

“QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS”
TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT *TIMELINE* AND *GOVERNANCE*
TOPICS RELATED TO SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION
(please note that timelines can vary)

TIMELINE

Question #1: What happens when the study is completed?

Answer#1: Upon completion, the draft of the feasibility study is forwarded to the State Education Department (SED) for review. After review by the department (two-three weeks) the study is returned to the consultants to make any changes as recommended by SED. Once finalized, the approved study is sent to each of the Boards of Education for review. At this point, the individual Boards determine if they will accept the report. When that happens, the consultants make arrangements with the individual Boards of Education to present the findings in each of the school districts. (Note: This process may take place during September and October and is completed by the beginning of November.)

Question #2: What do the Boards have to do next?

Answer #2: Each Board decides to move forward, or not. Supposing a positive vote of each Board, they then decide to undertake statutory reorganization process. This now brings SED into the process and from this point on, the Department will guide the districts through the reorganization process. (This happens during the month of January.) By the beginning of February, an advisory referendum (straw vote) takes place in each of the school districts. If the votes are positive, formal next steps are begun, commencing with a Board resolution from each district requesting the Commissioner of Education to “lay out” the new centralized district and make recommendations relative to conducting the formal vote.

Question #3: What are the requirements at this point to get to the formal vote?

Answer #3: February becomes a very busy month! Each Board, by formal resolution and through supporting documentation from the BOCES District Superintendent, requests the Commissioner to authorize the formation of a new centralized district. The Commissioner’s Order laying out the new district is posted in the respective districts. Next, the Boards submit Statutory Petitions requesting the Commissioner to call a special meeting to vote on the proposed centralization. There are two petitions:

A) Petition signed by 100 qualified voters (or 10% of the student enrollment of the proposed combined district) requesting Commissioner to call a special meeting of the combined district to vote on centralization.

“Custom tools and research to aid a school district in defining a vision and decision options for serving students in the future.”

B) Second Petition signed by 100 qualified voters (or 10% of the student enrollment) for each district to be designated as a special election district requesting the Commissioner establish an alternative voting site in each such district.

The Commissioner then issues an order calling for a special meeting in each district for a centralized referendum. (This has to take place within 30 days following the receipt of the petitions requesting a vote.) Legal notices must be provided regarding the special vote (at least 10 days prior) and information must be provided for absentee ballots. By the beginning of March (within the first week/week and a half to meet the deadline) the referendum is held in each district voting on the centralization proposition, the number of board members to serve in each district and the term of office of the members.

Question #4: What happens next, assuming a positive vote?

Answer #4: In March (continuing with this timeline), the Commissioner would order a special meeting to be held to elect a new Board of Education. Notice is posted at least 10 days prior to vote. Candidates for the new Board would obtain petitions through the BOCES District Superintendent. By the middle of April, BOE candidates would meet with the District Superintendent to determine placement on the ballots for voting and absentee ballots would be prepared. By the first week of May, the special meeting would be held to elect the new Board of Education of the newly centralized district. (Note: these dates provide an approximate rendering of the process. There may be adjustments to the dates as determined by SED and the districts.)

Question #5: When does the new district begin business?

Answer #5: This happens very quickly. The BOCES District Superintendent holds an organizational meeting; members take oath of office and prepare for new school year. Of most importance is the development of the budget and holding a special meeting to vote on the new budget. (This may happen on the statewide voting date for school budgets.) The new district officially begins operation on July 1, 2012.

Question #6: What if one of the districts voted not to centralize? How would this affect the other district and could they still move forward?

Answer #6: If one of the districts decided not to move forward, the reorganization process is terminated.

Question #7: How long can the study be used if there is an initial negative vote?

Answer #7: Supposing the two districts decided to move forward at a later date, the study would be considered useable by the districts for one year.

“Custom tools and research to aid a school district in defining a vision and decision options for serving students in the future.”

GOVERNANCE

The following are excerpts from a Guide to the Reorganization of School Districts in New York State. A complete version can be found at:

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/sch_dist_org/GuideToReorganizationOfSchoolDistricts.htm

CENTRALIZATION OF DISTRICTS AND GOVERNANCE

This form of reorganization has been the most common. The procedures for centralization provide that a new school district be created encompassing the entire area of the school districts to be merged.

The new central district becomes operational only after the centralization order is approved by the qualified voters in each school district included in the centralization. If each district approves the order by a majority vote, the new district will begin operation on July 1, following the vote. If approval of the order is defeated in any district included in the proposed centralization, the new district is not created, and the question may not be voted upon again for one year.

If the order is presented a second time, and is approved, the new district begins operation. If the order is defeated a second time — or if it is not brought to referendum within two years of the initial referendum — then the original order becomes null and void.

New Board of Education for the New District:

The new district is governed by a board of education comprising five, seven or nine members. The new board is elected at a special meeting called by the Commissioner of Education after the new district is approved at referendum. The number of board members (5,7 or 9) and their term of office (3,4 or 5 years) may be voted upon at the same time as the referendum on establishing the district, or may be decided at a separate meeting.

The boards of education of the districts included in the centralization continue their responsibilities until the new district begins operation and the business affairs of their former districts have been completed, usually August 1.

“Custom tools and research to aid a school district in defining a vision and decision options for serving students in the future.”