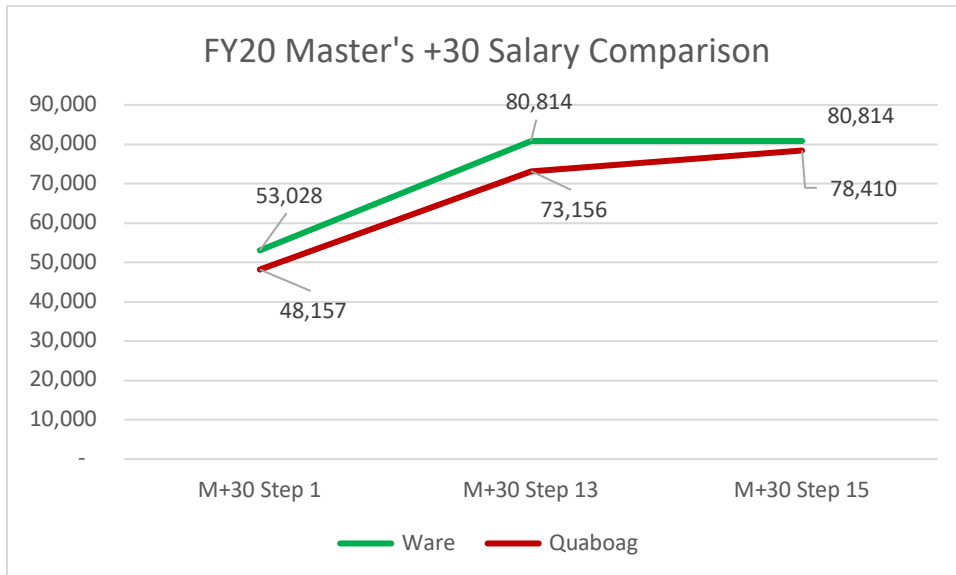
Note: The Ware salary scale at the Master's level peaks at Step 12. Quaboag continues on to Step 15.

Figure 4: FY20 Master's +15 Extra Credit Hours Comparison



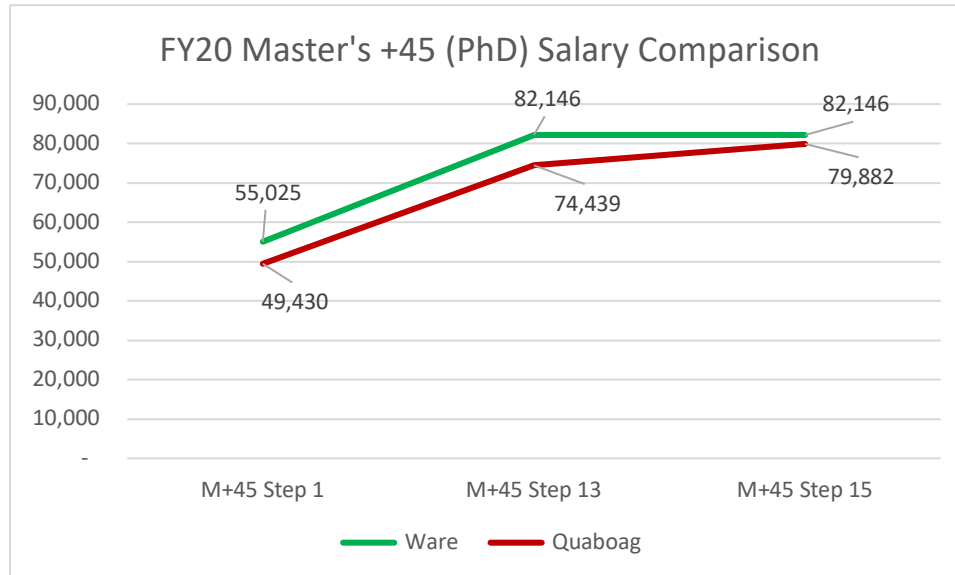
Note: The Ware salary scale at the Master's +15 level peaks at Step 12. Quaboag continues on to Step 15.

Figure 5: FY20 Master's +30 Credit Hours Comparison



Note: The Ware salary scale at the Master's +30 level peaks at Step 13. Quaboag continues on to Step 15.

Figure 6: FY20 Master's +45 (PhD) Comparison



Note: The Ware salary scale at the Master's +45 level peaks at Step 13. Quaboag continues on to Step 15.

A full comparison of these salary scales is contained in Appendix A of this report. The real cost of the disparities in the two salary scales is beyond the scope of this report. These costs would be determined by the number of teachers (and employees within any classification) in each district and the impact on the total cost of those salaries on the overall budget of a newly merged district. If Ware and Quaboag were to enter into an agreement to pursue regionalization, a more thorough analysis of these salaries, in addition to all other salaries, would need to be conducted.

This raises another issue for consideration, that of salaries and benefits for the employees of a newly merged district. Any employee groups covered by collective bargaining would require negotiating new contracts that ensure the integrity of the compensation and benefits packages for all. Massachusetts General Law c. 71, §42B requires that each teacher be paid no less than s/he is making in their current position. Based on the differences in any two collective bargaining agreements, this will require one of the two entities to increase their labor costs accordingly, which would increase labor costs borne by the entire regional district. These costs are unknown at this time and will not be able to be fully known if or until these negotiations were to proceed.

For the purposes of this analysis, benefits include any non-salary compensation as well as health insurance. As mentioned previously, due to the role of collective bargaining in

determining compensation, an exact or even approximate figure for a regional district's costs in this area is difficult to determine without a definitive partner. Non-salary compensation includes longevity, stipends, and other forms of extra duty pay awarded to qualified/ participating staff members. These forms of compensation are contractually determined via collective bargaining, so the cost of bringing the disparities between Ware and its potential partner are unknown. A comparison of a few common varieties of extra duty pay in Table 2 demonstrates how contract negotiations can result in specific arrangements for compensation. These specific conditions can significantly impact the total costs for a district, and without a definitive partner with whom costs can be compared, it is not possible to estimate the total costs at this time.

Table 2: Extra Duty Pay Comparison

Extra Duty Type	Ware	Quaboag
Department Chair	2 teachers: \$1537 5 teachers: \$2422 *Average increase of \$295 per additional teacher	≤ 5 teachers: \$3400 \$250 for each additional teacher over 5 Ex. 6 teachers: \$3650
Longevity	12-15 years: \$250 16-20 years: \$500 21-25 years: \$875 26-29 years: \$1050 29+ years: \$1250	14-18 years: \$700 19-23 years: \$900 42+ years: \$1100
Teaching Mentor	1 mentee: \$600 2 mentees: \$850	\$1500

Insurance benefits are also difficult to compare between districts. Insurance rates are dictated by the pool of people who pay into the policy, as well as what contract negotiations determine to be the employee and employer shares of insurance costs. As

such, this is another area where the lack of concrete negotiations complicates the ability to present specific figures on costs. The increased number of staff in the new regional district might increase overall costs for insurance, particularly if the employer/employee share of the costs would require one or the other entity to increase the employer share. The likelihood of the lowest employer contribution rate being agreed to by staff is dependent upon what is decided in negotiations as applied to pay and benefits, and relevant labor law restrictions and requirements. The table below compares some of the insurance rates and benefits that Ware and Quaboag offer its employees. The comparison illustrates the need for the partners to create uniform rates and benefits across the new regional district, and the additional expenses that will come along with that.

Table 3: Insurance Rates Comparison

District	Plans Offered	Monthly Premium (Individual/ family)	Employee Contribution (21 pays) (Individual/ Family)	Employee Contribution (26 pays) (Individual/ Family)
Ware	HMO Blue NE; Blue Care PPO	\$679.84/ \$1699.49; \$717.35/ \$1708.09	\$77.70/ \$194.23; \$102.48/ \$256.87	\$62.75/ \$156.88; \$82.77/ \$207.47
Quaboag	HMO Blue NE; Preferred Blue PPO	\$804.26/ \$2109.61; \$995.19/ \$2610.54	\$201.07/ \$527.40; \$248.80/ \$652.64	\$92.80/ \$243.42; \$115.85/ \$303.88

*Data sourced from respective districts' summary of benefits packets.

District and School-Level Administration: A common area for examination of the potential savings in a regionalization proposal is district- and school-level administration. At the district level, the positions are charged with overall operations of the district. These include policy and regulations to ensure student and staff safety, finances, human resources oversight, buildings and grounds maintenance and upkeep, food service operations, technology and related systems, curriculum, instruction, and building-specific functions in all of these areas. While a merged district might mean that these functions can be merged in some areas, the expansion of the number of schools, students, and staff

members might result in the increase in the number of administrators, and the staff to support them, necessary to run district operations. This will need careful examination should Ware choose to move forward with more concrete actions.

School Choice: An area where there is likely potential for savings in the event Ware does pursue regionalization is in school choice. State law requires that any school district which receives students who live outside of the town in which they attend school shall receive tuition from the school that the student would otherwise attend. As a result, a district can either receive or expend significant amounts of money solely on the basis of how many students choose to “choice-in” or “choice-out” of that district. Table 4 illustrates the districts that the most Ware students “choice-in” to and the financial impact to the town.

Quaboag Regional School District receives the third highest level of Ware resident students, resulting in Ware Schools paying almost \$150,000, as of FY19. If Ware were to join Quaboag, these students would no longer be leaving the district. It is also possible that other students who are leaving Ware might choose to stay in-district due to course or service offerings that the regional district could provide. However, the largest destination for Ware residents, Quabbin Regional School District, receives approximately \$450,000 from Ware in school choice payments, and this would be unlikely to decrease significantly as a result of regionalizing. Due to the many factors that go into a family’s decision to send their child to a specific school district, it is difficult to predict with certainty how much would be saved through regionalizing. The most conservative approximation would suggest that most if not all of the students who choice into Quaboag would remain in Quaboag should Ware join, resulting in approximately \$150,000 in savings to the town. On the flip side, any students who choice into Ware from a partner district would also now become part of the in-district student enrollment. As a result, the district would lose their School Choice reimbursement for these students and the towns would need to apply at least some of these savings to the lost revenue on the school side in order to maintain educational programming for these students. (See page 19 for Table 4.)

Table 4: School Choice by Receiving District

District Receiving	2018 FTE	2018 Tuition	2019 FTE	2019 Tuition
Quabbin	74.5	\$450,193	80.3	\$459,354
Belchertown	45	\$260,219	36	\$198,155
Quaboag	24.2	\$124,849	29.1	\$149,180
Amherst	4	\$30,822	3	\$23,580
North Brookfield	3.2	\$18,858	4	\$24,230
Palmer	2	\$10,000	2	\$10,000
Amherst-Pelham	2	\$11,897	4	\$22,555
Total all districts	174.75	\$1,017,030	188.9	\$1,089,058

Section B: Identify Incentives to Regionalize

In discussions had at a variety of levels and an examination of source documents available to the TMS team, the incentives to regionalize seem to be primarily financial in nature. The purpose of this initial study was to determine if there are cost savings to be had by regionalizing with another school district and, if so, how much.

Funding for public school education has been an issue for many years in Massachusetts. The last real reform of the funding formula at the state level was enacted in 1992. After years of advocacy by educational groups across the Commonwealth, the Legislature has taken up this cause in earnest resulting in passage of the Student Opportunity Act of 2019. The full impact of the next round of reform to the state funding formula is not fully known as of the writing of this report, however, a 7-year phase-in period of increasing the state's contribution to the funding of public education is the result of this legislation.

The increase in mandates from the Federal Education Department and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has placed demands on public schools at an alarming rate. High-stakes accountability systems that include statewide testing that is migrating to fully online assessments have required districts to add technology resources in rapid succession. Curriculum revisions and initiatives driven by growth in the technology sector have added to this increased load. Schools are now dealing with a multitude of learning and societal issues that have caused them to add to their behavioral health staff, increased the need for additional special education resources, add to building security, and institute new health requirements including healthy options in school breakfast and lunch programs. Many of these initiatives have not come with necessary funding to institute them and schools are being asked to do more with fewer resources.

Local towns in Western Massachusetts in particular have found themselves trying to do more with limited resources as much of Massachusetts' economic growth has been focused geographically east of Route 495. As a result, towns are looking to find ways to economize and Ware is no exception.

The question remains before the town as to whether or not enough savings can be realized to make regionalization advantageous to the town. This study has begun to identify areas in which there may be cost savings. However, there are other areas in which there may be increases in costs to one or both partners in this endeavor. Whether or not the savings will outweigh the costs cannot be fully determined at this time.

Section C: Determine Type of Region

If the town decides to pursue this option, there are several ways in which to go. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education outlines two different models of regionalization that would be applicable in this situation. Additionally, per the Office of School Governance at the Department, an option to share services without fully merging is a possibility.

Model #1: Two or More Towns form Regional District: Two or more towns join to form a new regional school district. Regionalization can occur at the elementary school level, the secondary school level or an entire district, Pre-K through 12. If Ware were to find another partner interested in regionalizing, there would need to be decisions made as to what levels would regionalize: elementary, secondary, or full district.

Model #2: Current Region Enlarges to include new Town(s): An existing regional school district enlarges to include one or more new towns not currently in the region. At the current time, the Ware selectboard has approached the town of Warren, which is one of the two towns in the Quaboag Regional School District. Were this path to be pursued, then Ware would become part of the Quaboag Regional School District.

Before any forward movement can take place, if the town so chooses, a determination of who would be a partner would then resolve the question of which of these models would make the best sense. Once a definitive partner is identified, then the town could begin to take the steps necessary to join an existing regional district or create a new one with another stand-alone district.

At the point of determining which type of model to pursue that is approved by all towns concerned, either a current regional agreement would need to be amended or a new regional agreement would need to be written. This agreement would define the district, the terms under which the towns involved would come together, the make-up of a new or expanded School Committee to oversee the district, and a revamping of the financial structure from a stand-alone model to a regional model. This is a lengthy process, which would take place over the course of 2-3 years before being finalized. Once the initial stages are set in motion, determining the scope of academic programming and support services, merging technology and academic delivery systems, and collective bargaining of all contracts would need to take place before the final merger becomes complete.

Another option that can be pursued without full-on regionalization is the sharing of services between two districts. Economies of scale can take place without necessarily entering into a total overhaul of the current district. Agreements that allow for the sharing of appropriate

services can be crafted. Another approach is joint bidding of services in order to realize savings. In the past, the Ware Public Schools have taken advantage of joint bidding for transportation and other services that have resulted in cost savings.

Section D: Utilized Self-Assessment Tool for Measuring District Capacity

The Special Commission On School District Collaboration & Regionalization released its report to the State Legislature in August 2011. The framework for this preliminary study is based on aspects of regionalization that they recommend be pursued by interested partners in the early stages of this discussion.

They also suggest that the potential partners engage in a self-assessment process that delves into these topics in depth. The purpose is to determine compatibility between districts. Since its publication, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has begun to sunset its District Analysis Review Tool (DART), upon which many of the questions in the survey were built. The Department has replaced this tool with a new tool, Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR), which yields much of the same information. Much of what is available to districts is housed in the district's online security portal at the Department, as it is tied to student-specific information, which was not available to the TMS Team for reasons of student privacy.

A look at the publicly available information on RADAR, both Ware and Quaboag share many of the same demographic issues, such as:

- declining enrollments,
- similar achievement levels on state assessments,
- similar staffing levels per 100 students, and
- similar spending levels above Net School Spending (Ware = 106%, Quaboag = 103%).

A difference discovered in the data is in the per pupil spending in each of the districts. As of 2019, Ware's per pupil amount is \$14,648 and Quaboag's per pupil amount is \$13,772, a difference of \$876 per student. When comparing special education percentages, Ware has 20% of its student population identified as students with disabilities and Quaboag has 17.2% of its population identified as students with disabilities. These differences could account for some of the differences in costs. Other factors could also be driving these numbers, such as the disparities in salaries noted above or the regional transportation reimbursement. Whether or not Ware could reap some benefits of merging with Quaboag or any other district, driving down their per pupil expenditures, is unknown at the moment in time.

If the town decides to move forward with regionalization and selects a partner with whom to work, it would be appropriate for both entities to complete the self-assessment tool with the

updated resources available to them. A copy of the Self-Assessment Tool for Measuring District Capacity is contained in Appendix B of this report and would be a logical next step should the town decide to move forward.

Section E: Determine Advantages to Regionalization

As noted in the introduction to this study, TMS holds no opinion as to whether or not the Ware Public Schools should join another regional district or merge with another town to form a new one. However, there are potential advantages to this process.

First is the expansion of educational opportunities for all students in a combined district. Ware's recent focus on emergency responder and Certified Nursing Assistant programs for high school students are unique initiatives and may be curricular options that a partner district might find attractive. Depending on the partner district, there may be programs that Ware does not offer but Ware's students might be interested in accessing. This aspect of regionalizing should be considered when talking to potential partners.

Second is potential cost savings. The greatest amount of savings would be in the areas of transportation and school choice. Depending on the number of eligible students who could qualify for a transportation reimbursement, coupled with how Ware would be assessed for its share of a regional budget, would drive how much would actually be saved. School choice savings would be driven by which district would be the partner, thereby eliminating school choice from that district, and how advantageous Ware families might decide it would be to stay in district rather than choice out. This is a double-edged sword of sorts. As noted above, there could be a loss of school choice reimbursement from students who choice into Ware and that would require a means to make up for lost revenue received for these students.

The other area that could result in cost savings is in central services to the district. Assessing the administrative resource needs for a newly merged district will be a crucial next step in determining what the staffing levels should be in order to make that determination. This is difficult to assess at this time without a definitive partner at the table.

Section F: Determine Challenges to Regionalization

The challenges to regionalization have been noted throughout this report. The purpose of this section is to highlight those challenges in a single place as well as lay out other challenges that Ware would face in this process.

1. Merging Academic Programs

As noted above, different districts use different instructional materials to provide an education that is aligned with state curriculum standards and to improve student achievement and growth. For the sake of consistency across a newly merged district, there would need to be a common set of materials. Depending on the partner and the materials used, there would need to be some negotiations around what materials would be used, causing the new district to expend significant amounts of dollars to ensure that the education of all students is grounded in a common set of instructional materials.

2. Merging Technology Networks and Systems

An examination of whether or not a WAN could be established, along with potentially moving from locally hosted to cloud-based server hosting of programs will be a necessary first step. The two districts would also need to assess systems for maintaining key functions like student and staff data and financial accounting/payroll to see if there are common platforms being used or if an investment in new platforms would need to be made to unify the district and its functions. On the academic side, there would need to be a merging of technology used to support instruction, which could result in additional costs at the outset. Should Ware decide to move in this direction with a definitive partner, an assessment of these key functions within the realm of technology would need to be conducted to see what would be involved in moving forward.

3. Employee-associated Costs

In the examples used outlined above, there is a high likelihood that there could potentially be additional costs as all contracts would need to be renegotiated. These negotiations cannot, by law, result in any loss of salary for employees, so new contracts would have to ensure equity for all in a new district. Additional benefits costs would also need to be considered where applicable.

4. Willingness of the Community

The final and potentially greatest challenge to regionalization is the willingness of the community to merge with another district. A new district would mean a change of identity for the Ware Public Schools in some form. One thing that we discovered in the process of collecting the data in this report is a great sense of pride that exists in Ware regarding its schools. From athletics to academics, Ware's identity as a stand-alone district is strong. There would be a loss of this identity in some respects, whether Ware chooses to join another already established regional district or merges with another single town to create

a new regional district entity. A series of conversations with community stakeholders would be necessary to assess whether or not there is a willingness to make this move and if the will of the community is sufficient to outweigh any potential savings or additional costs.

Next Steps:

Recommended next steps in this process, should the Ware Selectboard choose to move forward, will be to expand the conversations to be had at all levels of the community. The Finance and School Committees are necessary entities with which the Selectboard needs to discuss this issue so that all can weigh the advantages and disadvantages of a potential merger with another district. Should there be consensus to move forward, a search for a potential partner or partners would be a next step. This will then allow for this initial analysis to be conducted in greater depth, using the Capacity Assessment Tool in Appendix B and expanding on the data that were gathered relative to the topics discussed in this report.

Most importantly, the broader community must be engaged in this process. Community surveys can yield some information, but a series of focus group interviews with various stakeholder groups in the town will ensure that town officials are clearly hearing the voice of the community with regard to this important decision.

Massachusetts General Law c.71, §14 dictates the process required by districts who choose to take the next step of regionalization through the establishment of a Regional Planning Committee. A warrant needs to be placed on a Town Meeting agenda to vote to establish this committee, which is then appointed by the Town Moderator. The charge of this Committee is to fully examine, with a clearly identified partner, the possibility and processes needed to regionalize. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education clearly establishes the duties of this committee, as noted below.

It should be understood that the vote authorizes the formation of a committee to **study** regionalization. It does not authorize the formation of the region. This initial vote provides a process by which the town can gather pertinent information and report back its findings about forming a region or modifying an existing one. The vote by the electorate to authorize regionalization will only take place after all of the issues have been examined. To prepare for the upcoming Town Meeting votes, your group will need to share the information you learned during your data gathering and initial discussions with the community.

The information should include:

- Enrollment Data - enrollment for the past five years and at least five years going forward
- Physical Plant Issues (MSBA funding tie-ins)
- Instructional Issues
- Fiscal Issues
- Advantages & Challenges to forming/joining a regional school district
- Other information important to **your** community

If the vote is "No," the process comes to an end unless and until a subsequent vote is taken. If the vote is "Yes," you may move on to Step 2 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, no date, *Regionalization-Phase I*, guidance document, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/regional/>).

At the heart of this process, the essential question is what is best for the children in Ware and how can the town best ensure that they receive the highest quality education possible. While every town and school district strive to be fiscally prudent in what they do, the outcomes for students must be kept at the forefront. The gravity of any decision to merge or remain a single entity will have long-range consequences, so the recommendation is to move slowly and carefully, while ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice through which consensus can be reached.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Judy Houle, SFO
Vice President of Entrepreneurship

Michael DeBarge,
Associate Consultant for
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and Special Projects

Appendix A
Teacher Salary Comparison: Ware Public Schools/Quaboag Regional School District

Table 1: Bachelor's Degree and Bachelor's +15 Credit Hours

FY20 STEP:	WPS	QRSD
B-1	\$ 47,581	\$ 42,941
B-2	\$ 49,427	\$ 44,024
B-3	\$ 51,153	\$ 46,202
B-4	\$ 52,868	\$ 48,379
B-5	\$ 54,878	\$ 50,555
B-6	\$ 56,739	\$ 52,733
B-7	\$ 58,455	\$ 54,910
B-8	\$ 61,037	\$ 57,086
B-9	\$ 63,622	\$ 59,265
B-10	\$ 66,209	\$ 61,442
B-11	\$ 69,544	\$ 63,618
B-12	N/A	\$ 65,795
B-13	N/A	\$ 66,618
B-14	N/A	\$ 67,451
B-15	N/A	\$ 69,764
B+15-1	\$ 49,292	\$ 43,939
B+15-2	\$ 50,577	\$ 45,190
B+15-3	\$ 52,309	\$ 47,376
B+15-4	\$ 54,017	\$ 49,561
B+15-5	\$ 56,026	\$ 51,747
B+15-6	\$ 57,888	\$ 53,931
B+15-7	\$ 59,901	\$ 56,116
B+15-8	\$ 62,182	\$ 58,302
B+15-9	\$ 64,490	\$ 60,487
B+15-10	\$ 66,792	\$ 62,672
B+15-11	\$ 70,108	\$ 64,857
B+15-12	N/A	\$ 67,042
B+15-13	N/A	\$ 69,226
B+15-14	N/A	\$ 70,092
B+15-15	N/A	\$ 72,438

Table 2: Master's Degree and Master's +15 Credit Hours

FY20 STEP:	WPS	QRSD
M-1	\$ 50,431	\$ 45,296
M-2	\$ 52,014	\$ 46,663
M-3	\$ 53,737	\$ 48,811
M-4	\$ 55,734	\$ 50,961
M-5	\$ 57,457	\$ 53,110
M-6	\$ 59,606	\$ 55,260
M-7	\$ 61,328	\$ 57,408
M-8	\$ 63,620	\$ 59,557
M-9	\$ 66,197	\$ 61,706
M-10	\$ 68,772	\$ 63,853
M-11	\$ 71,343	\$ 66,002
M-12	\$ 74,664	\$ 68,152
M-13	N/A	\$ 70,301
M-14	N/A	\$ 72,450
M-15	N/A	\$ 75,555
M+15-1	\$ 51,874	\$ 46,798
M+15-2	\$ 53,171	\$ 48,161
M+15-3	\$ 55,178	\$ 50,309
M+15-4	\$ 56,885	\$ 52,459
M+15-5	\$ 58,605	\$ 54,608
M+15-6	\$ 60,748	\$ 56,756
M+15-7	\$ 62,468	\$ 58,905
M+15-8	\$ 65,051	\$ 61,054
M+15-9	\$ 67,342	\$ 63,203
M+15-10	\$ 69,644	\$ 65,351
M+15-11	\$ 71,960	\$ 67,501
M+15-12	\$ 75,126	\$ 69,649
M+15-13	N/A	\$ 71,797
M+15-14	N/A	\$ 73,946
M+15-15	N/A	\$ 77,050

Table 3: Master's +30 Credit Hours and Master's +45 Credit Hours

FY20 STEP:	WPS	QRSD
M+30-1	\$ 53,028	\$ 48,157
M+30-2	\$ 54,878	\$ 49,524
M+30-3	\$ 56,600	\$ 51,673
M+30-4	\$ 58,317	\$ 53,820
M+30-5	\$ 60,329	\$ 55,969
M+30-6	\$ 62,182	\$ 58,118
M+30-7	\$ 63,903	\$ 60,266
M+30-8	\$ 66,490	\$ 62,414
M+30-9	\$ 68,774	\$ 64,563
M+30-10	\$ 71,340	\$ 66,711
M+30-11	\$ 73,298	\$ 68,859
M+30-12	\$ 76,579	\$ 71,008
M+30-13	\$ 80,814	\$ 73,156
M+30-14	N/A	\$ 75,305
M+30-15	N/A	\$ 78,410
M+45-1	\$ 55,025	\$ 49,430
M+45-2	\$ 56,410	\$ 50,802
M+45-3	\$ 58,029	\$ 52,950
M+45-4	\$ 60,038	\$ 55,099
M+45-5	\$ 61,755	\$ 57,248
M+45-6	\$ 63,617	\$ 59,397
M+45-7	\$ 65,624	\$ 61,546
M+45-8	\$ 67,923	\$ 63,695
M+45-9	\$ 70,495	\$ 65,843
M+45-10	\$ 72,785	\$ 67,992
M+45-11	\$ 75,088	\$ 70,141
M+45-12	\$ 77,966	\$ 72,289
M+45-13	\$ 82,146	\$ 74,439
M+45-14	N/A	\$ 76,588
M+45-15	N/A	\$ 79,882

Appendix B: Capacity Assessment Tool (From Special Commission Report, 2011)

Instructions: Using the suggested data identified in the column labeled “Data Source”, check the appropriate box (“yes” or “no”) based on whether or not the corresponding statement applies to the district. Refer to Table 1 on page 18 for additional guidance on accessing and using the data to complete the assessment.

1. Current & Projected Enrollments	YES	NO	Data Source
a. Current enrollment is below the median enrollment for districts of the same group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 District • Elementary District • Secondary District 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART</i>
b. Enrollments have declined over the past several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART</i>
c. The number of students leaving through choice, charter or tuition agreement has increased over the past several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>ESE Finance</i>
d. The district relies on incoming choice or tuition students to support programs and budget	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>ESE Finance</i>
2. Financial Trends	YES	NO	Data Source
a. The district has operated on a budget that is at or below level funded or level services for several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Local</i>
b. School budgets and/or regional assessments to member towns have increased, while programs/services remain the same or have decreased over the past several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Local</i>
c. The district has instituted or increased fees for programs/services within the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Local</i>
d. Teacher salaries are not commensurate with those in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>ESE Finance</i>
e. Administrative costs per pupil have increased or are higher than such costs in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART Finance</i>
f. Operations and maintenance costs per pupil have increased or are higher than such costs in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART Finance</i>
g. In-district transportation costs per pupil have increased or are higher than such costs in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART Finance</i>
h. Out-of-district transportation costs (per out-of-district pupil) have increased or are higher than such costs in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART Finance</i>
i. Professional development spending per teacher has decreased or is lower than such spending in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART Finance</i>



3. Instructional Capacity (<i>by school and district</i>)	YES	NO	Data Source
a. Class size has increased in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
b. Class size is higher than in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
c. Student/teacher ratio has increased in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DART Finance
d. Student/teacher ratio is higher than said ratio in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DART Finance
e. The teacher turnover rate has increased or is greater than the turnover rate in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DART
4. Curricular & Program Offerings	YES	NO	Data Source
a. The number and variety of course offerings are fewer than in like districts (<i>e.g. the number and variety of foreign language courses, AP courses, electives, vocational programs, etc.</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
b. Course offerings have been reduced or eliminated in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
c. Special programs and service offerings (art, music) have been reduced or eliminated in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
d. Extracurricular offerings have been reduced or eliminated in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
e. Early childhood offerings have been reduced or eliminated in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
f. Out-of-district special education placements have increased in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
g. Special education costs have increased or are higher than such costs in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ESE Finance
h. Transportation services have been reduced in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
5. Performance Indicators	YES	NO	Data Source
a. Percentage of students scoring at or above proficient on the MCAS has declined or remained stagnant over the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DART
b. Student SAT, PSAT and/or ACT scores have declined in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
c. Status of high school graduates (college, careers) has declined	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
d. District has received a warning or has been placed on probation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
e. Dropout rate has increased in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DART
f. Dropout rate is higher than in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DART



Helping schools succeed

g. Four-year or five-year cohort graduation rates have declined in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART</i>
h. Four-year or five-year cohort graduation rates are lower than in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART</i>
i. Attendance rate has decreased in the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART</i>
j. Attendance rate is lower than in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART</i>
6. Capital Facilities	YES	NO	Data Source
a. One or more district schools received a —below average utilization rating in the most recent MSBA Needs Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>MSBA</i>
b. One or more district schools received a —building conditions rating of 3 or 4 in the most recent MSBA Needs Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>MSBA</i>
c. One or more district schools received a —general environment rating of 3 or 4 in the most recent MSBA Needs Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>MSBA</i>
d. The district recently attempted to submit a Statement of Interest (SOI) for MSBA funding that was defeated at the local level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Local</i>
7. Administrative Capacity	YES	NO	Data Source
a. The number of district and/or school administrative positions has decreased over the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART Finance</i>
b. District administrators are responsible for more functions than administrators in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>MARS</i>
c. The district does not have enough administrators to effectively address instructional and achievement issues for students, particularly students with specific and differentiated needs (e.g. English language learners, students receiving special education services, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>MARS</i>
d. The district does not have enough administrators to effectively recruit and maintain a high-quality educator workforce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>MARS</i>
e. The district does not have enough administrators to create and maintain effective lines of two-way communication with parents and family members and other community stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>MARS</i>
f. A greater number of district administrators are responsible for operational versus instructional issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>MARS/Local</i>
g. The administrative turnover rate has increased or is higher than the rates in similar districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>DART</i>
h. District Administrators report to more than 1 school committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Local</i>

i. The current structure of the central office and configuration of administrators do not support optimal efficiency and effectiveness with regard to the district's ability to execute its core functions, including: 1) communication among administrators and also among administrators, principals, teachers, and staff members; 2) the collection and continuous analysis of multiple types of data; and 3) the management of instructional, human, fiscal, and other resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
8. Collaboration	YES	NO	Data Source
a. The district has not explored the possibility of providing joint academic and extracurricular programs with other districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
b. The district does not participate in cooperative purchasing programs with other districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
c. The district does not partner with other districts or utilize an educational collaborative to offer professional development programs for its staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
d. The district does not belong to an educational collaborative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
e. The district does not participate in a collaborative or cooperative transportation service program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
f. The district does not partner with other districts or utilize an educational collaborative to provide special education programs and services for its students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
g. District leaders and/or administrators do not meet with colleagues on a regular basis to discuss common challenges and implement common solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
h. District staff members do not participate in and/or belong to statewide professional associations (e.g. Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association, Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association, Massachusetts Teachers Association, American Federation of Teachers – Massachusetts, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
9. Community Indicators	YES	NO	Data Source
a. One or more communities within the district have a negative Municipal Revenue Growth Factor (MRGF)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DOR
b. Property values within the district have decreased over the past several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DOR
c. The bond rating of one or more communities within the district has decreased within the last several years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local
d. Communities within the district have a higher unemployment rate than the rates in like districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	EOLWD*

*Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development