



# MAINE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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## Questions and Answers About the Governor's School Consolidation Proposal

**The Governor has pointed to studies showing that Maine spends \$2,000 more per pupil for education than the national average, but that Maine teachers are paid less than the national average. Is this discrepancy due primarily to high administrative costs in Maine's school systems?**

No. Maine's school administrative costs are a relatively small factor in this discrepancy. Most of Maine's higher per pupil costs can be attributed to Maine's lower student/teacher ratios and smaller class sizes than the national average. School administrative costs in Maine are higher than the national average, but non-instructional support services in Maine are below the national average. A recent study by Gordon A. Donaldson, Jr., an education professor at the University of Maine in Orono, demonstrates that in 2003-04 Maine was second highest in the country in percentage of current expenditures spent on "instruction and instruction related activities" and that the 9.3% spent in Maine for "general" and "school" administration was the fourth lowest in the United States (9.3% in Maine vs. 11.3% nationally). Donaldson concludes that school administrators in Maine may be doing much of the work in Maine that is done by other lower level support staff in other states. The Donaldson study entitled "*Pursuing Administrative Efficiency for Maine's Schools. How Our Past Can Inform Our Current Decisions*" can be found at <http://www.portfolio.umaine.edu/~edl>.

**Won't there be increased merger expenses in the first one or two years of operation of the new regions?**

Yes. MSMA expects that there will be increased costs in the short term. The Governor's projected cost savings in FY 2008 seem to ignore the short-term costs of merging all of Maine's school units into 26 regions. The law requires that all superintendents' contracts and teacher contracts be assigned to the new regions so that most savings in these areas will be delayed until the contracts expire. At least initially, there will be increased costs as the new regions attempt to integrate their computer systems, to redesign their transportation systems, redesign their administration, hire new principals, staff new advisory councils and combine their collective bargaining agreements, all without adequate time for planning. The experience in other areas and in the private sector has been that mergers and consolidations rarely result in significant short-term costs savings. The Governor's projected savings seem to ignore this reality.

