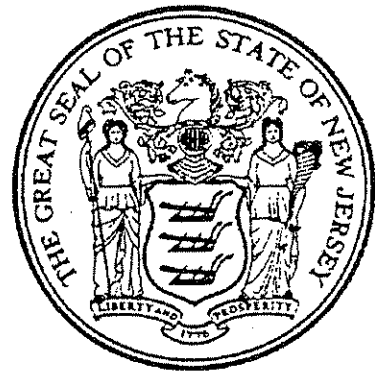


# FINDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT:

*Ideas on Regionalization and  
Shared Services*



Recommendations of the  
Regionalization Consortium  
and  
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The Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools is an advisory body which reviews and recommends statutory changes as they become necessary to facilitate improvements in the business efficiency of the Public Schools.

New Jersey Legislature  
CN-068  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
(609) 292-8030

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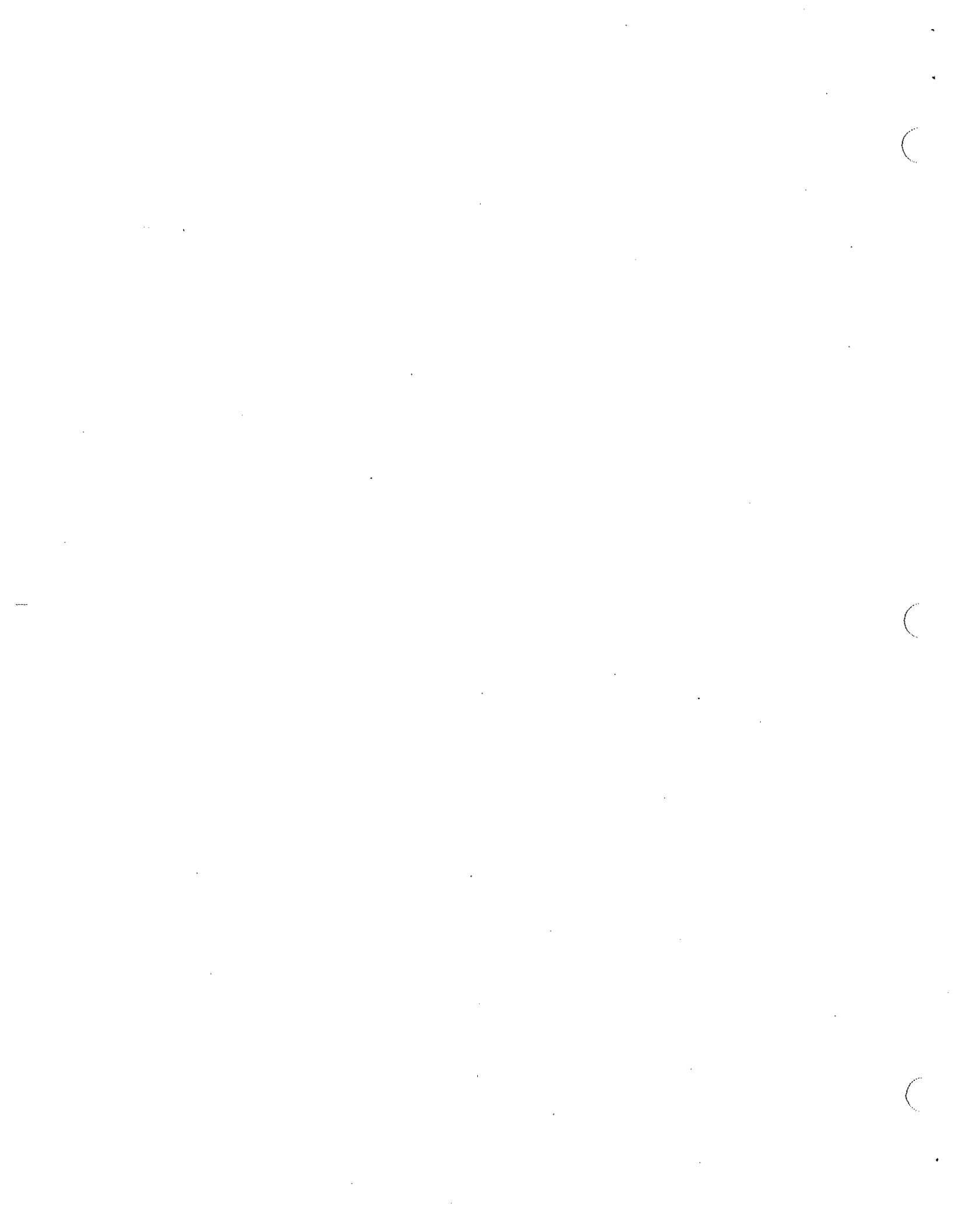
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# INTRODUCTION

The Regionalization Consortium was created by the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools to promote the voluntary regionalization of New Jersey school districts by (1) raising public awareness of the costs and benefits of regionalization activities; (2) providing information on regionalization; (3) organizing public interest and (4) identifying successful strategies.

Every major organization in the New Jersey education community has supported the concept of regionalization in one form or another. The FY 1996 State Budget, submitted by the Governor to the Legislature in January, contains regionalization incentives in the form of an aid bonus for school districts which cover primary and secondary education kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12). In February, the New Jersey Department of Education called for improved efficiencies and structural reform in its Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing. The Department is currently examining the level and types of inter-district sharing now practiced in New Jersey. In March, Rutgers University and the Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey released a report which estimates potential annual savings from regionalization at \$123 million in 1990-91 dollars. All of these indicate an increased interest in regionalization.

New Jersey has 594 operating school districts serving 1,174,000 pupils. There are 180 school districts with fewer than 500 pupils. While there is disagreement on the minimum effective size of a district, most agree that that size is more than 500 students. (It should be noted that school size is a different issue than district size. Significant research indicates that schools considerably smaller than 500 can be highly effective.)

In 1993, the Commission held a meeting with members of the education community interested in regionalization of school districts. Those attending that meeting identified three major obstacles to regionalization:

- The structure of the formula for allocating State aid to school districts tends to penalize districts which form regional districts;
- Changes in the relative distribution of tax levies when forming a regional district tend to discourage at least one of the potential members from joining, and
- The quality of information available about regionalization in New Jersey is incomplete and leaves districts without clear information on the costs, benefits and effectiveness of regionalization.

The Commission has adopted the following statement of purpose on regionalization:

***"Voluntary regionalization of New Jersey school districts has been publicly supported by the Governor, members of both political parties in the Legislature, the New Jersey Department of Education, members of the New Jersey Association of Public Schools and private citizens. However, very little has been done to actively promote regionalization of our schools. Therefore, the Commission's purpose is to promote the voluntary regionalization of New Jersey school districts by:***

- Raising public awareness*
- Organizing public interest*
- Providing Information*
- Identifying successful strategies*

The Commission pursued this purpose by bringing together interested parties to discuss the obstacles to regionalization and methods of overcoming those obstacles. The Commission's Regionalization Consortium began holding meetings on March 11, 1994 to begin to develop strategies for achieving these goals.

The Consortium divided the project into three major subdivisions: (1) Regionalization which includes all issues pertaining to the combining of school jurisdictions with the goal of reducing the total number of school districts; (2) Shared Education Services focusing on ways in which districts can achieve some of the goals usually associated with regionalization through the sharing of educational resources (such as distance learning, class sharing or regional provision of specified services like special education), and (3) Shared Support Services which seeks economy and efficiency through cooperation in non-educational services including, though not limited to, purchasing, transportation and the provision of social services. Some of these require participation of non-school jurisdictions. Three subcommittees were formed to research these issues. They reported back to the Consortium in October of 1994. This report focuses on the Commission's findings and recommendations based on the reports of the three subcommittees. The following individuals and organizations participated in this project:

Vincent B. Calabrese	Ms. Joan Ponezza
Ms Debra J. Cosgrove	Public Affairs Research Institute of NJ
NJ Principals and Supervisors Association	Ms. Ann Prewett
Ms. Andrea Dahl	NJ League of Women Voters
Senate Minority Staff	Hon. Thomas Renkin
Dr. John L. DeCesare	NJ League of Municipalities
NJ Association Of School Administrators	Ms. Melanie M. Schulz
Dr. Robert D. Elder	Joint Committee on The Public School
NJ Urban Superintendents	Rev. Deforest Soaries, Jr.
Mr. James George	1st Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens
NJ Education Association	Mr. John Tergis
Mr. Stephen Heller	NJ Council of Senior Citizens
Bell Atlantic	Samuel Thompson, Ph.D.
Mr. John Henderson	Ms. Mary Torres
NJ School Boards Association	Assembly Majority Staff
Ms. Emmy Hunter	Dr. Seymour Weiss
New Jersey PTA	Education Consultant
Ms. Wendy Ann Lang	Mr. Robert Woodford
Senate Majority Staff	NJ Business and Industry Assoc.
Professor Maureen McClure	Mr. Vincent Yaniro
University of Pittsburgh	NJ Assoc. of School Business
Ms. Ellen Mushinski	Administrators
Aide To Assemblyman David Wolfe	

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission encourages the involvement of the entire school community including residents and school personnel in the implementation of the following recommendations.

### REGIONALIZATION

**Develop a feasibility model for regionalization studies.** The model should include outcome measures and levels of service requirements and be useful in identifying districts which should be regionalized. Several studies should be conducted in developing this model including: (1) development, by the State Department of Education, of clear outcomes and levels of service required to provide a "thorough and efficient" education; (2) evaluations of districts which have regionalized K-12 and (3) feasibility study of county-wide school districts as used in such states as Florida.

**Encourage regionalization, where appropriate, through funding and incentives.** The Legislature should consider the impact any funding formula has on districts considering regionalization. Specific incentive funding for regionalization should also be considered.

**Encourage site-based management.** The use of site-based management will help improve effective involvement of communities in local education.

### SHARED EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

**Perform a comprehensive study of the delivery of low incident / high cost education services in New Jersey.** This study should focus on how the current fragmented delivery system can be better coordinated to obtain efficient and cost effective service.

**Perform a comprehensive examination of education technology in New Jersey.** This study should focus on bringing the full benefits of modern technology to New Jersey's children.

**Realize savings through cooperative transportation.** Encourage and, in some cases, require the use of regional transportation to realize savings, improve services and redirect funds back into the classroom.

**Study the feasibility of providing shared administrative services.** This study should examine the costs and benefits of sharing administrative services and personnel. This examination should include consideration of educational costs and benefits as well as fiscal ones.

**Encourage regional bulk purchasing.** Cooperative purchasing by school districts and other governmental jurisdictions should be encouraged.

**Support expansion of the School Based Youth Services program.** Move social service responsibilities away from school districts and place them with appropriate service providers.

**Study the role of and delivery systems for extracurricular activities.** The feasibility of providing some extracurricular activities on a regional basis should be examined.

# Recommendations of the Committees

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## REGIONALIZATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The search for a means of providing incentives for regionalization has been a continuing concern of State leadership, both political and educational, for generations. In addition to the provision of a legal structure to accomplish the task of reducing the number of school districts in the State, there have been numerous studies, position papers and formal committees. These efforts have flowed from the conventional wisdom that reduction of the number of school districts will result in greater fiscal efficiency through economies of scale and the elimination of duplication of services as well as producing a statewide educational system which will more effectively provide equality of educational opportunity through logical and sequential development of learning experience, K-12.

The Commission finds:

There is strong evidence that K-12 school districts provide a more integrated and sequential educational experience than limited purpose districts.

Small school districts (under 500 enrollment) exist which cannot provide the modern facilities (libraries, computer stations, etc....) and the full range of educational programs and services required to meet today's educational needs. In addition, these districts are limited in the ability to provide a full scope of extra-curricular athletic and artistic experiences for children.

As a group, school districts with fewer than 500 pupils have disproportionately higher administrative and non-instructional expenditures compared to other districts in the State.

While research does not indicate automatic efficiency or achievement gains through regionalization of school districts based only on size, most of the research does not include districts below 500 pupils or in non-K-12 organizational structures. Research which has included such arrangements tends to indicate lowered efficiency in those districts.

Based on these findings the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools supports several recommendations of the Regionalization Committee. The recommendations can be understood within the framework of three topic areas (1) the nuts and bolts of regionalization as represented by the development of a **FEASIBILITY MODEL** for regionalization studies; (2) supporting successful regionalization strategies through **FUNDING AND INCENTIVE** reforms, and (3) preservation of local citizen participation in forming education policy through **SITE BASED MANAGEMENT**.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF A FEASIBILITY MODEL FOR REGIONALIZATION STUDIES**

The Commission supports the development of a uniform and comprehensive model for determining the feasibility of regionalization of districts in New Jersey. This model should be focused on the creation of K-12 districts. Some flexibility in the model should be built in to accommodate unusual situations. Outcomes, levels of services, and collective bargaining issues should be included in the model. However, the needs of children should be the controlling element in this model.

A detailed study of districts which have regionalized should be conducted. This study would provide information on the costs and benefits of regionalization and help form the basis for the model.

The Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools should ask the Department of Education (DOE) to provide a report on the outcomes of regionalization studies funded under the FY 1994 Appropriations Act. This information would also be used in constructing the model.

The Legislature should direct the New Jersey DOE to: (1) clearly define outcomes, elements and levels of service required to provide a thorough and efficient education and, (2) identify districts which cannot provide these defined outcomes, elements and levels of service due to size or structure. This activity would: provide measures for the evaluation of proposed models; identify districts which would be most likely to benefit from regionalization, and aid in the structuring of incentives for regionalization.

A study should be performed which determines the feasibility of moving to a county-wide school system in New Jersey. This study should start with an examination of those states which have adopted such systems. While this structure does not appear likely in New Jersey on a voluntary basis, understanding the differences between our highly decentralized system and a centralized one, such as Florida's county based system, should provide insight for State decision makers.

## **FUNDING AND INCENTIVES**

The Commission encourages the Legislature and the Executive branch to structure any new funding formula in such a manner that school districts are not penalized should they become constituents of regional districts. Regardless of the benefit to children, many districts will not consider regionalization if it results in reduced aid from the State and a probable increase in local tax levies.

Districts which cannot provide these defined outcomes, elements and levels of service due to size or structure as identified by the Department of Education should be given incentives to regionalize. Non-operating districts and elementary districts which are constituents of regional high schools should be provided with incentives to form comprehensive K-12 regional school districts. . Additional State funds may be needed to induce small elementary districts to join in a K-12 district. There are approximately 100 school districts out of 621 with fewer than 400 resident students.

## **SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT**

Site-based management of schools with a K-12 setting should be encouraged through incentives and the development and distribution of model site-based programs. One of the chief concerns expressed regarding regionalization efforts is the loss of effective input by local citizens into the structure of education policy. The Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools believes that wider use of site-based management of school buildings not only overcomes this problem but provides more effective input than is available through the school board structure since the participation is formalized through the design of site-based approaches.



## SHARED EDUCATION SERVICES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Shared Education Services Committee concentrated its focus on the state of shared education in New Jersey. Based on the work of that committee, the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools developed findings and recommendations.

The Commission finds:

Very little information is available on the state of educational technology use in New Jersey. No substantive action has been taken to implement a thorough and comprehensive technology plan for New Jersey schools.

Smaller districts may not be able to provide modern facilities (libraries, computer stations, etc....) required to meet today's educational needs.

Educational Service Commissions (ESCs), Regional Day Schools, Special Services Districts, Special Services Commissions, County Vocational Schools and Audio Visual Commissions were each created to fill important needs. This arrangement now appears to contain significant duplication of services and the potential for gaps in needed services. A haphazard patchwork of agencies developed because the needs for the various services were identified at different times. Since they were created, some of these agencies have expanded their roles and are now in competition for the same clients. In other cases, the opposite may have happened. As agencies redefined their roles, they may have stopped serving a client group creating a need not filled by any other agency. In addition, all counties are not covered by all agencies. Only county vocational schools exist in every county.

Based on these findings, the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools supports several recommendations of the Shared Education Services Committee. The recommendations focus on (1) the use of **TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION**, and (2) regional sharing of **LOW INCIDENT / HIGH COST SERVICES**.

### AN EXAMINATION OF EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY IN NEW JERSEY

The Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools should undertake a study of the current level of use of technology for all purposes by New Jersey school districts. This study should include the use of technology in the delivery of educational services. One area of particular focus should be the use of distance learning technology in providing low demand courses to a wider audience and for expanding educational opportunity to students in districts unable to provide these educational experiences.

This study should also examine the need for and advantages of different distance learning delivery systems including fiber optics, micro-wave and cable. The appropriate uses of each system should be evaluated.

As part of or separately from this examination, the feasibility for incentive funding of educational technology should be examined, including the possibility of building a technology component into the next funding formula.

The mission of the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools Education Technology Task Force shall be to;

- (1) Identify successful technology driven education programs and leaders in New Jersey and the nation.
- (2) Develop strategies to promote the use of technology to enhance efficiency and quality in the delivery of administrative and instructional services in education for the benefit of all New Jersey Public School Students. Develop and promote efficiency in public school business and finance operations through the use of technology and uniform statewide data management.
- (3) Identify the appropriate role of technology not only in providing equal educational opportunity for all New Jersey public school students but as an integral part of the education process.
- (4) Enable students and staff to prosper in a technologically driven state, nation and world.

The work of the task force shall be considered complete with the presentation of a comprehensive and coherent plan to achieve these goals which includes identification of funding sources and outcome measures for success.

The Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools also recommends that a pilot project applying technology to a shared education function, such as bilingual education, be funded and undertaken by the State.

## **AN EXAMINATION OF THE DELIVERY OF LOW INCIDENT / HIGH COST SERVICES IN THE NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

The Commission recommends a study of the feasibility of creating non-overlapping regional units which would provide low incident / high cost services within geographical areas.

This project should include, but not be limited to, the following services: (1) special education, (2) bilingual education, (3) vocational education, (4) adult education, (5) shared extracurricular events and (6) various business and administrative functions.

## SHARED SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The State has, through legislation and State Board action, sought to encourage service sharing by school districts as a means of achieving economies of scale. Some examples of this are purchasing and transportation Jointures, creation of education service commissions (ESCs), audio visual commissions and the position of County School Business Administrator (CSBA). Some of these have been highly successful in achieving their initial goals, some have seen their roles added to and expanded and some have recreated themselves in ways not contained in the original intent. The result of these attempts over time have yielded many positive results. The success of some of the ESCs in providing transportation for special education students is one example; though even that success does not appear to be sufficiently utilized by school districts. As a result of this committee's work the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools finds:

Over 30,000 or nearly 40 percent of non-public students eligible for transportation to and from school receive payments in lieu of transportation rather than the transportation our State laws identify as their right.

Special education placements are in many instances not made in a timely manner resulting in insufficient time to arrange cost effective transportation.

Recent changes in federal and State law concerning environmental issues and persons with disabilities are highly complex. In most cases individual school districts are attempting to handle these issues on their own.

The private sector has for well over a decade been incorporating computers and other modern technologies into operations to such an extent that it has revolutionized the nature of business not only in America but throughout the world. New Jersey school districts by and large use technology in a very limited capacity compared to the private sector.

School districts are now expected to provide many services of a social service nature which are beyond their training and mission.

In times of tight budgets, extracurricular activities of all types are frequently targeted for budget cuts or elimination. Many of these activities might be continued on a cooperative basis.

Based on these findings the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools supports several recommendations of the Shared Support Services Committee. The recommendations focus on (1) **COOPERATIVE TRANSPORTATION**; (2) the use of **TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION**; (3) sharing of **ADMINISTRATIVE, PURCHASING AND EXTRACURRICULAR** functions, and (4) support of the **SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES** program in the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

## COOPERATIVE TRANSPORTATION

The Commission supports the development of regionalized transportation by advising the legislature to:

- A** direct the Commissioner of the Department of Education to identify a local education agency, educational services commission or other independent organization to provide and/or coordinate regional transportation services for all districts in each county.
- B** direct school districts responsible for transporting students to destinations outside the local district to submit a request for transportation of these students to the agency responsible for coordinating services. Before providing transportation by other means, a board of education must demonstrate that the local district will provide transportation at a lower cost. In the case of transportation for which in-lieu-of payments were made in the pre-budget year, the district must provide transportation through the use of the coordinating agency if the agency can provide the transportation for less than the in-lieu-of amount.
- C** direct the Commissioner of Education to assist districts in using computerized bus routing on a regional or wide area basis to identify other savings through cooperative transportation.
- D** direct that the deadlines for submission of applications for transportation by non-public schools to the local school district for students attending a non-public school must be met. In the event that the deadlines are not met, the local school district shall not make in-lieu-of payments to the parents of the child for that school year in the event that transportation cannot be provided except in the case of; (1) a student recovering from a long term illness which was expected to prevent attendance from school for the year, or (2) if residency in the district was not established until after the cut-off dates contained in code.
- E** direct that superintendents of school districts require directors of special education to complete placements of students in time for cooperative transportation schedules to be developed.

## SHARED TECHNOLOGY

The Commission recommends that a study of the current level of use of technology for all purposes by New Jersey school districts be conducted. This study should include the use of technology for: (1) general business functions such as accounting, budgeting, tracking of maintenance needs and personnel allocation; (2) transportation routing; (3) educational record keeping, and (4) asset tracking.

It is clear from this study that the State Department of Education (DOE) should continue its current move to have all school districts connected electronically to the DOE. In fact, the Commission recommends that that effort be completed with all possible speed.

## **SHARED ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS**

The Commission recommends that the feasibility of sharing selected administrative functions be examined. This examination should include consideration of educational costs and benefits as well as fiscal ones. These administrative functions include but are not limited to:

- A tracking questions regarding the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) including distribution of information on developing case law and its impact; identification of minimal requirements as they affect schools and possibly including the development of checklists regarding the ADA;
- B regional coordination of the activities of school districts regarding changing environmental laws, and
- C the possibility of sharing administrative staff.

## **REGIONAL PURCHASING**

The Commission recommends the establishment of regional bulk purchasing consortiums in all parts of the state where they do not currently exist and should encourage the participation of municipalities as well as school districts.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

The Commission recommends that a statewide task force study the role of extracurricular activities in New Jersey and examine the feasibility of providing them on a regional basis.

## **SCHOOL BASED YOUTH SERVICES**

The Commission recommends that the Youth Based School Services program operated by the Department of Human Services eventually be expanded to all school districts. This would move social service responsibilities away from school districts and place them with appropriate service providers. School districts will be able to better focus on the task of educating for which they were created and for which teachers were trained and hired.



# APPENDICES

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**THE COST IMPACT OF SCHOOL DISTRICT CREATION AND CONSOLIDATION  
IN NEW JERSEY**

by Ernest C. Reock, Jr.  
Center for Government Services  
Rutgers, The State University

**Executive Summary**

This paper examines the relationship between the number of school districts in New Jersey and the state's school expenditures per pupil, which are the highest in the country. The aim is to determine whether the creation or consolidation of districts affects the level of spending.

An analysis is made of the expenditure experience of 43 clusters of communities which increased the number of school districts by creating new limited purpose 7-12 or 9-12 regional high school districts at some time between 1955-56 and 1982-83. For the group as a whole, expenditures per pupil, when measured against all other districts in the state in the same years, rose by 15% in the first four years of regionalization, compared with the last four years before regionalization. In later years the relative level of expenditures declined, but never back to the pre-regionalization level.

A second analysis examines the record of six clusters of communities which reduced the number of school districts by consolidating into all purpose K-12 regional districts. For the group as a whole, expenditures per pupil declined by 1.5% in the first four years after consolidation and by larger amounts in later years. In the three wealthiest districts the consolidation was followed by somewhat higher expenditures per pupil. Two of the three middle wealth districts showed substantial reductions in expenditure level, while in the third middle wealth district the reduction in expenditures was more modest.

A very tentative cost projection, based on the experience of the three middle wealth school districts which regionalized, estimates that there might be an annual statewide savings of 8.3% or \$123,000,000 in 1990-91 dollars if the state's 40 middle wealth limited purpose regional school districts were converted to all purpose K-12 districts.

*(A copy of Dr. Reock's complete report may be obtained through the Center for Government Research at Rutgers University, PO Box 5079, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 08903.)*

"A Plan For School District Consolidation In New Jersey"

by Ernest C. Reock, Jr.  
Center for Government Services  
Rutgers, The State University  
Executive Summary

New Jersey's more than 600 local school districts are among the smallest in the country, having on average less than 1,800 students compared with a national average of more than 2,600. Almost half of the districts in the state have fewer than 500 students, and some are so small that they operate no schools but send their students elsewhere for their education.

Earlier research has indicated that the administrative costs per pupil are much higher than average in the smaller school districts of the state. The purposes of this paper are to present a plan for consolidating the smaller districts and to estimate the savings that are possible.

The plan presented here is a plan of school district consolidation, not school consolidation. With very few exceptions, no students or teachers would be forced by this plan to change their present location or assignment. The plan would be implemented by two steps:

- (1) Each limited purpose regional high school district would become an all purpose K-12 school district.
- (2) Each district which now is the principal receiving district for secondary level pupils sent from small elementary districts on a tuition basis would become the nucleus of a new K-12 regional school district including those sending districts.

The result of these two steps would be to reduce the number of local school districts in New Jersey by more than half. The average enrollment per district would rise to about 3,600, placing the state 18th in the country.

The paper demonstrates an annual saving of more than \$32 million in 1990-91 dollars in district administrative costs, and it suggests a potential future saving of more than \$200 million in overall costs.

The plan would reduce the disparities among school districts in the amount of locally taxable property per pupil, and it would help to equalize local tax rates, eliminating a substantial number of tiny school districts where property is taxed only minimally for public school purposes.

**REGIONALIZATION:**  
**THE CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR VIEW**

by Seymour Weiss  
Education Consultant

The search for a means of providing incentives for regionalization has been a continuing concern of State leadership, both political and educational, for generations. This concern has resulted in two separate bodies of law which have sought to provide for the reduction of the number of school districts through voluntary regionalization (NJSA 18A:8-25 et seq.) or regionalization (NJSA 18A:13-1 et seq.).

In addition to the provision of a legal structure to accomplish the task of reducing the number of school districts in the State, there have been numerous studies, position papers and formal committees of which the Regionalization Consortium of the New Jersey Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools is the latest. All of the above cited efforts have flowed from the conventional wisdom that reduction of the number of school districts will result in greater fiscal efficiency through economies of scale and the elimination of duplication of services as well as producing a statewide educational system which will more effectively provide equality of educational opportunity through logical and sequential development of learning experience, K-12.

**Arguments Favoring Regionalization**

While the issue of greater fiscal efficiency will be considered in a subsequent portion of this report, this section will limit itself to those arguments which have been raised both in favor and against regionalization as it relates to school and school district size and quality of educational program.

The current district organizational structure which prevails in New Jersey consists of 211 school districts providing education programs from kindergarten through high school graduation, 295 elementary school districts organized either as K-6 or K-8 systems, and 49 limited purpose regional school districts providing educational programs either on a 7-12 or a 9-12 basis. In addition there are 37 structures providing special and vocational education services on a county-wide (or wider in some cases) basis.

The strongest argument from an educational quality perspective that can be made in favor of regionalization is the fact that the foregoing organizational hodgepodge results in unequal educational experiences and opportunities on a statewide basis. Children who attend unified K-12 districts enjoy the opportunity to be offered not only an integrated and sequential educational experience in the core subjects of language arts, social studies, science and mathematics but are often times more likely to be offered greater access to experiences in the arts, music, home economics and industrial arts, guidance services as well as a greater range of curricular and co-curricular choices. Even students attending K-12 school districts in New Jersey, however, may well find themselves educationally disadvantaged in relation to other students attending similarly organized districts due to the prevalence of many small K-12 districts which have too few students to maintain adequately comprehensive programs or which provide them at an excessive cost. There are throughout this State a notable number of such K-12 districts which were at one time thriving districts serving pupils in their own community as well as students

from surrounding rural areas but which have shrunk in size due to the loss of sending districts which have become separate suburban K-12 districts or which find themselves able to be sustained only through the retention of high school sending districts whose student numbers oftentimes exceed those of the receiving district.

Elementary districts (K-8 or K-6) whose pupils attend limited purpose regional high schools or high schools of receiving districts vary widely as to the size of the sending district as well as to the number and size of the schools within such districts. Such disparity often exists within the various constituents of the same limited purpose regional or receiving district. The natural consequences of such circumstances are elementary programs and educational facilities which may vary widely among the districts which constitute the limited purpose regional or which attend high school on a sending-receiving basis. By way of example, an elementary district with a significant enrollment may well organize its grade level structure in such a manner as to permit it to offer introduction to the study of foreign languages, the first year of high school mathematics and science and a greater variety of both curricular and co-curricular offerings to its students; while a neighboring district attending the same regional or high school might well be too small in student enrollment to provide the same breadth of program and specialized personnel available to its neighboring district.

Further, unless the elementary districts which constitute a regional or which send to a receiving high school make a specific effort to do so, the various constituent districts lack the benefits derived from a uniform integrated K-12 curriculum, often placing those students who come from poorer and less populous elementary districts at a disadvantage to those coming from more affluent and/or larger elementary districts.

Small elementary districts with low pupil enrollment often lack facilities and/or funding for modernization which would enable them to provide science laboratories, music and art, home economics and shop and computer experiences available to students in larger or wealthier districts. Indeed, 25 years after the issuance of the ***Report of the State Committee to Study the Next Steps of Regionalization and Consolidation in the School Districts of New Jersey***, better known as the **Mancuso Report**, many of its findings remain true today despite New Jersey's having the highest per pupil expenditure level in the United States. Some of those findings include the following conclusions:

1. High schools vary widely in the number of course offerings which they make available to their students based upon their size and wealth<sup>1</sup>.
2. Many elementary schools in the State have centralized library collections but lack professional librarians (media specialists) while others have no libraries at all relying on classroom collections.
3. Many elementary districts have no guidance specialists or have such personnel in inadequate numbers.
4. Many elementary districts have insufficient child study teams to fully address pupil needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Another measure not considered by the Mancuso Report but now widely used as a measure of high school quality are the numbers of Advanced Placement Courses offered which also vary widely.

5. Many elementary schools lack facilities for feeding students in a time period when the preponderance of children come from homes where both parents work and no one is at home to feed them lunch.

Finally, as an ultimate measure of the diversity which exists among elementary school districts to the detriment of those children most in need of greater educational services are the differences which prevail in early childhood education. Larger or more affluent districts are able to offer full day kindergarten to their children while still others go even further by offering nursery or pre-school services. The disparity of services in what is the most crucial period in determining the future educational success of children argues strongly for the regionalization of smaller elementary districts into larger units so as to provide greater equality of opportunity for all of the children of this State.

### **Arguments Against Regionalization**

Notwithstanding the fact that inequality of educational opportunities exist among New Jersey's schools and school districts, a study undertaken by the New Jersey Department of Education found that ". . . *there is no easy or universal rule indicating that larger districts can provide better education. In fact research seems to indicate that smaller schools have more positive schooling outcomes.*" Fowler, William "***School Size, School Characteristics and School Outcomes***" New Jersey Department of Education Policy Statement, March, 1989.

This same report further found that while larger school districts permit the offering, particularly at the high school level, of a greater breadth of program, such greater diversity is often at the price of the loss of individual student identity and personal contact. Further, an NJEA Policy Statement on Regionalization while citing a study of a random sample of New York State Districts conducted in 1987 which found that larger school districts offered more advanced placement courses and more math and special education opportunities, nevertheless presented further research which indicated that program diversity has had little impact on dropout rates, with high schools of over 2,000 students having drop out rates nearly double those with 700 or fewer students. (See Pittman Robert and Houghwout, Perre "***Influence of High School Size on Dropout Rate***" Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Vol. 9, Number 4, pp. 337-343).

The NJEA Policy Statement further pointed out that a study of the results of the NJ Minimum Basic Skills Test conducted in 1984 revealed that larger district enrollments were associated with lower test scores which could not solely be attributed to the fact that the largest school districts were to be found in the urban centers.

The NJEA Policy Statement on Regionalization goes on to cite further research by Dr. James W. Guthrie in an article entitled "***Organizational Scale and School Success***" Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis Vol. 1, Number 1 pp. 17-27, 1979 and another by William Fowler and Herbert Walberg, both of which raise serious questions as to the educational efficiency of the national movement to reduce the number of small school districts through consolidation and regionalization. (See Walbey and Fowler "***Expenditures and Size Efficiencies of Public Schools***" Education Researcher, October, 1987).

**Conclusion:**

While the research evidence available on the relationship between school and district size and educational effectiveness seems to refute the earlier cited conventional wisdom regarding the efficacy of larger units as a general principle, experience on an individualized basis must lead us to conclude that there are schools and school districts, both at the elementary and secondary level, in the State of New Jersey which fail to provide breadth of educational programs comparable to those offered in other districts and that this inequality is related to size and lack of fiscal resources. Therefore, while it may be both unwise and unproductive to seek to urge regionalization solely on the basis of size of school or district, we would urge the development of a State policy which would identify those criteria which would constitute a thorough and efficient program both as to depth and breadth and apply them to each school district.

Upon identification of those school districts which are unable to provide such a program because of lack of resources and size, the State should concentrate its efforts to provide incentives for regionalization upon those districts.

## **Issues of Governance and Control: Should School - Based Management be Linked to Regionalization?**

by Bob Woodford  
New Jersey Business and  
Industry Association

The merger of a local school district into a regional district raises real concerns for stakeholders within the district. Local school board members face loss of their governance power. Administrators and other employees of the district face the risk of job loss, reduction in authority or transfer. Parents confront the possibility of reduced access and influence within a larger school system. Property taxpayers may perceive a diminished ability to influence expenditure levels and resource allocation, particularly if theirs is a small district being merged with a larger district. Although the community, per se, may enjoy all of the same powers and routes of influence in a regional district, individual shareholders may have less control or influence.

Q. Should school-based management be proposed as a counterbalance to the shift of local governance powers inherent in regionalization and to strengthen opportunities for local input within regional school districts?

The term "school-based management" (or "site-based management") describes many existing and possible variations in approach and organization. Narrowly defined, it may connote shared decision making by administrative and teaching staffs. Broadly defined, it may provide for decision-making by school councils of principals, teachers and parents with responsibility for employing and assigning all staff; designing curriculum; student assignments; schedule and use of space; and instruction, discipline, and management practices. Staff, community members and students may be council members or may serve on ad hoc committees. The selection of members is by democratic process.

Proposals of site-based management are grounded in the belief that decisions about the most productive form of instructional organization should be made close to the action by parents, teachers and principals at the school site level. Among the major recommendations of New Jersey's Quality Education Commission was the creation and rapid expansion of a large scale school-based management pilot program. The Commission described site-based reform as "shared decision making that engages teachers and staff, parents, students, and the community in basic decisions about curriculum and programs. These decisions typically extend to budget allocations within the school, staff hiring decisions and the professional development needs of the school...Each school can develop programs and designate facilities, staff and strategies to achieve student performance outcomes that are keyed to statewide goals, standards and curriculum frameworks."

Indirect Linkage to Regionalization: Pros and Cons

Efforts to facilitate and promote school-based management could be supportive of regionalization, providing a corollary issue for consideration in the making of regionalization decisions. There are major pros and cons in developing such a linkage.

Pro. (1) School based management would provide a framework for local input and control and an enhanced instructional staff role, thus offsetting the greater centralization and remoteness of the region.

2) School based management can be part of a larger effort at educational restructuring, identifying improved educational quality as a primary objective of regionalization.

Con. (1) School-based management (SBM) involves a significant realignment of responsibilities including changes in the structure and process of governance and control at the state and local levels. The issues of SBM could further complicate already complex issues of regionalization.

(2) SBM requires significant community preparation and intensive staff development to prepare all parties for new or expanded roles and collegial approaches to decision making. Successful SBM occurs only when all parties "buy in" to and support the new governance process and understand its educational objectives.

NOTE: The role of site-based management in educational restructuring, and the problems confronted in its design and implementation, are discussed at length in Restructuring The Education System: Agenda for the 1990s, National Governors' Association (1988). An excellent and detailed handbook for implementation of school-based management/shared decision-making was prepared for the Paterson schools (May, 1993).

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Regionalization

by Vincent Yaniro

There are many advantages to regionalization. Much depends on the current make up of the districts involved; that is, whether they are independent, involved in a sending/receiving relationship, or members of a limited purpose regional district moving to a full purpose regional district. Below are some of the most often noted advantages and disadvantages of regionalization.

### ADVANTAGES

- School facilities can be more effectively utilized. Class sizes that are considered to be small can be increased through the addition of more pupils.
- One or more schools may be closed as the buildings are more effectively utilized. This will result in staff and operating expense savings. Proceeds of the sale of a school may also be realized.
- A broader, more comprehensive curriculum may be offered.
- On the high school level, the need to limit the offering of a class to once a day may be reduced or eliminated. With additional students, several sections of the class will allow the class to be offered with greater frequency. This would ease scheduling problems and increase opportunity for participation for all students.
- A district which was sending students and becomes a member of a regional district automatically gains proportional representation on the school board.
- Staff savings may be realized as class sections on the middle school and high school levels are combined. Fewer teachers are usually needed for the same level of course offerings. Fewer administrators, particularly at the central office level, will be needed. Coaches and advisors can be reduced as these activities are combined.
- Savings can be realized due to the elimination of duplicative services, including those of the auditor and board attorney. Also, since a number of boards will be combined, there will be fewer board of education expenses.
- There is more interaction between pupils and more interaction between staff members in a larger school in comparison with a very small school.
- Sports programs can be maintained or enhanced due to larger numbers of participants.
- In the case of districts currently regionalized on the 9-12 level and considering K-12 regionalization, there will be better articulation between the elementary, middle school and high school curricula.

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Large costs may result since facilities sometimes have to be upgraded or expanded.
- Individual communities entering into a regional relationship are likely to experience diminished degree of control over educational issues.
- In the early years a regional district may experience increased non-instructional expenditures due to various start-up costs. These may include legal fees, elections, coordination of curricula and temporary overlap of administrative functions.
- Community identity may be reduced to the extent that the names of the district, schools and athletic teams change and involve members of other communities.
- In total, fewer students may have the opportunity to participate in varsity sports.
- A shift in the level of fiscal responsibility may occur resulting from differing levels of community wealth. This shift may adversely impact constituent district costs.
- Depending on the situation, transportation costs may increase.
- Some class sizes may increase in the change to a regional district.
- Additional costs may be experienced in merging the staffs of existing districts.
- Some existing long-term employees may lose their jobs.
- Unless accommodated in a new funding formula, the new district may experience a net loss in state aid.

Regionalization and the Law  
by Andrea Dahl and Mary Torres

Andrea is a former Democrat aide to the New Jersey Senate Education Committee  
Mary is a former Republican aide to the New Jersey Assembly Education Committee:

**Definitions**

New Jersey law provides that local school districts may combine with other local school districts to form regional school districts. Two types of regional districts are authorized:

- 1) All purpose regional school districts which are organized for all the school purposes of the constituent districts; and
- 2) Limited purpose regional districts which are created for a specific limited purpose such as for elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, vocational schools, special schools, health facilities or for other designated educational services or facilities. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-2.

**Supervision**

Each regional school district is under the supervision of the county superintendent of the county in which the constituent districts having the greatest amount of ratables are located. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-4.

**Elections**

Elections in regional districts are generally conducted as in other local school districts. Questions regarding the creation, enlargement, additional purpose, dissolution and withdrawal must all be submitted to the voters. In any election, unless otherwise provided by law, the total vote of the entire regional district, without regard to the territorial boundaries of the constituent districts, is counted in determining the result of the election. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33

For example, a proposal submitted to the voters of a limited purpose regional district that wishes to add to the purposes for which it was created (but not to convert to an all purpose regional) requires a majority of all votes cast, without regard to constituent district boundaries, for approval.

There are, however, exceptions to the foregoing. First, there must be at least one polling place in each of the constituent districts.

In addition, a proposal submitted to the voters for the creation of a regional district requires a majority of the votes cast in each of the local districts proposing to form the regional district.

The foregoing provision does not apply to those local districts that are consolidated districts. A proposal submitted to the voters in a consolidated district for the creation of a regional district requires a majority of the votes cast without regard to the territorial boundaries of the constituent districts comprising the consolidated district.

Further, a proposal submitted to the voters for the enlargement of an all purpose regional district requires a dual majority of the new member districts. That is, a majority

vote is required in both the region to be enlarged and in each district proposed to enlarge it. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-5.

A proposal to convert a limited purpose regional to an all purpose regional also requires a dual majority.

### **Board of Education**

A person must be a resident of the constituent district they will represent for at least one year prior to the election to be eligible to be a member of the regional board of education. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-7

The size, membership and the weight of the vote of each member of the regional district board of education is determined by the number of constituent districts and relative size of the districts.

The law provides for a nine member board for regional districts with nine or fewer constituent districts. Each district must have at least one board member and the remaining members are apportioned by the county superintendent among the constituent districts according to population. Not included in the population count, however, are inmates of State or federal prisons, patients in any State or federal hospital and military personnel stationed at or civilians residing within a military installation located within the constituent district. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-8

The board membership of regional districts with more than nine members is the number of constituent districts, plus one; however, each district does not necessarily have a board member. A district may share a board member with one or more other districts. The members of the board are apportioned among the constituent districts and the weight of their votes in all proceedings of the board are determined by the county superintendent.

A detailed apportionment procedure is set forth in statute. Apportionment is determined by the total district population, board size and member district populations.

Constituent districts with the smallest populations may share board members with other districts and become a representative district within the region. Such board members are elected at large within the representative district.

Board members generally serve three year staggered terms, with approximately one third of the board elected each year. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-8

The statutes also includes procedures for board membership reapportionment after a federal census or when a regional district is enlarged or reduced. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-8

### **Change in Status**

Any change in the status of a district requires the approval of the Commissioner of Education as well as voter approval. This includes the question whether to join an existing limited purpose or all purpose regional district, to create a regional district, to enlarge a regional district or to expand the purpose of a limited purpose regional district. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-43

The law also provides for the preservation and recognition of pension, tenure, employment and accumulated leave rights of district employees and provides for the transfer to the regional district of all principals, teachers and employees of the constituent districts. This provision, however, does not apply to superintendents. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-42, 18A:13-49

### **Creation or Enlargement of a Regional District**

If the boards of education of two or more local districts, or the board of education of a consolidated district, or of a district comprising two or more municipalities, and the Commissioner of Education approve the creation or enlargement of either a limited purpose or an all purpose regional school district, the matter must be submitted to the voters of the constituent districts.

The proposal must include a statement of how the districts funding requirements will be allocated among the constituent districts. The statement must indicate whether the amounts would be apportioned to the constituent districts upon the basis of each municipality's equalized valuation allocated among the regional and constituent districts, the proportional number of pupils enrolled from each municipality on the 15th day of October of the prebudget year or any combination of apportionment of the foregoing. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-34, 18A:13-43.

### **New Board of Education**

The appropriate county superintendents calculate and apportion the membership of the board of education for the newly created regional district. The superintendent of the county of any constituent district appoints the appropriate number of board members. The statute delineates the procedure for the allocation of terms for the first elective board. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-36 through 38.

The county superintendent or county superintendents appointing the first board of education of a regional district shall allocate the initial elective terms for the first elective members of said board in the following manner:

- (1) In regional districts having nine members, three members shall be elected for three years, three for two years and three for one year, which terms shall be allocated to the constituent districts to the extent of apportioned membership on the regional board of education, starting with the allocation of the terms of three years, by allocating one of such terms to each of the constituent districts in the alphabetical order of the names of such districts, and continuing then still in such order with allocation of the terms of two years and with allocation of the terms of one year.
- (2) In regional districts in which there are more than nine constituent school districts, the allocation for the tenth district shall be a term of three years, for the eleventh district a term of two years, and for the twelfth district a term of one year, with continuation of such rotation until provision has been made for allocation of the terms to all districts.

When the new board is organized, the county superintendent or county superintendents notify the board of the allocation of initial elective terms for its members. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-38.

The board of education of a newly created regional district may, prior to taking charge and control of the educational facilities of the regional district, do all other acts and things which may be necessary for the organization and operation of the public schools of the regional district during its first year. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-40.

#### **Dissolving Constituent Districts**

Whenever any local district has joined in creating or enlarging an all purpose regional district or has joined more than one limited purpose regional, all existing districts forming such regional district or any existing district so united with the regional district is dissolved when the board of education of such regional district takes control of the educational facilities of the schools of the constituent district or districts.

The board of education of each district to be dissolved continues in office with power to conduct the schools of the district until the board of education of such regional district takes control of the educational facilities of the schools of such regional district. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-48

#### **Transfer of Property to the Regional District**

The transfer and inventory of all funds, property, documents, assets and obligations of indebtedness of the constituent districts to the regional district take place upon dissolution of the local district. The regional district assumes all contracts, debts and other obligations of the dissolving district. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-50

#### **State Aid**

For a period of five years following regionalization, each regional school district is eligible to receive supplemental state aid. N.J.S.A. 18A:7D-37 The supplemental state aid includes the regional district start-up costs. N.J.S.A. 18A:7D-28.5

#### **Regional School District Budget & Apportionment of Appropriations**

At each annual school election, the regional board of education submits to the voters of the regional district the amount of money fixed and determined in its budget for the use of the regional schools of the district for the ensuing school year. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-17

If the voters reject any of the items submitted at the annual election, two days after the election the board of education of the regional district certifies to the governing body of each municipality, included within the school district, the item or items rejected. The governing bodies then consult with the board and determines, no later than May 14, which amount or amounts they deem necessary to provide a thorough and efficient education. Each respective municipality then certifies the budget to the regional board of education. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-19

If the governing bodies fail to certify the budget, then the Commissioner of Education certifies which amount or amounts are necessary to provide a thorough and efficient education. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-20

The amount which is eventually certified is then apportioned among the municipalities included within the regional district and is included in the tax levy for each municipality. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-21

The voters of each municipality determine the apportionment at the annual school election or at a special school election. They choose between the following three methods of apportionment:

- 1) Apportionment on the basis of the portion of each municipality's equalized valuation allocated to the regional district.
- 2) Apportionment on the basis of the proportional number of pupils enrolled from each municipality on the 15th day of October of the prebudget year in the same manner as would apply if each municipality comprised separate constituent school districts.
- 3) Or any combination of apportionment based upon equalized valuation or pupil enrollments. N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-23

A regional district may modify the manner of apportionment upon occurrence of one of the following events:

- 1) Ten years have elapsed since the last school election in which the apportionment of costs was approved by the voters;
- 2) A school year in which the equalized valuations of any constituent municipality have changed according to N.J.S.A. 18A:13-23.3;
- 3) A school year in which the pupil population of any constituent municipality has changed according to N.J.S.A. 18A:13-23.3;
- 4) A school year in which the regional district is enlarged by the admission of one or more districts; or
- 5) During any school year if the regional district was formed prior to March 8, 1993 and has never revised its cost apportionment basis. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-23.3

#### **Additional Purposes of a Limited Purpose Regional District**

Whenever the board of education of a limited purpose regional district and the commissioner determine that it is advisable to add to the purposes for which the regional district was created, the regional district must adopt a proposal to submit to the voters.

If the proposal to add additional purposes will convert the regional district from a limited purpose regional district to an all purpose regional district, the proposal must be submitted to the voters of each of the constituent districts of the regional district instead of at large to the voters of the regional district. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-33

#### **Withdrawal From or Dissolution of a Limited Purpose Regional District**

The board of education of any constituent district of a limited purpose regional school district or the governing body of the municipality constituting a constituent district that wishes to withdraw from that district must, by resolution, apply to the county superintendent of schools to make an investigation as to the advisability of such withdrawal.

Additionally, a majority of the boards of education of the constituent districts and a majority of the governing bodies of the municipalities which constitute the constituent school districts of a limited purpose regional school district that wish to dissolve the district must, by separate resolution, apply to the county superintendent of schools to make an investigation as to the advisability of such dissolution.

Within 21 days, the county superintendent must call a meeting of representatives of each constituent governing body, each board of education constituting part of the regional district, and the board of education of the regional district to review the procedures to be followed for the withdrawal from, or dissolution of, the limited purpose regional district. The superintendent may call the meeting prior to the adoption of the required resolutions. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-51.

Within 60 days after the request, the county superintendent must file a report with the foregoing governing bodies and boards of education of all of the constituent school districts and the board of education of the regional school district. The report must contain a statement of the current assets and operating expenses of the regional district for the then current year and such financial, educational and other information as necessary to enable the governing bodies and local boards of education and regional board of education to determine the advisability of the proposed withdrawal or dissolution and its effect upon the educational and financial condition of the withdrawing district, constituent districts and the regional district. The statement must also set forth the amount of indebtedness, if any, to be assumed by the withdrawing and the regional districts, or by each constituent district in the event of a dissolution. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-52

The county superintendent can require the constituent municipalities and school districts and the regional district to submit a feasibility study in order to determine the educational and financial impact of the withdrawal from, or dissolution of, the limited purpose regional district. If the county superintendent requests a feasibility study, the county superintendent's report must be filed within 60 days following submission of the feasibility study. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-52.

Department of Education regulations set forth the procedure for the feasibility study required for the withdrawal or dissolution of an all purpose or limited purpose regional district. The feasibility study must include, inter alia, an examination of the racial composition of the withdrawing district or municipality, and the effect of such withdrawal upon the racial composition of the remaining pupil population of the regional district. The final decision, made by the board of review, is based upon whether a thorough and efficient system of education can be maintained in the withdrawing district and the remaining regional. N.J.A.C. 6:3-7.1 - 7.5

The county superintendent must calculate the amount of indebtedness relating to buildings, grounds, furnishings, equipment and additions to be assumed on the basis of the proportion which the replacement cost of the regional district situated in the withdrawing district, or in each of the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution, bears to the replacement cost of same. The county superintendent shall also calculate the amount of all other indebtedness and unfunded liabilities to be assumed on an equitable basis. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-53

The municipal governing body or the board of education of the withdrawing district or the municipal governing body and the board of education of each constituent district seeking dissolution may, within 30 days after the filing of the report by the county superintendent, petition the Commissioner of Education for permission to submit to the legal voters of the withdrawing district and the remaining districts within the regional district the question whether or not it shall so withdraw or in the event of a dissolution to

submit to the legal voters of each constituent district whether the regional district shall dissolve. The board may request in the petition any specific reduction or increase in the amount of indebtedness to be assumed as set forth in the county superintendent's report. The municipal governing body and the board of education of each constituent district, the board of education of the regional district and the county superintendent must be served with a copy of the petition. Fifteen days are allowed for the filing of an answer to the petition. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-54 and 55

Within 15 days after the filing of the answers to the petition, the Commissioner of Education shall submit the petition and answers to a board of review consisting of the Commissioner, a State Board of Education member, the State Treasurer and the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs. The board of review shall determine if the withdrawal or dissolution would be permissible and, if so, the amount of indebtedness, if any, to be assumed by the remaining or the new district, or by each of the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-56

In determining whether to permit the withdrawal or dissolution, the board of review must take into consideration the educational and financial condition of the withdrawing municipality and the municipalities remaining in the regional or, in the event of a dissolution, each of the constituent districts. The board of review cannot allow dissolution or withdrawal if:

- 1) An excessive debt burden will be imposed upon the remaining districts, or the withdrawing district, or upon any of the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution;
- 2) An efficient school system cannot be maintained in the remaining districts or the withdrawing district, or in any of the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution, without excessive costs;
- 3) Insufficient pupils will be left in the remaining districts or in any of the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution, to maintain a properly graded school system;  
or
- 4) For any other reason, which it may deem to be sufficient.

Upon granting of the application, the county superintendent fixes the date of the election and the question of whether or not the withdrawing school district shall withdraw from the regional district or whether the regional district shall be dissolved is submitted to the voters. The notices, advertisements and ballots to be used in the election must contain a statement detailing the amount of indebtedness to be assumed by the withdrawing district or by each of the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution and the effect of such indebtedness upon the borrowing margin of the municipality, the withdrawing district, the remaining districts, and the remaining municipalities within the district, or by each of the constituent districts and municipalities within the regional district in the event of a dissolution. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-57 and 58

The question is deemed adopted and withdrawal approved by the voters if it receives an affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast within the withdrawing constituent district and it receives an affirmative vote of a majority of the overall votes cast in the entire regional district. Dissolution is deemed approved if the question receives an

affirmative vote in a majority of the individual constituent districts and if it receives an affirmative vote of a majority of the overall votes cast in the entire regional district. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-59

Board of Education members shall continue in office until the effective date of the withdrawal or dissolution. When the withdrawal has taken effect, the terms of those members of the regional board who reside in the withdrawing district expires. The vacancies are reapportioned among the remaining districts and filled by appointment by the county superintendent to serve until the next annual school election. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-60

Title of the school grounds, buildings, furnishings and equipment shall be established by the Commissioner. Upon the assumption of title, each board shall also assume the amount of indebtedness of the original school district as determined by the board of review. In the event of a withdrawal, the withdrawing district pays to the regional board of education, at least 5 days before it becomes due, the amount of the principal and interest of the assumed indebtedness, the regional board then pays the principal and interest when it becomes due. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-61

The county superintendent determines the division of the assets and liabilities between the withdrawing district and the regional district, or among the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-62

If as a result of withdrawal, a limited purpose regional school district is left with only one constituent school district, then that district is dissolved upon the withdrawal of the other school districts. Upon the effective date of a dissolution of a regional school district each constituent municipality shall be constituted a separate local school district. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-63

All employees of the regional district continue in their respective positions in the withdrawing district, or in each of the constituent districts in the event of dissolution, and their rights of tenure, seniority, pension, leave of absence and other similar benefits are recognized and preserved and any periods of prior employment in the regional district shall count toward the acquisition of tenure to the same extent as if all such employment had been under the withdrawing district or in any of the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution. In the event of withdrawal, within 45 days of the election, any tenured employee in the withdrawing district who desires to remain in the employ of the regional district, and whose seniority under existing tenure law so permits, may apply and must be granted a transfer to a position with the regional district for which that employee is certified. The position must be vacant or held by an employee with less seniority or by an employee without tenure. N.J.S.A. 18A:13-64

#### **Withdrawal From and Dissolution of an All Purpose Regional**

N.J.S.A. 18A:13-66 to 81 provides for a withdrawal or dissolution procedure similar to that for the limited purpose regional district except that there is no provision allowing the county superintendent to require a feasibility study from the constituent municipalities, school districts and the regional district.



**The Commission on Business Efficiency  
of the Public Schools**

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The Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools is an advisory body which reviews and recommends statutory changes as they become necessary to facilitate improvements in the business efficiency of the Public Schools.

New Jersey Legislature  
CN-068

Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
(609) 292-8030



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