

Establishing Regional School Districts

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Issue

Summarize the processes for creating a regional school district.

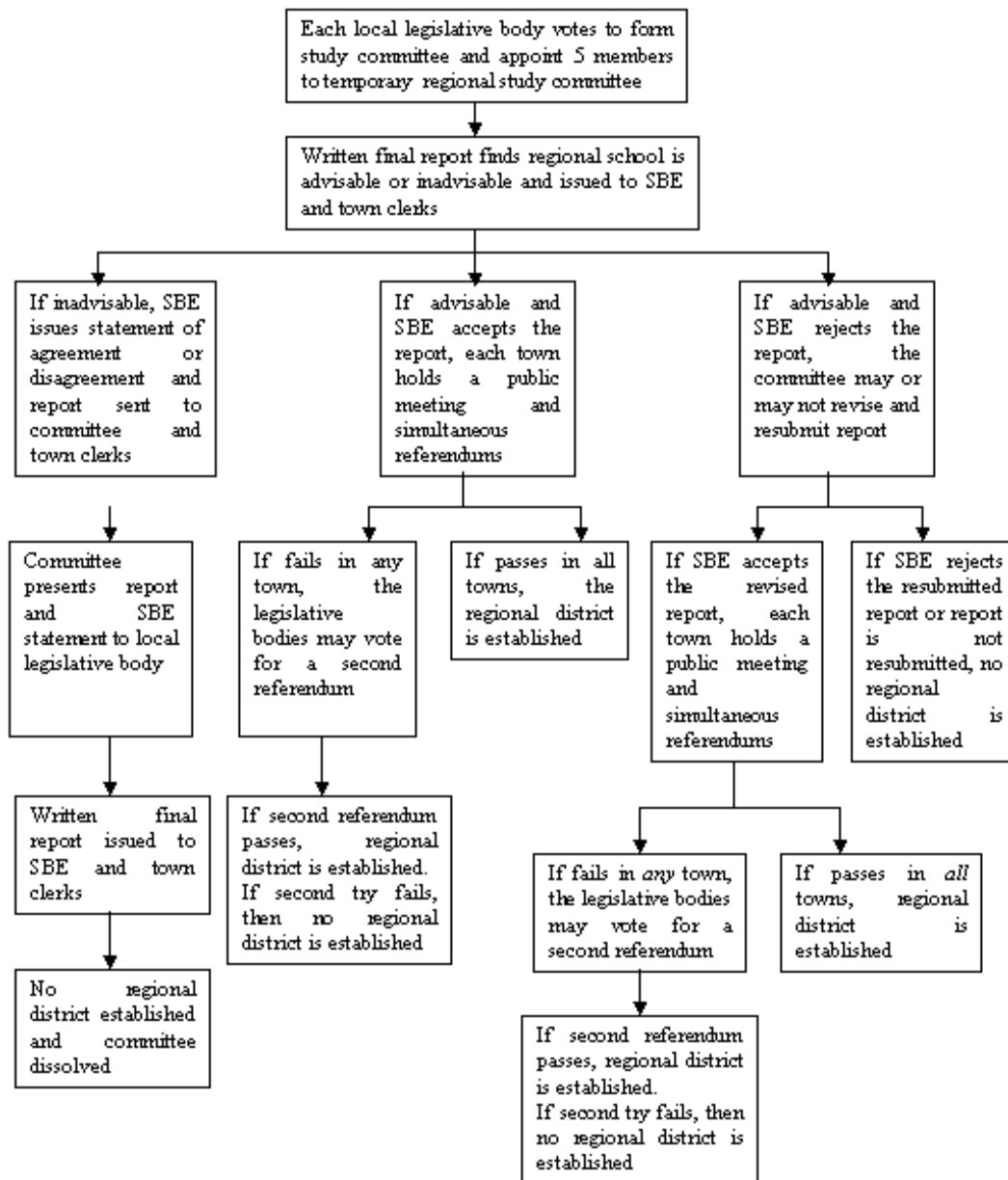
Summary

Connecticut law allows two or more towns to establish a regional school district through the statutory process set forth in [CGS §§ 10-39](#) to [10-46](#). The process begins when the towns involved appoint a regional school district study committee to determine the feasibility of regionalization and prepare a written report. If the committee determines that establishing the district is advisable, it must also make recommendations on facility needs, expense sharing, and regional school board representation, among other things.

After the committee determines whether creating the district is advisable and completes its report, the State Board of Education (SBE) must review it. If the committee determines that establishing a district is advisable, SBE must accept the report recommendations before the involved towns may take any action. If SBE does so, the committee must schedule a referendum in each participating town on whether to approve the proposed district. If approved, the towns establish a regional school district and proceed with establishing the regional board of education. State law also specifies how the committee must proceed if they determine establishing the district is inadvisable or if SBE rejects its report.

[Figure II-1](#), below, from a Program Review and Investigations report, summarizes the process.

Figure II-1. Process to Establish a Regional School District.



Temporary Study Committee

Committee Formation

By law, the process of forming a regional school district begins when two or more local or regional school districts, by vote of their municipal legislative bodies, appoint a temporary regional school study committee to determine whether establishing the district is advisable ([CGS § 10-39](#)). The

committee's duties generally include gathering information and consulting with educational officials, examining fiscal and administrative factors, determining benefits of district development, and delivering written reports to the chief executive officer in each town served if findings are affirmative of regional district establishment.

At the first meeting, which the consultant must call within 10 days after the appointment, the committee must elect a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer, and other officers the committee determines to be necessary. The committee's subsequent meetings must be held at the call of the chairperson or at times the committee determines.

The legislative body of each town must appoint five members, two of whom must be school board members. After doing so, each town must notify the education commissioner, who then must appoint a consultant to the committee within 30 days after receiving the last notice ([CGS §§ 10-40 & 10-41](#)).

Preliminary Study

Prior to establishing a temporary study committee, two or more school boards may conduct a preliminary study of the advisability of establishing a regional school district. If the findings are affirmative, the school boards must submit a written report to the chief executive officer in each town served by the boards. Within 30 days after receipt, each officer must call a meeting of their town's legislative body to consider the report and vote on establishing a temporary regional school study committee. In the case of a regional board of education, the board will call a meeting of the regional school district ([CGS § 10-39](#)).

Expenses

The law requires participating towns to share committee expenses proportionately to each town's share of the total student population, and the first two years of expenses may not exceed \$10 times the total number of students in the towns ([CGS § 10-42](#)). If the committee is extended beyond the initial two-year period (see "Duration and Dissolution," below), the total expenses for each additional year may not be more than half the standard limit. In general, the committee may receive and use money from any source (individuals, corporations, associations, etc.) or method (bequests, gifts, contributions, etc.).

Study Committee Reports

Progress Reports. The committee must prepare written progress reports for the participating towns and SBE in a way the committee deems suitable. The reports must be completed at least semi-annually.

Final Report. After completing its study, the committee must present a written report containing its findings and recommendations to SBE and the town clerks for the participating towns.

If the committee finds that establishing a regional district is inadvisable, the report must include its findings and explain its conclusions ([CGS § 10-43](#)).

If the committee finds that establishing the district is feasible and desirable, the report must include the following, among other things:

1. the committee's findings on the advisability of creating the regional school district;
2. the towns and grade levels to be included in the district;
3. educational and budget plans for at least a five-year period, detailing projections of enrollment, staff needs and deployment, and descriptions of all programs and supportive services;
4. the facilities recommended, and estimated costs;
5. each town's recommended capital contribution based on (a) appraisals or negotiated valuation of existing land and facilities owned by each town and (b) the proportion of the student population attributable to each town; and
6. the recommended size of, and town representation on, the regional board of education.

Committee Duration and Dissolution

By law, the study committee continues until dissolved, up to two years after the date it was formed. However, the law allows the legislative bodies of the participating towns vote to extend the life of the committee for up to two additional years ([CGS § 10-39](#)).

The committee dissolves upon completion of the referenda or presentation to town legislative bodies, as applicable (see below) ([CGS § 10-43](#)).

State Board of Education Review

State law charges SBE with reviewing study committee reports, and it must complete its initial review of a report within 30 days after receiving it.

In cases where a committee reports that forming the district is advisable, SBE must confirm that the report includes the required information (see above) and either accept or reject the committee's recommendations. If accepted, SBE must certify to the town clerk in each town that the recommendations have been approved and send a copy to the committee. Then, the committee moves on to referenda (see below).

If rejected, SBE must give its reasons to the committee in writing. The committee may then revise its recommendations and resubmit its report within 30 days after receiving the rejection. The amended plan may then either be accepted or rejected by the State Board of Education.

If the committee finds the establishment of the regional school district is inadvisable, SBE must send the committee and town clerk of each town a statement of its agreement or disagreement and the reasons for the stance. Within 30 days after receiving the statement, the committee must present the report and statement to the legislative body of each town at a public meeting. This procedure also applies in cases where SBE rejects a study committee's amended report ([CGS § 10-44](#)).

Referenda

After SBE's approval of the committee's report, the committee must set the date on which referenda will be held simultaneously in each of the towns to determine whether a regional school district will be established as recommended.

If a majority in each town votes yes, the regional district is established. If the majority in any town votes no, the committee may recommend a second vote. If it does so, the committee must notify the town clerk in each participating town of its decision. Within 30 days after the notice, the legislative body in each town must meet to act upon the committee's recommendation. If each legislative body accepts the recommendation, a second referendum must be held in each participating town. If most of the votes are then affirmative, the regional school district is established and numbered accordingly ([CGS § 10-45](#)).

Regional Board of Education

Once the regional district is approved, a regional board of education consisting of five or more members — at least one from each town — is created to oversee the district's operations. The committee report determines the number of members of the regional board and the representation of each town.

The first members must be nominated, elected, and appointed within 30 days after the referendum and generally serve four-year terms. Within 10 days after the last member town appoints its members, the education commissioner must call the first meeting of the regional board. The members serve until their successors are elected and qualify. The law also establishes various procedures for determining initial staggered term lengths, filling vacancies, and holding future elections ([CGS § 10-46](#)).

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