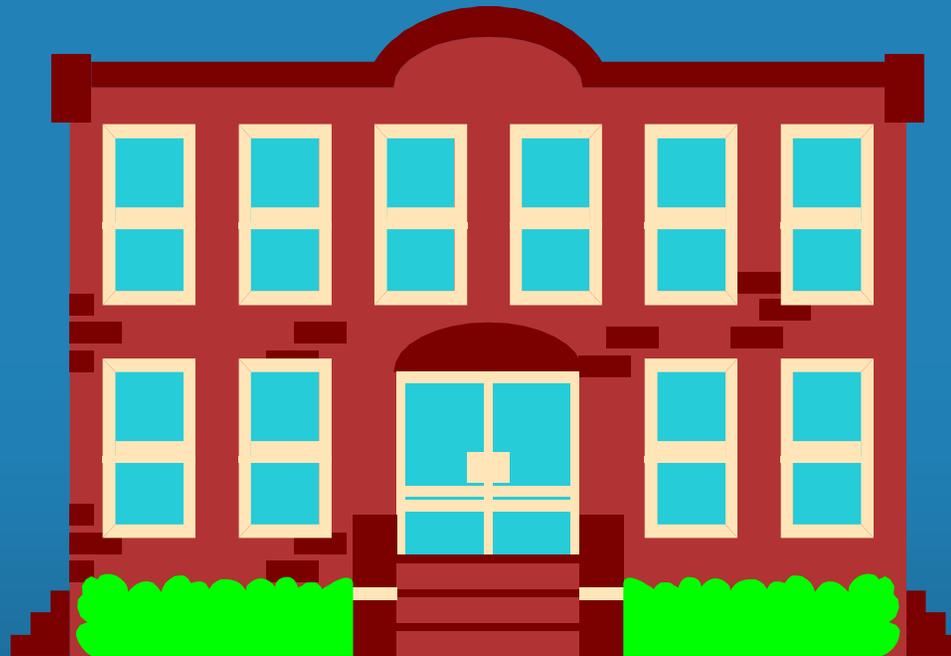


# REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NEW YORK STATE

Deborah H. Cunningham  
New York State Education Department  
[dcunning@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:dcunning@mail.nysed.gov)



1/7/2010

# HISTORY OF REORGANIZATION

- Ω 1795 Establishment of Statewide system of support for public schools
- Ω 1812 Establishment of common schools
- Ω 1853 Establishment of union free schools
- Ω 1914 Establishment of central schools
- Ω 1925 Central Rural Schools Act Revised
- Ω 1947 Statewide Master Plan for reorganization adopted
- Ω 1958 State Plan revised

# REORGANIZATIONS SINCE 1870

Year	Number of Districts	Decrease
1870....	11,372	
1890....	11,216	- 156
1910....	10,565	- 651
1930....	9,118	-1,447
1940....	6,397	-2,721
1950....	3,189	-3,208
1960....	1,293	-1,896
1970....	760	- 533
1980....	739	- 21
1990....	720	- 19
2000....	704	- 16

1/7/2010



# STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- ∞ Common School Districts - 1812
- ∞ Union Free School Districts - 1853
- ∞ Central School Districts - 1925
- ∞ City School Districts -
- ∞ Central High School Districts - 1917

# COMMON SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Ω Oldest of the existing types of districts
- Ω Do not have legal authority to operate a high school. Students are tuitioned to neighboring districts
- Ω Governed by a sole trustee or a board of three trustees elected for three-year terms
- Ω Currently 10 common school districts operating in the State (one non-operating)

1/7/2010

# UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- ∞ 1853 establishment of UFSDs to provide for secondary education
- ∞ Currently 151 UFSDs, of which 31 do not operate a high school
- ∞ 16 UFSDs serve children residing in child care institutions or "Special Act"
- ∞ Governed by a board of education of three to nine members who serve 3-5 yr. terms

# CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- ∞ 1925 legislation and financial incentives
- ∞ most common type in NYS
- ∞ created by combining two or more common, union free or central school districts.
- ∞ Currently 460 such districts, all but four operate K-12 programs.
- ∞ Governed by board of 5, 7 or 9 members, elected for 3 - 5 yr terms.

1/7/2010



# CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

## Population less than 125,000

---

- ∞ 57 cities under 125,000 population
- ∞ separate governmental units with their own board of education and independent taxing and debt incurring power
- ∞ may cover larger geographic area than the city: "enlarged city school districts"



# CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

## Population over 125,000

- Ω Commonly referred to as the “Big 5”
- Ω NYC-Buffalo-Rochester-Syracuse-Yonkers
- Ω Education function is part of the overall city government
- Ω Board of education sets policy for school system
- Ω Funding for school system is part of the overall municipal budget

# CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- ∞ Authorized in 1917 to provide secondary education to children from two or more feeder districts
- ∞ Appointed reps from the component boards comprised the central high school board
- ∞ 1944 deemed unsatisfactory and prohibited
- ∞ 1981 Legislation reinstated for Suffolk county only (Eastport-South Manor)

1/7/2010



# TYPES OF REORGANIZATION

---

- ∞ Centralization
- ∞ Annexation - Central School District
- ∞ Annexation - Union Free School District
- ∞ Consolidation with a Union Free or a Common School District
- ∞ Consolidation with a City School District

# CENTRALIZATION

- ∞ Education Law Section 1801-1804
- ∞ New school district is created encompassing the entire area of the school districts to be merged.
- ∞ Can be established through the merger of any types of school districts except city school districts
- ∞ The districts must be contiguous

# ANNEXATION: CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

- ∞ Education Law Sections 1801 and 1803
- ∞ New district is not created. The district to be annexed is dissolved and becomes part of the annexing central school district.
- ∞ Common, union free and central districts can be annexed to a central school district if they are contiguous



# ANNEXATION: UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

- ∞ Education Law Section 1705
- ∞ New district is not created. The district to be annexed is dissolved and becomes part of the annexing union free school district.
- ∞ Common, union free and central districts can be annexed to a union free if they are contiguous.

# CONSOLIDATION OF UNION FREE/COMMON SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- ∞ Creation of a new school district
- ∞ Two or more common districts may be consolidated as a single common or as a union free.
- ∞ Two or more union free districts may be consolidated as a single union free.
- ∞ A union free school district and a common school district may be consolidated as a single union free.

1/7/2010

# CONSOLIDATION CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

- ∞ The district to be consolidated will cease to exist and city will have responsibility for education of the whole area.
- ∞ School districts of any legal form outside the city district which are directly contiguous to either the city or other district which is also being consolidated to the city may be party to the reorganization.

# WHY REORGANIZE

- ∞ Enhance pupil and financial base
- ∞ Provide a wider range of educational programs and opportunities for students
- ∞ Upgrade facilities and equipment to support program requirements
- ∞ Provide competitive salaries to teachers
- ∞ Provide specially equipped classrooms for specific subjects

## WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE

- ∞ A fear of losing local identity
- ∞ Perception that the communities are incompatible and that one may benefit more than the other
- ∞ Higher costs and increase in property tax
- ∞ More time required for transportation
- ∞ Job security for school district employees
- ∞ Natural tendency to resist change

1/1/2010

# HOW TO QUALIFY FOR INCENTIVE AID

- ∞ Two or more K-12 school districts; or
- ∞ One K-12 school district and 9 or more other school districts; or
- ∞ Two or more central school districts; or
- ∞ One K-12 school district and a school district employing 8 or more teachers; or
- ∞ A city school district and 7 or more other districts

1/7/2010

## INITIATING THE REORGANIZATION

- ∞ Joint meetings between the affected boards of education to gather information to determine if there are sufficient benefits to warrant a formal study.
- ∞ District Superintendent acts as an informed neutral party that provides information, support and assistance
- ∞ If there is potential benefit, the board undertakes a comprehensive feasibility study with guidance from SED



# FEASIBILITY STUDY

## The Purpose

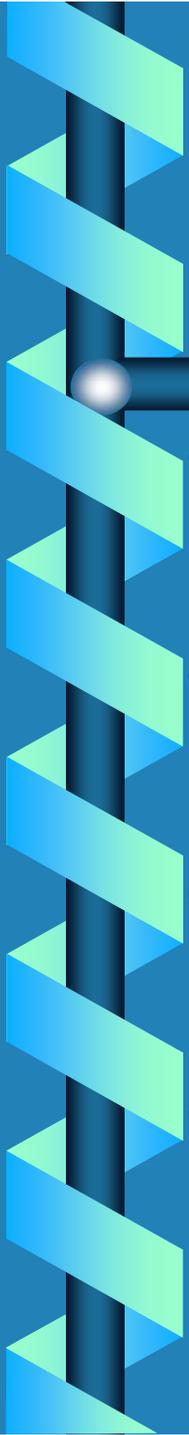
---

- ∞ Develop information which describes how a specific combination of districts would operate if reorganization were implemented
- ∞ Serves several audiences
  - school district officials
  - taxpayers
  - Commissioner of Education

# FEASIBILITY STUDY

## What to Include

- ∞ current and projected enrollments
- ∞ current and projected professional staffing plans
- ∞ current and projected housing plans
- ∞ plan for education programs and curricula
- ∞ plan for transportation
- ∞ fiscal implications of the reorganization: state aid, expenditures and local tax effort



# INFORMING THE PUBLIC

- ∞ Education Law provides for a referendum in the communities affected by reorganization
- ∞ Public needs to be informed throughout the process of the study and implementation
- ∞ Joint plan and calendar should be developed for community information process
- ∞ Goal is to reach every eligible voter so that informed decisions can be made at the time of the vote

# ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

- ∞ Established practice by SED
- ∞ Evidence of support in each district before the Commissioner takes formal action to authorize reorganization
- ∞ Petitions or advisory referendums
- ∞ District Superintendent responsible for working with SED on transmitting information relative to the reorganization

# LEGAL STEPS TOWARD REORGANIZATION

- ∞ Legal steps are dependent on the statutory forms by which districts reorganize
- ∞ Outline of steps required are provided in "A Guide to the Reorganization of School Districts in New York State"
- ∞ Close cooperation among the DS, boards of education and SED staff is essential to insure that each step is carried out correctly and in the proper sequence

# Looking at Pairs of Districts

District	Reorganization Incentive Operating Aid*	2006-07 Selected Operating Aid	CWR	2007 Enrollment	Pair Similar in Wealth?
Haldane		\$434,416	1.557	884	N
Garrison		120,400	3.29	295	
Reorganized District	\$221,926				
Ossining		2,896,107	1.629	3,993	Y
Tarrytown		1,750,398	1.573	995	
Reorganized District	\$1,858,602				
Briarcliff		763,200	2.218	1,752	N
Ossining		2,896,107	1.629	3,993	
Reorganized District	\$1,463,723				
Croton		730,400	1.824	1,731	Y
Ossining		2,896,107	1.629	3,993	
Reorganized District	\$1,450,603				

1/7/2010

# Looking at Pairs of Districts

District	Reorganization Incentive Operating Aid*	2006-07 Selected Operating Aid	CWR	2007 Enrollment	Pair Similar in Wealth?
Hendrick Hudson Croton Reorganized District	\$783,040	1,227,200 730,400	1.73 1.824	2,715 1,731	Y
Lakeland Yorktown Reorganized District	\$5,784,093	10,286,320 4,173,913	1.034 1.32	6,326 4,040	Y
North Colonie Maplewood Reorganized District	\$2,753,015	6,882,537 258,930	1.194 0.847	5,646 147	Y

\* Only North Colonie is currently receiving Reorganization Incentive Operating Aid due to its reorganization with Maplewood, effective 7/1/2008. All other Reorg. Incentive Operating Aid amounts are estimates based on Selected Operating Aid and an additional 40% apportionment.

# Questions?

---

∞ [emscmgts@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:emscmgts@mail.nysed.gov)

∞ [http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/mgtserv/  
sch\\_dist\\_org/](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/mgtserv/sch_dist_org/)