

New Hampshire School Consolidation – Legal & Legislative Summary

Purpose: This summary provides an overview of current New Hampshire law governing school district consolidation, along with active and recent legislation relevant to consolidation discussions.

Voluntary Consolidation Framework (RSA 195 & RSA 195-A)

- New Hampshire law allows school districts to voluntarily consolidate or form cooperative school districts.
- Districts create an Area School Planning Committee to study consolidation options.
- The committee develops Articles of Agreement outlining governance, finances, and operations.
- Each participating district must approve the consolidation through a local vote.
- There is no statutory authority for the State to mandate consolidation under current law.

Financial Incentives (RSA 194-C)

- The State offers temporary merger grants to districts that voluntarily consolidate.
- Incentives are time-limited and must meet statutory deadlines.
- These grants are intended to encourage voluntary cooperation, not compulsory mergers.

Current & Recent Legislation Under Study

HB 292 (2025–2026): SAU Consolidation Study Commission

- Establishes a legislative commission to study School Administrative Unit (SAU) consolidation statewide.
- The commission is tasked with analyzing administrative structures, costs, and potential efficiencies.
- The bill does not mandate consolidation and does not change existing law.
- Any consolidation resulting from this study would require future legislation and likely local approval.

Other Proposed Bills (Not Enacted)

- Additional bills have been introduced to explore administrative restructuring or expanded consolidation models.
- These proposals remain in committee or study phases.
- None currently override local voter authority or impose mandatory consolidation.

Key Takeaways

- Consolidation in New Hampshire remains voluntary and locally controlled.
- The Legislature is studying consolidation but has not authorized mandatory restructuring.
- Any future consolidation would require new legislation and, historically, local voter approval.
- Current law prioritizes local decision-making while offering incentives for voluntary collaboration.

This summary is intended for informational purposes only.