Perceptions of New Jersey Superintendents Relative to Public School Regionalization and Deregionalization Efforts, 1993-2003

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PERCEPTIONS OF NEW JERSEY SUPERINTENDENTS RELATIVE TO
PUBLIC SCHOOL REGIONALIZATION AND DEREGIONALIZATION
EFFORTS, 1993-2003

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Abstract

Seventeen New Jersey public school districts between the years of 1993 and 2003 were granted approval from the Commissioner of Education to present the question of regionalization or deregionalization to their respective voters for consideration. The superintendents or designees representing the 17 school districts were interviewed for the purpose of determining whether they perceive that specific factors, when present, influence the success or failure of a district's regionalization or deregionalization efforts.

From the responses received from the superintendents or designees involved in the study, a database was developed that listed the primary and secondary reasons for successful or unsuccessful regionalization efforts. Other tables indicating the frequency and percent of the superintendents' responses for successful or unsuccessful regionalization or deregionalization efforts and the overall outcomes of the districts involved in the study are also included. Summary data, national perspectives regarding school district consolidation, and a discussion of factors that hinder or promote regionalization or deregionalization in New Jersey are also discussed. Suggestions for future study are also noted.
Acknowledgement

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. John W. Collins, Jr. for all his time, energy, and guidance in assisting me to complete this study. Thank you, Dr. Collins, for your "gentle push" prior to my defense and additionally for understanding why my study had to be relevant.
Dedication

This study is dedicated to Kristen D. Lake, my daughter, and the most important person in my life. Kristen, the next degree we celebrate will be yours!
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Chapter I
Introduction

The subject of regionalization, or the consolidation of public school districts, has been a major topic of interest and educational research within the state of New Jersey for over 30 years. This is documented by a series of reports and studies, primarily authored by the New Jersey Department of Education, which discussed the topic of regionalization as a means of more comprehensively and cost effectively delivering educational services to New Jersey’s public school students. The first study of note is the New Jersey Department of Education’s study titled, Report of the State Committee to Study the Next Steps of Regionalization and Consolidation in the School Districts of New Jersey (1969). This study, chaired by Ruth H. Mancuso, member of the Glassboro Board of Education, made a series of specific recommendations relative to the organizational pattern of New Jersey’s public schools. It addressed pupil distribution and the financing necessary to meet the requirement of New Jersey’s constitutional clause that mandates a thorough and efficient education for all students. In terms of the issue of regionalization, the report recommended reducing the number of school districts "by reorganization based on districts encompassing a total
K-12 program (p.12). The report also recommended that a comprehensive K-12 school district include a student enrollment of a minimum of 3,500 pupils.

Subsequent reports have also made recommendations relative to the consolidation of New Jersey's public schools. The New Jersey Department of Education's study titled, The Organization of Educational Services and Local School Districts in New Jersey (1980) questioned the Marcuso report's conclusions. Specifically, concerns were expressed as to whether the consolidation of New Jersey's school districts would indeed be both cost effective and of greater quality relative to the delivery of instructional services to students. The report indicated that transportation costs incurred because of school district consolidation could eliminate most savings derived by district consolidation. The comprehensive delivery of instructional services offered via consolidation could be mitigated by: "less flexibility for innovation, less diversity in response to student needs, and a low level of citizen participation in policy making" (p. 2). Instead, the 1980 report made organizational recommendations on both the county and local level and discussed the financial accommodations recommended to assist local school districts that voluntarily select regionalization.
The Quality Education Commission (1991), established by former Governor James Florio, recommended that New Jersey consolidate its 600 plus school districts into K-12 systems by the year 2000. The Commission indicated that such a reorganization would save taxpayers $50,000,000 in central administration expenses. The Commission noted that in addition to savings to the taxpayer, the intent of consolidation was to "provide more effectively sized school districts with greater autonomy at the individual school level and with greater opportunities for all students" (p. 40).

Reock (1995b) also presented a plan for the consolidation of New Jersey's public schools. His plan involved two major recommendations. First, that each limited purpose regional high school district become an all-purpose K-12 school district. Second, that each district serving as a receiving district for secondary level pupils sent from small elementary districts on a tuition basis become a new K-12 regional school district.

Conversely, a review of the literature has also indicated support for the maintenance and control of local public schools. This is manifested by the dissolution of two limited-purpose regional school districts, the Union County Regional and the Lower Camden Regional School
District, as permitted under state statute 13A: 13-51 (amended August 13, 1993). Support for local control is predicated on the belief that local public schools provide a more responsive delivery of educational programs and services to constituents than larger school districts.

The concept of local control of public schools was supported in a study written by the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (1992). Additionally, an Assembly Task Force, chaired by Assemblyman Joseph Malone (New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization, 1999), released findings that indicated regionalization does not always result in savings for the local property owner or that the desire for home rule was the motivating factor to reject regionalization. The Task Force found that more specific local issues might determine the feasibility of school district consolidation.

Many of New Jersey's reports and studies relative to school district consolidation have expressed their conceptual endorsement of further district consolidation. However, New Jersey's operational practices fail to illustrate a commitment to expedite mergers of existing school districts. Other states such as Pennsylvania, New York, and Illinois, as noted by the Public Affairs Research Institute (1996), have implemented school district
consolidation programs in an attempt to offer more comprehensive educational programs and services to its constituents, while concomitantly operating school districts more cost effectively. New Jersey has maintained its steadfast commitment to the concept of local control. Financial incentives have been provided by other states to encourage school district consolidation as noted by the Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996). New Jersey has offered very little to encourage its public school districts to consolidate.

The Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) indicated that while the number of school districts declined nationally from 83,643 to 15,337 between the years 1949 and 1990, the number of school districts in New Jersey over the same period of time increased from 559 to 603. Nationally, New Jersey has the greatest number of school districts per square mile. Furthermore, Reock (1995b) noted that New Jersey's 600 plus school districts are among the smallest in the country and serve an average of less than 1,800 students compared to the national average of more than 2,600 students. Reock (1995b) also stated that almost half of New Jersey's public school districts have fewer than 500 students, some are non-operating and several rural districts have enrollments of less than 50 students.
An examination of the report of the Public Affairs Research Institute (1996) illustrates the complexity of the state's public schools organizational structure. There are 209 K-12 school districts with 49 limited purpose regional high school districts. These operate at either a 7-12 or 9-12 grade level configuration and provide high school programs for constituent elementary school districts that have K-6 or K-8 patterns. Additionally, there are 107 school districts that operate elementary grade level programs and pay tuition to send students to other school districts. Twenty districts are non-operating in that they operate no schools and pay tuition to attend other school districts on a tuition basis. Finally, New Jersey operates as separate entities, vocational school districts and educational services commissions.

The Public Affairs Research Institute (1996) also reported that New Jersey is the only major industrial state that has not developed a more regional approach to providing public education. New Jersey has the lowest number of students per district of the major industrial states and the highest per pupil expenditure in the country. According to the New Jersey Department of Education's Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing (1995a), these costs are attributed to
administration and the duplication of services provided to students. The latter is due to the fact that there are a large number of small public school districts located throughout the state.

The aforementioned statistics are supported by Education Vital Signs (1999), which noted that New Jersey's per pupil expenditure of $10,153 for the 1998-99 school year was the highest in the nation. SAT scores and high school completion rates, when compared with student achievement data attained from other northeastern states, do not indicate that New Jersey students attain higher test scores or higher high school completion rates.

To summarize, there appears to be many factors that influence the issue of school district consolidation within the state of New Jersey. These include New Jersey's tradition of home rule of its public schools, the need to realize both fiscal and educational economies of scale as discussed within the Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing (1995a) as well as the need to provide comprehensive curriculum articulation, K-12. To date, New Jersey continues to operate over 600 public school districts, and, according to the aforementioned publication, duplication of services in many small
districts contributes to the increase of the local tax burden.

Theoretical Rationale

Interest in consolidating or regionalizing New Jersey's public school districts can be compared to corporate mergers that gained momentum in the 1980s and have continued to the present time. Renner (2000) reported that the trend toward corporate consolidation "reached significant momentum in 1999, when the value of worldwide mergers and acquisitions reached a new record of 3.4 trillion" (p.1). Renner further related that this statistic was "an astonishing 40 percent increase from the previous record of $2.5 trillion established in 1998" (p.1). Since 1980, the annual value of mergers has increased 100 fold reaching a cumulative $15 trillion. In 1999, more than 32,000 deals were announced, triple the number 10 years earlier and more than 30 times as many as in 1981.

In a statement to the Federal Trade Commission (June 16, 1998) and presented by Robert Pitofsky, chairperson, concerning mergers and corporate consolidations in the new economy, it was noted that the number of mergers reported to the antitrust agencies under the Hart-Scott-Rodino Act continued to increase from the filing in 1991 of 1,529 to over 4,500 in fiscal year 1998. Furthermore, the report
discussed some of the dynamics that affected consolidations and mergers. These included "the acquisition of unrelated businesses that were targeted for their break-up value or designated to generate cash for corporate raiders. Other mergers involved the traditional corporate goals of efficiency and competitiveness" (p.1).

Pitofsky (1998) also related that the globalization of competition as typified by product markets and evidenced by the automobile, media, technology, and pharmaceutical industries gained momentum. These mergers were designed to enhance a firm's ability to compete in foreign markets by providing access to local markets, economies of scale, and complementary products. By way of example, BBC News reported on January 7, 2003, the merger of Japanese camera manufacturers Konica and Minolta. The intent of the merger was to be more competitive with other firms in the photography and office-equipment market such as Canon and Ricoh. Also, as stated by Masahiro Nakanomyo, a Mitsubishi analyst, "The merger brings the chance of cost savings which increase the possibility that the two could become a survivor group in the highly competitive sector" (p.2).

Corporate downsizing and consolidation also has been manifested in the health care industry. There has been considerable modification in health care practices such as
shorter hospital stays that could result in excess capacity in some hospitals. As a result, hospital mergers have been in evidence as a means of eliminating unneeded capacity as well as improving the delivery of hospital efficiency. As a corollary to hospital mergers, Scherer (2003) reported, "three companies, McKesson, Cardinal Health Systems, and Amerisource Bergen distribute 90% of the drugs bought by hospital and drug stores" (p.2).

Scherer (2003) provided additional information relative to the consolidation and merger of financial institutions. As an example, he noted the purchase of Fleet Bank by Bank of America for $43 billion in stock. More recently, the Daily Record (2004), reported the Federal Reserve approved the merger of J.P. Morgan Chase to combine with and absorb the Chicago based Bank One Corporation. The merger would form the second largest bank in the nation with $3 trillion in assets.

The theory of economies of scale, manifested by corporate mergers and acquisitions, including the downsizing of management and staff, is analogous to the issue of school district consolidation, or the practice of combining two or more school districts for educational and/or economic benefit. Nelson (1985) noted that a consolidated school district has the ability to offer an
expanded curriculum while reducing the costs through economies of scale. Consolidation provides opportunity to expand course offerings and facilities. Such sharing provides a varied curriculum as fewer courses are dropped due to low student enrollments. Also, expenditures for maintenance and capital improvements are often reduced, as there is not a need to maintain duplicate facilities. Athletic and extracurricular programs are usually expanded and enhanced.

Consolidation also combines course offerings and maximizes the number of students taking courses. This usually leads to the downsizing of the teacher labor force within the consolidated district. Consolidations usually require a reduced number of administrators since the number of schools needed within a consolidated district is often reduced. Central office administrative staff is also downsized as documented by the consolidation of Chatham Borough and Chatham Township in New Jersey in 1986 that eliminated one superintendent and one business administrator.

Conversely, there is a body of research that questions whether bigger is truly better in delivering instruction to students. Skandera and Sousa (2001) related "if students were strictly economic goods then the economies of scale
associated with consolidation would make perfect sense; more production, lower costs, and, to some degree, better quality" (p.1). However, Skandera and Sousa further noted that students are not products to be managed but individuals that must be educated as they are the future of America.

Michael Antonucci, in his 1999 study titled, Mission Creep: How Large School Districts Lose Sight of the Objective reported that the American public school system actually suffers from "penalties of scale." Antonucci’s study indicated that as a school district’s size increases, the percentage of the budget spent within the classroom on student instruction for teachers, books, instructional supplies and materials actually decreases. As an example, Antonucci reported that in 1999 the average school district spent 61.7% of its budget on instruction. However, Broward County, Florida, the nation’s sixth largest school district, spent 55.7% of its budget on instruction. Baltimore County, Maryland, the 24th largest school district in the nation, spent 55.3% on instruction. Other educational reformers such as Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, John Goodlad, author of A Place Called School, and Theodore Sizer, dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education,
all recommended that comprehensive high schools be realigned into smaller educational settings.

Meier (1995), in her discussions relative to alternative schools, noted that Anthony Alvarado, former superintendent of District 4 in New York City, closed down three large comprehensive junior high schools and replaced them with small autonomous educational programs. He then introduced market competition into those autonomous programs by requiring the students to choose from among the new programs. The results were that by the end of the 1980s, District 4 student achievement had risen from the bottom of New York City’s 32 local systems to 16th. Other examples of market competition within the business of education is noted by the increase in the Charter Schools movement throughout New Jersey and the nation as well as the increase in the number of private elementary and secondary schools. Skandera and Sousa (2001) reported that during the 1929-30 school year, there were 12,533 private schools throughout the United States. During the 1997-98 school year, there were 35,694. By contrast, there were 262,266 public schools during the 1929-30 school year. During the 1997-98 school year, there were 90,661 public schools or about one third as many schools as in 1929-30.
While the New Jersey Department of Education has expressed its conceptual endorsement of further school district consolidation, its operating practices fail to document this philosophy. In fact, New Jersey's Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing (NJDOE, 1995a) does not include any financial resources necessary to facilitate school district consolidation.

Other statewide reports, including the Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey report titled Reducing the Number of New Jersey School Districts: Regionalization and Consolidation Options (1996) and the Cost Impact of School District Creation and Consolidation in New Jersey (1995a) written by Reock provided substantial historical and programmatic data relative to New Jersey's public schools. The Assembly Task Force on School District Consolidation (New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization, 1999) also discussed the consolidation of New Jersey's many school districts and listed recommendations for consolidation. However, in this study, Assistant Commissioner, John M. Sherry, noted that the New Jersey State Department of Education could find no quantitative data to support cost savings, improved
educational curricula, and increased efficiency that had resulted in existing districts because of consolidation.

This study focused on school districts that have brought the issue of consolidation or deregionalization to their voting public during the years of 1953 through 2003. The problem to be researched is whether there are specific factors that, when present, influence the success or failure of a school district's regionalization or deregionalization efforts. If the objective of regionalization or deregionalization is to increase school district efficiency while concomitantly pursuing economies of scale for the New Jersey taxpayer, then myriad factors within each district considering regionalization or deregionalization must be studied before regionalization or deregionalization becomes the state's mission.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the study is to answer a series of questions designed to determine whether superintendents perceive that specific factors, when present in New Jersey public school districts, influence the success or failure of regionalization or deregionalization efforts. If, in fact, there are factors that can be identified to assist school districts in their regionalization or deregionalization efforts, the identification of these
factors could assist school districts in determining whether moving forward with regionalization or deregionalization is feasible. As noted by Beaufeea (1993), "If the outcome of a merger could be predicted before undergoing any stressful changes to a district, and that by correlating the factors that are unique to each district's merger, and analyzing their outcomes, standardized procedures may be achieved" (p.6).

Research Questions and Subsidiary Questions

This study will answer the following research question: What are the common factors as perceived by superintendents or their respective designees, of New Jersey public school districts that, when present, influence the success or failure of regionalization or deregionalization efforts from the years 1993 through 2003? The superintendents involved in this study are those presently serving, or have served, in school districts that have been involved in regionalization or deregionalization efforts from the years 1993 through 2003. Additionally, the purpose is focused on gathering the perceptions of the superintendents involved in this study. It is not the intent on the part of this researcher to determine the validity of the participants' perceptions.

The following is a list of subsidiary questions to be
discussed within this research study. It should be noted that although the primary purpose of the research is to explore the factors that influence the success or failure of school district regionalization or deregionalization in New Jersey, as perceived by participant superintendents or designees, a secondary purpose is to update the current research relative to this topic. The research question and the subsidiary questions have been gleaned from a previous regionalization study completed by Beauchea in 1993 and modified to include questions relative to dissolution of school districts as noted:

Question 1. What factors appear to contribute to the success of New Jersey school districts' consolidation or dissolution efforts? What are the factors that appear to contribute to the unsuccessful consolidation or dissolution of New Jersey public school districts?

Question 2. Does a district consolidation/dissolution contribute to a diverse curriculum?

Question 3. What happens to the cost effectiveness in a newly formed regional district or in the dissolution of a regional in the areas of staff and administration?

Question 4. What point in the consolidation process or dissolution process will economies of scale become moot?

Question 5. Does the issue of "home rule" when
discussing board representation have a major impact on consolidation or deregionalization efforts?

Question 6. Can it be determined if there is any correlation between factors that, when present, may successfully predict the outcome of the consolidation process? Can it be determined if there is any correlation between factors that may successfully predict the outcome of a successful deregionalization process? (pp. 6-7)

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited to the New Jersey school districts that have completed the required Department of Education feasibility study regarding school district consolidation or dissolution of an existing regional school district and have been granted approval by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education or designee to present the issue of consolidation or dissolution on the ballot for voter consideration. Only those New Jersey public school districts that presented the issue of consolidation or dissolution to their voters since 1993 are considered within this study. Those districts in which consolidation was approved by the voters included the Independence (K-8) and Liberty (K-8) public school districts located in Warren County. These two districts regionalized in 1994 to become the Great Meadows School District. Bernardsville a (K-12)
school district, Far Hills (K-8), and the Peapack-Gladstone (K-8) public school districts all located in Somerset County, regionalized in 1995 to become the Somerset Hills Regional School District. Hanbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge, two districts located in Bergen County that experienced the defeat of the question of consolidation by the voters in 1997 are also included in this study. Additionally, there are also two regional districts that experienced deregionalization or dissolution of their respective regional school district that are also included in this study. They are the Union County Regional High School District that was dissolved in 1997 and included the constituent districts of Berkeley Heights, Clark, Kenilworth, Mountainside, Garwood, and Springfield Boards of Education. In 2001, the Lower Camden County Regional School District comprised of the constituent districts of Berlin, Waterford, and Winslow Townships as well as Chesilhurst, Clmenton, Lindenwold, and Pine Hills Boroughs in Camden County was dissolved.

Further limitations to consider included the fact that the responses to the questions asked will be directed to the superintendents or his/her designee of the respective public school districts involved in this study who brought the issue of regionalization or deregionalization to the
voters between the years of 1993-2003. These superintendents include the superintendents/designees of the two newly regionalized districts, the superintendents/designees of the constituent districts of the two deregionalized districts, and the two superintendents/designees representing the two districts that experienced a defeat of their regionalization efforts. The total number of superintendents or designees represented within this study number 17. The responses of the superintendents may reflect past actions or biases relative to specific district needs as related in their district's feasibility study as submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education.

In addition to the aforementioned limitations, delimitation includes the survey questions selected by the researcher that were developed by Beauchea in 1993 for use in a national school district consolidation study in partial fulfillment of her doctoral studies at Seton Hall University. This survey was used in part to update the research completed by Beauchea in 1993, as suggested in her recommendations for future study and also to determine if, in fact, superintendents involved in this study perceive there are specific factors that influence or hinder school
district regionalization or deregionalization efforts in New Jersey.

Significance of the Study

The New Jersey Department of Education, while endorsing the concept of school district consolidation, has not consistently provided financial incentives to encourage consolidation. Garrahan (1992) indicated that in 1987, incentives for voluntary regionalization were enacted into law. The incentives ranged in amount of $40,000 to $60,000 in additional state aid for smaller districts that would voluntarily regionalize. The Public Research Institute (1996) indicated that in 1993, a total of $90,000 was distributed to 19 district groups representing a total of 58 school districts. Concomitant with the lack of consistent financial assistance, there was no specific state policy relative to local school district consolidation.

In the past few years, there have been a plethora of state reports and studies that have discussed regionalization and its applicability to provide comprehensive educational services at reduced costs to local taxpayers. Most of these studies appear to emanate from agencies supported by the New Jersey Department of Education. Limited research has been conducted that
considers what factors, if any, are necessary in order for two or more schools districts to succeed in consolidating their respective districts. One study completed by Beauchea (1993) discussed factors that influenced school district consolidation. However, that study was not specific to New Jersey public school districts and is 11 years old. There is a need to update the research relative to the factors that may influence the success or failure of school district regionalization in New Jersey. The number of New Jersey school district regionalizations and deregionalizations, since the Beauchea study and the recent efforts to consolidate school districts as discussed in New Jersey Governor McGreevey’s State of the State Address, appear to validate the timeliness and appropriateness of this study.

This study examined the perceptions of select superintendents relative to the factors that appear to influence New Jersey public school districts’ interest in regionalization or deregionalization since 1993. The intent was to determine whether the superintendents’ perceptions appear to indicate specific factors consistent in all regionalization studies that led to successful or unsuccessful consolidation of two or more public school districts. Additionally, the study also included interviews
from superintendents whose school districts were involved in deregionalization efforts between 1993 and 2003. Determining the factors influencing successful school district consolidation or those factors that led to unsuccessful consolidation efforts may provide the New Jersey Department of Education with parameters necessary to develop a consistent policy relative to school district consolidation. It could also provide the Department of Education with a framework in which to provide financial incentives necessary to encourage school district consolidation. Furthermore, it could also assist local school districts in determining whether or not to pursue school district consolidation absent the factors that have been suggested to support this concept.

This study also focused exclusively on New Jersey in its attempt to suggest factors, based on superintendents' and designees' perceptions that may influence school district regionalization or deregionalization. It will update the study completed by Beauchea (1993) to determine whether there are specific factors, as perceived by superintendents that support the consolidation of school districts or conversely determine the factors that inhibit consolidation of school districts. The study also investigated whether the factors necessary for
regionalization or deregionalization are local factors and thus specific to the districts considering consolidation.

**Definition of Terms**

Regionalize: To divide into regions or administrative districts; to arrange regionally (American Heritage Dictionary, p.1041).

Consolidate: The process of uniting, to unite into one system or body (American Heritage Dictionary, p.313).

Note: The terms regionalize and consolidate are used interchangeably throughout this study as are the terms regionalization and consolidation.

Perception: The process, act or faculty of perceiving. The capacity for insight or discernment (American Heritage Dictionary, p. 920).


Local school district: "Any school district comprising within its territorial boundaries the territory comprised in one or more municipalities, except a regional district"(N.J.S.A. 18A: 1.1 1968).

Local school board: The local school board is the
prime enforcer of the school laws of the state board. The local board is mandated by the state legislature "to enforce the rules of the state board and to perform all acts consistent with law for the conduct, equipment and maintenance of public schools" (N.J.S.A. 18A: 11-1 (b),(d) 1968).

All purpose regional school district: School district organized "for all the school purposes of the municipalities included within such regional districts" (N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-2 1968).

Limited purpose regional districts: "Those districts organized to provide and operate in the territory comprised within such districts one or more of the following: elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, vocational schools, special schools, health facilities or particular educational services or facilities" (N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-2 1998).

Superintendent of Schools: An individual selected and appointed by a school board to serve as chief advisor and chief executive and administrative officer of the board or boards of education employing him/her. The superintendent shall have general supervision over all aspects, including the fiscal operations and instructional programs of the
schools of the district or districts under rules and regulations prescribed by the state board and shall keep himself/herself informed as to their condition and progress and shall report thereon from time to time, to, and as directed by the board and he/she shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the board or boards employing him/her. (N.J.S.A. 18A: 17-20(a)1968)

Constituent K-6 and K-8 school districts: "Independent elementary school districts that have a board of education and operate their own schools. These districts are members of limited purpose regionals that provide secondary education services to the constituents" (NJDOE, 1980, p.20).

District Factor Group (DFG): New Jersey Department of Education's measure of a community's socioeconomic status using the following variables based on the Decennial Census:
Percent of adults with no high school diploma
Percent of adults with some college
Occupational status
Unemployment rate
Percent of individuals in poverty
Median family income http://www.state.nj.us/
Sending districts, according to NJDOE (1980) are:
Elementary school districts that operate their own school
districts but send all secondary pupils to one or more
receiving districts on a tuition basis for their secondary
school education. Residents in these districts have no
representation on the receiving district’s board of
education. (p. 20)

Non-operating school districts: “School districts that
do not operate schools on their own but send all pupils to
other districts on a tuition basis” (NJDOE, 1980, p. 20).

Sending receiving relationship: “One in which a school
district pays tuition to a receiving school district for
pupils who are residents of the sending community”

Any school district having the necessary
accommodations may receive, or be required to receive
by order of the State Board, pupils from another
district not having sufficient accommodation. When a
district is receiving students, it may set a tuition
rate which is determined as the actual cost per pupil
based on a formula approved by the State Board.
(Public Affairs Research Institute, 1996, p.35)
Successful consolidation: One in which a board or boards of education shall, by resolution, frame and adopt a proposal to join or create an all-purpose or limited purpose regional school district in accord with N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-41. If approved in each of the constituent districts, the county superintendent will set a date for formation, organization, and operation of the new regional district (N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-41).

Unsuccessful Consolidation: One in which a board or boards of education shall, by resolution, frame and adopt a proposal to join or create an all-purpose or limited purpose regional school district in accord with N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-34. The question of consolidation is presented to the voters of the potential constituent districts and is not approved by the majority of the voters as required (N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-41).

Dissolution of Local Districts (18A: 13-48.) Whenever any local school district has joined or shall join in a creating or enlarging an all purpose regional district, or b. the formation of a limited purpose regional district and thereafter has joined or shall join in the formation of another regional district for all other school purposes,
all existing districts forming such regional district or any existing district so united with such last named regional districts shall be dissolved when the board of education of such regional district shall take charge and control of the educational facilities of the schools of such existing district or districts and thereafter each municipality included within such regional district shall become a constituent district of such regional district. The board of education of each district to be dissolved shall continue in office with power to conduct the schools of the district until such date as the board of education of such regional district shall take charge and control of the educational facilities of the schools of such regional district on which date their terms of office shall terminate. No election shall be held for members of any district to be so dissolved in or after any year in which the members of the board of the regional district are elected (N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-48).

Economies of scale: A situation where the cost of producing one unit of a good or service decreases as the volume of production increases. The converse situation in which the cost of producing a good or service increases, as the volume of production increases is known as diseconomies of scale. Economies of scale tend to occur in industries
with high capital costs in which those costs can be distributed across a large number of units of production. (Economies of Scale - Reference Library)

**Organization of the Study**

The research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 serves as the introduction of this study and includes a theoretical rationale, purpose of the research, limitations and delimitations, significance of the study, definition of terms and the organization of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature. This review is divided into four categories: (1) a historical overview of the organizational structure and patterns of New Jersey school districts including a review of the various studies and reports completed by the New Jersey Department of Education, (2) national perspectives relative to school district consolidation, (3) dissolution of regional school districts, and (4) factors that inhibit or promote school district consolidation throughout New Jersey.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology of the study. It describes the subjects involved in the study, which are the New Jersey school districts and their respective district superintendents/designees that have presented to their voters the issue of school district regionalization or
deregionalization since 1993, the interview questions, and the procedures utilized to collect the data.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis and findings using the results of the interviews administered to the New Jersey superintendents/designees from the school districts that presented referendums on regionalization or deregionalization to their voters since 1993 and the review of the relevant literature.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the research findings, the conclusions drawn from the research and provides recommendations to districts that may be considering regionalization or deregionalization. Recommendations for further study of the subject of school district regionalization or deregionalization are also discussed.
Chapter II
Survey of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to review available literature pertinent to the topic of school district consolidation and deregionalization. The literature review falls into four main categories and is presented as follows: (a) historical overview of the organizational patterns of New Jersey school districts, (b) national perspectives relative to school district consolidation, (c) deregionalization, and (d) a discussion of the many factors that hinder or promote school district consolidation.

Historical Overview of the Organizational Patterns of New Jersey School Districts

The Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution states that "the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution...are reserved to the States respectfully or by the people." Thus, according to Dow-Ford, Kaelber, Kaye, Chapman-Belin, and Weaver (1992), the authority to provide public education is reserved to the individual states. In New Jersey, the State Constitution of 1875 states: "The Legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools for the instruction of all children in the State between the ages of five and eighteen.
years" (NJ Constitution art. 4, sec. 7, par. 6 by amendment of 1875).

The sharing of authority and responsibility to educate students in New Jersey is shared by many agencies. Local control, according to Dow-Ford et al. (1992), has been taken to mean that the educational functioning of a school district is exclusively the responsibility of the local board of education. However, the aforementioned authors have indicated that the notion of home rule is simply a myth. New Jersey's educational system, in fact, is based on the concept of lay control, not local control. Therefore, all levels of government share in the responsibility to provide students attending public schools in New Jersey a "thorough and efficient" education. Specifically, in New Jersey as reported by Dow-Ford et al. (1992):

The flow of educational authority is voluntarily delegated by the Legislature to local, county, and state officials. In some areas of responsibility, the lawmakers have set mandatory standards by express statutory provision. In other areas, the Legislature has delegated such authority to state level officials.
And, in still other areas, local boards are vested with broad discretion to set their own standards. (pp. 2-3)

Although the aforementioned has clearly focused the responsibility for educating students in New Jersey on the Legislature, with power to delegate responsibility to state, county, and local officials, the people of the state of New Jersey appear to have an affinity for local school governance. The Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) indicated that while the number of school districts declined throughout the United States from 83,643 to 15,387 between the years 1949 and 1990, the number of school districts in New Jersey over the same period of time increased from 559 to 603. Reock (1995b) noted that New Jersey's school districts are among the smallest in the country and serve an average of less than 1,800 students compared to a national average of more than 2,600 students. Reock (1995b) also noted that almost half of New Jersey's public school districts have fewer than 500 students. Some districts are non-operating or rural districts consisting of student enrollments of less than 50 students.

To better understand the basic structure of New Jersey's public schools, Mackey (2000) reported that there were 616 school districts in New Jersey during the 1999-
2000 school year. These districts varied from non-operating districts with no schools at all, K-6 districts with total enrollments of fewer than 60, to sprawling suburban regional districts and dense urban districts with enrollments as high as 44,000 pupils. About half of the 593 operating districts are K-6 or K-8 elementary districts.

Elementary school districts send their graduates to other districts comprised of 7-12, 9-12, or K-12 grade level configurations. Approximately 190 elementary districts rely on 72 regional districts to provide secondary educational services. About 110 elementary districts pay tuition for their graduates to attend nearby school districts. Another 23 districts have no schools at all and send their students to other districts on a tuition basis. New Jersey also operates vocational school districts and educational services commissions. Table 1 provides a summary of the number of New Jersey school districts by grade plan and enrollment, 1999-2000:
Table 1

Number of New Jersey School Districts by Grade Plan and Enrollment, 1999-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operating Type</th>
<th>Number in Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8 (fewer than 400 students)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8 (400-750 students)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8 (more than 750 students)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 (fewer than 1,800 students)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 (1,800-3,500 students)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 (more than 3,500 students)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12 &amp; 9-12</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Special Services</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Vocational Schools</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Excludes non-operating districts, educational services commissions and jointures Source: Mackey (2000, p. 18).

The Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) also reported that while New Jersey has continued to operate over 600 school districts, other states have implemented consolidation programs in an attempt to offer more comprehensive programs while concomitantly operating
school districts more cost effectively. The Institute reported that New Jersey is the only major industrial state that has not developed a more regional based approach to providing public education. New Jersey has the lowest number of students per district of major industrial states and the highest per pupil expenditure in the country. These statistics are supported by Education Vital Signs (1999) which noted that New Jersey’s per pupil expenditure of $10,153 for the 1998-99 school year was the highest in the nation. Yet New Jersey’s students do not score better on national tests than students from other northeastern states. Table 2 serves to document these statistics:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Per Pupil Expenditure</th>
<th>SAT Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>59,427</td>
<td>516 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>409 math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>7,434</td>
<td>503 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>497 math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>6,652</td>
<td>507 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>503 math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>8,083</td>
<td>511 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>511 math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>7,846</td>
<td>520 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>518 math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>10,153</td>
<td>498 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>510 math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>9,192</td>
<td>495 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>502 math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>7,700</td>
<td>499 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>495 math</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Per Pupil Expenditure</th>
<th>SAT Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>8,001</td>
<td>504 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>499 math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>6,680</td>
<td>514 verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>506 math</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There have been a plethora of state reports and studies that have discussed regionalization and its applicability to providing comprehensive educational services at reduced costs to local taxpayers. Most of these studies appear to emanate from agencies supported by the New Jersey Department of Education. Of primary note is one of the initial studies titled, Report of the State Committee to Study the Next Steps of Regionalization and Consolidation in the School Districts of New Jersey (NJDOE, 1969). This study, chaired by Ruth H. Mancuso, member of the Glassboro Board of Education, and subsequently referred to as the Mancuso Report, made sweeping recommendations relative to reorganizing New Jersey's public schools. Of particular note were the following recommendations within
the categories listed (NJDOE, 1969):

A. School District

1. All school districts be organized on a K-12 (N-12) basis.

2. Constituent districts of regionals or districts with sending-receiving relationships be reorganized in a K-12 format.

   a. Exception: When such reorganization mitigates against an effective county reorganization plan.

3. Districts that have not maintained nor operated a school for the preceding two years shall become part of a reorganized district.

B. Enrollment

4. The comprehensive K-12 district enroll a minimum 3,500 students.

   a. Exceptions to the minimum may be allowed when:

      (1) The proposed district is so extensive as to require transportation greater than 45 minutes one way.

      (2) The growth of the proposed district is projected to be sufficient to meet the minimum enrollment by 1973.
C. Boundaries

5. School district boundaries be primarily within county lines but, when feasible and contributory to effective reorganization, they shall cross county lines.

6. Each newly created district shall respect, as early as practicable, a natural geographic, social and economic community providing equalization of opportunity for all students, to avoid the creation or perpetuation of racial balance.

D. Master Plan

7. In the development of a county master plan, all school districts be a part of the study and included in the final master plan.

8. The master plan for reorganization contain recommendations for the alleviation of concentrations of pupils with educational and learning problems. (pp.12-13)

Subsequent reports and studies continued to focus on regionalization. The New Jersey Department of Education's study titled, The Organization of Educational Services and Local School Districts in New Jersey (NJDOE, 1980),
questioned some of the Mancuso Report's recommendations. Specifically, the study expressed concern relative to the cost effectiveness of school district consolidation and the quality and delivery of instructional services to be provided to students within a regionalized school district. The report indicated that transportation costs incurred because of school district consolidation could eliminate most savings derived by school district consolidation. The comprehensive delivery of instructional services offered via consolidation could also be mitigated by, "less flexibility for innovation, less diversity in response to student needs, and a low level of citizen participation in policy making" (p. 2). The report also made organizational recommendations on the county and local levels and discussed the financial accommodations recommended to assist local school districts that voluntarily select regionalization.

The Quality Education Commission (1991), established by former Governor James Florio, also recommended that all public schools in New Jersey consolidate into K-12 systems by the year 2000. The Commission further recommended reducing the 600 plus New Jersey school districts to approximately 250. Their study estimated that this consolidation of New Jersey schools would save taxpayers
§50,000,000 in central administration operating expenses. Other recommendations discussed in this study suggested that by the 1997-98 school year, district consolidations should include the following:

All K-6 and K-8 school districts and constituent districts of a 9-12 or 7-12 regionalized high school, all non-operating school districts that send their students to another district, all school districts that are the sending districts in a sending-receiving relationship and all school districts with fewer than 250 students. (p.40)

The intent of school consolidation, as stated in the Quality Education Act (1991) was to, "create more effectively sized school districts with greater autonomy at the individual school level and with greater educational opportunities for all students" (p. 40).

Reock (1995b) also presented a plan for the consolidation of New Jersey public schools. His plan involved two major recommendations: each limited purpose regional high school district would become an all purpose school district and, each limited purpose secondary level school district receiving students on a tuition basis would become part of a new K-12 regional school district.

Pendle (1993) investigated the feasibility of
regionalizing the existing 49 New Jersey limited purpose districts to K-12 configurations. A quantitative research study was initiated which focused on budget, enrollment, staffing and number of buildings within the limited-purpose districts. Statistical information provided by the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Information Resources Management, was reviewed for both the 1990-1991 and 1991-1992 school years. The study analyzed the tax impact of forming all-purpose regional districts. Taxes were compared based on current school law contained in N.J.S.A 18A: 13-23. The findings indicated a wide variation in the tax rate. Some 63% of the districts evidenced an increase in the local tax levy; 37% evidenced a decrease. Zero districts had no change. When applying the enrollment tax levy calculation amount to these 240 school districts, 60% of the districts had a tax increase while 38% of the districts had a tax levy decrease.

The Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools (1995), in its report titled, Finding Opportunities for Improvement: Ideas on Regionalization and Shared Services (1995) indicated that its primary focus was to promote voluntary school regionalization in New Jersey by informing the public relative to the cost and benefits of regionalization. Additionally, the Commission emphasized
all the benefits of a K-12 school district. Of primary note was the ability to offer a sequential educational experience in grades K-12. Furthermore, it encouraged the legislature and the executive branch to structure any new funding formula in a manner that would not penalize school districts that became constituents of a regional district. An additional recommendation was the establishment of site-based management teams within the K-12 setting. The final recommendation was that the New Jersey Department of Education begin a study to explore the feasibility of moving to a countywide school system in New Jersey. The report also discussed the problems of attempting to provide students in districts with enrollments under 500 with a comprehensive curriculum and related services necessary to meet the demands of today's technological society. The Commission also recommended following a uniform model for determining the feasibility of regionalization into a K-12 district.

The New Jersey Department of Education (1995b), in its Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education in New Jersey, provided statistics indicating that New Jersey ranks number 49 among states in the proportion of total education spending for instruction. The report indicated this was due to the large amount of money required to
sustain administrative costs.

Another report developed by the New Jersey Department of Education was the *Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing* (1995a). This report focused on the perceived administrative excess costs and suggested "the state's many small districts generate unnecessary costs by duplicating various administrative functions and services such as purchasing, transportation, and food services, as well as other non-instructional services" (p.44).

Contrary to the New Jersey Department of Education's studies, the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (1992) developed a questionnaire designed to survey New Jersey school business officials' attitudes toward regionalization. One hundred fifty responses were returned. The survey results suggested that the present school configurations in New Jersey received considerable support. Apportionment of taxes and ability to withdraw from an existing regional district appeared to be major obstacles to any school district consolidation plan. The survey also indicated that many of the respondents were of the opinion that the real obstacle to regionalization was the state's current funding formula.

As an outgrowth of the New Jersey Department of
Education's Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing (1995a). Governor Christine Whitman convened a 12-member panel charged with the task of formalizing a plan designed to bring about both economic and academic efficiencies to local schools. The 12-member panel, titled the New Jersey Regionalization Advisory Panel (1997), found that New Jersey's educational system has, "many redundancies and inconsistencies....and indicated that a prudent and uniform approach was needed to address these issues" (p.30). Thus, the Regionalization Advisory Panel, chaired by Michael C. Bibb, attorney for the Philadelphia Appeals Office of the Internal Revenue Service, recommended the New Jersey Legislature to direct and empower the New Jersey Department of Education to conduct and finance studies of regionalization for:

1. All K-8 and K-6 school districts with 300 or fewer students.
2. All limited purpose regional school districts.
3. Any district completely surrounded by another district.
4. All districts currently participating in sending-receiving relations.
5. Direct the Commissioner to prepare an information program to the public describing the advantages and
benefits of school regionalization.

6. Eliminating non-operating districts by legislation requiring school districts without students to merge with another district, with the Department of Education’s assistance.

The remaining six panel recommendations would:

1. Direct the Department of Education to offer financial incentives for voluntary regionalization with a set time period if the studies demonstrate substantial and educational or efficiency benefits to regionalization.

2. Authorize the Department of Education to require regionalization if districts do not regionalize within the set time frame. The district would bear the burden of proving why regionalization is not educationally or economically in the best interests of students.

3. Direct and empower the Department of Education to provide technical assistance to districts that regionalize.

4. Direct and empower the Department of Education to engage in periodic review of existing regionalized districts to assess the educational effectiveness
and efficiency of those districts.

5. Direct the Department of Education to develop procedures to expedite the creation or dissolution of regional school districts.

6. Direct and empower the Commissioner to develop procedures that permit a phase-in period of regionalization not to exceed five years.

(NJ Regionalization Panel, pp.30-31)

Upon review of the Advisory Panel’s recommendations, former Governor Christine Whitman again proposed the consolidation of school districts by linking consolidation with property tax reform. In her 1998 State of the State address, Governor Whitman announced that she was proposing a statewide referendum on regionalization that would ask “Should the state mandate regionalization of certain school districts if, upon completion of a study, it is determined that substantial savings to the property taxpayer could be realized without sacrificing educational quality?” (p.4). However, the question never was placed on the ballot, thus there was no response by the New Jersey voter.

New Jersey State Senator Robert Smith, 17th District, introduced a bill in the Senate, S410, that called for a non-binding public ballot question designed to reduce the number of school districts to 21 to reflect one system for
each county in New Jersey. In a white paper titled, 21 School District Consolidation and disseminated from his office on October 10, 2003, the state Senator suggested that consolidating the current 617 school districts into 21 county-based school districts would assist in reducing the duplication of costs in such areas as transportation, maintenance, and purchasing. Additionally, the calculation of state and federal aid formulas, according to Senator Smith, might be determined on a more equitable basis. Policy issues and management could also be more uniform, and teachers would have greater job opportunities.

State Senator Smith also addressed the issue of home rule. He noted that there is a perception by some that consolidating school districts into a 21-county system is analogous to the loss of local control. Smith disputed this concept and noted that the county boards of education should be elected bodies responsible "to the voters, accessible to parents, educators, and students and constituted on as broadly based geographic and demographic representation as possible" (p.2).

A renewed interest in school district consolidation was also promulgated by Governor James McGreevey in his State of the State Address of January 13, 2004. Specifically, the Governor discussed his concern for
escalating property taxes in relation to the amount of money spent on education in New Jersey. Currently, New Jersey spends over 18 billion annually on education. The Governor indicated that one factor responsible for the escalating cost of education is the lack of efficiency as documented by the number of school districts within the state. By way of example, Governor McGreevey indicated that New Jersey has 23 school districts that do not have a single school in its school district. Students from these communities are sent to schools in other communities. Another 172 school districts in New Jersey in 2004 have but one school building. Governor McGreevey (2004) expressed concern for the taxpayer and noted that he had directed the Commissioner of Education, William Librera, to take the following steps:

First, develop a plan to eliminate 23 school district bureaucracies that oversee nothing but their own existence. Second, require 172 one building school districts to find ways to consolidate services. Third, establish limits on administrative and non-instructional costs and a system of rewards for districts that meet these standards and sanctions for those that do not. Every budgeted dollar that exceeds those limits will either go back to the classroom or
go back to the taxpayer. Fourth, provide performance grants to school districts that demonstrate excellence in student achievement while maintaining low administrative costs. (p.11)

Additionally, the Governor reiterated the need for increased shared services and increased cooperation among all levels of government.

Reaction to the Governor's State of the State Address was immediate. In an article published in School Board Notes, Edwina M. Lee, Executive Director of New Jersey School Boards Association, indicated that Governor McGreevey's call for the elimination of 23 non-operating districts and the consolidation of an additional 172 school districts containing but one school would have limited impact on property taxes statewide (NJSSBA, 2004b). Lee further indicated that a real statewide solution would be to shift a substantial part of school costs off local property taxes and over to the state. That would help the greatest number of New Jersey taxpayers, especially those in moderate and middle income communities. (p.1)

Lee further related an additional suggestion for funding education by noting that shared services, as
recommended by the Governor, also be researched (NJSSBA, 2004b). Furthermore, she noted that the New Jersey School Boards Association supported legislation that would give municipalities the authority to levy fees on builders to assist in facilitating the cost of schools and other municipal services required due to development. Lee also stated that the New Jersey School Boards Association would not oppose an objective study relative to the elimination of 23 non-operating school districts, but she stressed the fact that an objective study should be completed before eliminating the 23 districts.

In response to the local school districts' administrative costs, Lee reported, "Since 1989-90, there has been no increase in the number of administrators in our schools. During the same period, the student population and the number of classroom teachers have increased by over 25%" (NJSSBA, 2004b, p.4).

Also noted in the New Jersey School Boards Association's article titled, "State of the State Message" (2004a) are statistics that highlight school districts organizational patterns and associated costs as discussed by Governor McGreevey in his State of the State Address:
Table 3

School District Organization/Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of school districts in New Jersey</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of New Jersey districts that operate one school</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school districts</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional high school and county-wide vocational and special services school districts</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median cost per pupil in the 146 one-school elementary districts in 2002-03</td>
<td>$10,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median cost per pupil among all New Jersey school districts in 2003-03</td>
<td>$10,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Blue Ribbon, Star School, and Best Practice Awards given to one-school district by the United States and New Jersey Departments of Education</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) responded to the Governor's State of the State Address. Executive Director, James Murphy, in a position paper titled, Administrative Costs-Setting the Record Straight (NJASA, 2004), provided statistical data designed
to refute the Governor’s comments in a format that first lists the Governor’s comments followed by the NJASA retort:

NJASA Fact Sheet titled “Myth vs. Reality”

Governor: We spend more than $10 billion dollars a year on education, more than almost any other state. But we don’t spend it efficiently because we don’t spend it where it matters—in the classroom.

Reality—New Jersey ranks near the national average in Administrative Costs with almost a 0% increase in the number of administrators since 1990; although the student enrollment rose 27.1% and the number of teachers increased by 28.2%. The percentage of school district employees classified as administrators has declined from 8.7% to 6.7% since 1990.

Governor: Establish limits on administrative and non-instructional costs and a system of rewards for districts that meet these standards and sanctions for those that do not.

Reality—The latest published survey by the U.S. Department of Education (May 2003) states that 61.5 cents of every dollar is spent on instruction. The vast majority of states are clustered within a few cents of the national average including New Jersey, which is within two cents of the average. New Jersey
devotes more money for instruction than large states such as Florida, Ohio, and Michigan. New Jersey support services are three cents above the average, a reflection of the needs of a very heterogeneous and growing student population. New Jersey administrative costs of 8% are near the national average.

Governor: Do we really need 172 school districts with only one school building?

Reality-The 146 one school elementary districts per pupil costs are slightly less than the average cost for all New Jersey districts. The current national research supports the educational advantages of small learning communities (better test scores and less violence problems).

Governor: Require the 172 one-building school districts to find ways to consolidate services.

Reality-The New Jersey small school districts are the leaders in establishing shared services agreements with hundreds of cost saving measures currently in effect. It is unfortunate that last year the Governor chose to eliminate state grant programs (REAP and REDI) that encouraged sharing of services and cost savings.
Governor: I think it’s outrageous that we have 23 school bureaucracies that don’t have a single school.

Reality-The 23 non-operating school districts do not employ any full-time employees and usually pay a person a small stipend to process tuition checks to neighboring districts and do all of the paperwork required by the New Jersey Department of Education.

(pp. 1-5)

The concluding comments by Murphy (NJASA, 2004) indicated that the NJASA is of the opinion that the Governor and his administration have attempted to divert the attention of the public away from the fact that New Jersey’s state government has not adequately provided funding for local school districts. This is documented by the fact that, according to the NJASA, New Jersey receives only 37% of its state aid from the state compared to 49.6% nationally.

On February 13, 2004, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators released an additional position paper relative to school district consolidation. Authored by Maria Lepore Esq., NJASA chief counsel, the paper initially provided a historical perspective relative to New Jersey’s attempt to consolidate school districts. Following the historical perspective, Lepore’s report contained various
educational organizations' positions on consolidation as noted:

New Jersey Association of School Administrators support regionalization if two or more school districts voluntarily agree to merge following a careful study of the financial and educational impact on the individual districts. The affected districts must vote on the proposed regionalization to allow full local resident participation. Issues related to educational policy, current school debt service in each district, impact on state aid, contractual obligations, wage scales, and potential for student enrollment growth would be discussed.

The New Jersey Education Association supports regionalization if it is voluntary and if employees' rights to tenure and seniority are fully protected. The NJEA also notes that the local decision making process should not be restricted by state mandates.

The League of Women Voters support regionalization if local school boards and their citizens make that decision. The League also recommended an increase in the state share of school costs, particularly with regard to the building and renovation of facilities.

The New Jersey School Boards Association believes that
school districts should be encouraged to regionalize when the districts determine after thorough study that regionalization would provide educational and/or financial benefits to the districts involved. The Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education should be prohibited from ordering the merger, consolidation or regionalization of two or more existing school districts without prior public referendum in each of the affected districts approving such action. (pp.1-3)

The Philadelphia Inquirer, in an article written by Kaitlin Gurney (posted on Thursday, January 22, 2004), further discussed Governor McGreevey’s call for the consolidation of school districts and the articulation of shared services as a means of implementing property tax relief. Gurney reported that in his address at the Twelfth Annual Mayors’ Legislative Day, McGreevey indicated that neither consolidation nor shared services alone would solve the property tax issue here in New Jersey, but it would assist in “changing a culture that we have tolerated for entirely too long” (p.1). Furthermore, Gurney related that McGreevey said he would reject a constitutional convention “until the spending side of the equation has been
addressed" (p.2).

By way of response to Governor McGreevey's comments, the Mayor of Woolrich Township related that his local community's property tax problem was primarily due to the fact that the community is a growth district and has not received sufficient state funding for its public school population, a population that has risen by 50% in 3 years.

Similarly, Harrison Township Mayor, Philip Rhudy stated his support for a county school system similar to the organizational pattern utilized by the State of Maryland. Rhudy noted that merging two school districts does not solve New Jersey's issue of funding local schools. He indicated the state needed 21 county school districts, one for each county. Additionally, he challenged the Governor to take "the bull by the horns" and tackle the issue of the powerful teacher unions and administrative organizations (as cited in Gurney, 2004, p.2).

The Philadelphia Inquirer, in an article written by Bitman and Burney (posted January 15, 2004), discussed some of the shared services presently in place in some local school districts and promulgated as a means of containing costs. By way of example, Bitman and Burney noted the efforts of four small school districts in Gloucester County: Wenonah, Westville, Woodbury Heights, and National
Park to implement shared services as a means of implementing cost saving strategies for their local school districts. Wenonah and Woodbury Heights share a guidance counselor. Both districts have superintendents who also serve as principal in their respective districts. Three of the four districts share a business administrator.

Bitman and Burney also pointed out (2004) that the Laurel Springs Superintendent of Schools, Robert Bazzel, indicated that his one school district is presently bare bones with only one full-time administrator. The district shares its business administrator and curriculum coordinator with another district. In the same article, the Bass River Superintendent/Principal, Larry Mathis, indicated that their school district tried to share both principal and superintendent with Washington Township and, according to Superintendent Mathis, the financial benefit was minimal in relation to having their own person.

National Perspectives Relative to School District Consolidation

Regionalization studies are not unique to New Jersey. The New Jersey School Business Officials (1997) indicated that many states have initiated reports and studies relative to the topic of school district consolidation. Specifically, the State of Pennsylvania reorganized its
public schools in the 1960s and 1970s by first forming jointures and then mandating consolidation of small school districts. Ultimately, school districts were reduced from approximately 2,500 to 505. The purposes of consolidation were to, "improve efficiencies, reduce administrative costs, create larger districts with more opportunities for student programs, and make districts more self-sufficient and less state dependent" (p.9). Critics of Pennsylvania's plan indicated that the plan effectively removed the schools from their local public support base and led to more public disenchantment with schools and decreased community interest in their local schools. Additional funds were required for transportation costs and state mandates. Regional decision-making increased while local decision-making decreased.

The same report also discussed Oregon's initiative designed to increase school consolidation. The Oregon initiative envisioned a two-step plan. First, it ended sending-receiving district relationships, thus requiring all districts to offer full grade level educational services. Second, it required consolidation of contiguous districts, if the enrollments of the existing districts did not meet the state's minimum standard.
Boex and Vasquez (1998) highlighted the issue of policy decision-making in relation to Georgia's school district organizational structure and its impact on school funding. Their study related the fact that in 1998, Georgia's school-district structure consisted of 159 county-based school districts and 22 municipal or independent school districts. The structure of the county and municipal systems was promulgated in the State Constitution of 1945. However, that same Constitution prohibited the expansion of additional municipal or independent school districts. Since the Constitution of 1945, many municipal or independent school districts have declined through consolidation efforts. By way of example, there were 35 independent school districts in Georgia in 1967, 29 school districts in 1977, 27 independent school districts in 1987, and 22 districts in 1998.

Boex and Vasquez (1998) also reported that Georgia passed the Quality Basic Education Act of 1986. The act provided financial incentives to school districts for consolidation by offering to fund 100% of the capital outlays required for the voluntary consolidation of two or more school districts. Since the Act was implemented, five independent school districts have consolidated with the surrounding countywide school districts.
There were two major policy issues discussed by Boex and Vasquez (1999) in their study. The first policy issue to be confronted was whether giving financial incentives to school districts in Georgia for purposes of consolidation was warranted on economic grounds. An examination of the cost structure of the Georgia school districts from 1977 through 1995 provided the following results:

Economies of scale at the district level do exist in the provision of high school education in Georgia. As high school enrollment increases, cost per student decrease. This suggests that potential savings could indeed result from school district consolidation.

Economies of scale at the district level do not exist in the provision of elementary education. The costs per student remain unchanged as the level of elementary enrollment increases.

Results suggest that potential savings from economies of scale are small for most school districts. On average, a ten percent increase in high school enrollment would result in savings of 7 dollars per student. However, substantial savings could be realized if a small independent school district consolidated with a neighboring county school district that is several times larger than the independent
district. For several independent school districts, the potential savings from such a consolidation exceed $300 per student per year. (p.2)

The second policy issue discussed by Boex and Vasquez (1998) reviewed the reasons select districts decided to pursue consolidation while other school districts did not pursue consolidation. The authors based their findings on an analysis of the characteristics of independent school districts in Georgia that consolidated during the period of 1977 through 1995. The study only took into account consolidation of the independent districts. The analysis resulted in the following:

1. The greater the potential economies of scale, the greater the probability that independent school districts consolidated with its surrounding county district when all else is held equal.

2. The likelihood of consolidation significantly increases if the merging partner is geographically smaller in absolute terms. This finding is consistent with the notion that increased physical distance will result in higher transportation cost after consolidation, thus making consolidation less desirable. Also the effect of geographical size of
a surrounding county district on the consolidation decision could also be due to feared loss of local involvement and control after consolidation by the residents of the independent district.

3. Independent school districts that choose to consolidate with the surrounding countywide district in general have high tax burdens relative to the county district. Consolidation would allow the residents of an independent district to shift some of their tax burden onto county residents.

4. Independent school districts with smaller enrollments relative to the surrounding countywide district were less likely to consolidate. This would be expected since the smaller the population of the independent school district vis-à-vis the county district, the smaller the influence of the independent district would be in a potential consolidated county district.

5. Independent school districts that have a greater concentration of minorities relative to the surrounding county district were significantly more likely to opt for consolidation. A possible explanation of this result is that if voters believe that a higher concentration of minorities
results in lower school quality, residents of an independent school district will favor consolidation if school district consolidation results in a lower concentration of minorities in the consolidated district. (pp. 1-3)

The conclusions of Bock and Vasquez (1998) relative to the State of Georgia's efforts to consolidate school districts were that the potential cost savings from consolidation was quite small. Additionally, the State's efforts to consolidate small school districts needed to address concerns regarding potential loss of community involvement in local schools. A sense of community involvement, whether actual or perceived, appeared to have resulted in a resistance to school district consolidation. A final conclusion of this study was that the State would likely need to provide large financial incentives if it wished to encourage further school district consolidation.

The Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) discussed New York's efforts to provide financial incentives to school districts for consolidation purposes. Historically, New York's school consolidation efforts can be traced back to the early part of the 20th century when the state supported over 10,000 school districts. By 1949, the number of New York school districts had been reduced to
4,000. Wiles (1994) reported that it has been New York's policy to reduce the number of existing public school districts by creating larger ones composed of a number of smaller districts. This emphasis is especially focused on districts in remote rural locations. Wiles (1994) further reported that New York has offered "reorganization aid for the purpose of encouraging school district consolidation since 1925" (p. 238).

According to Wiles (1994), in 1947, New York created a Master Plan (revised in 1957) and set the goal of 500 K-12 districts throughout the state. In the next 25 years, 202 consolidated districts replaced 2,619 smaller ones, but the pace has slowed dramatically within the last 15 years. Between 1983 and 1991, only 13 districts replaced 26 smaller districts (p. 298). New York operates 757 school districts and the state's effort to offer additional financial incentives to encourage school district consolidation has not proved to be effective.

Woodward (1985a) reported that a review of New York's history of school district consolidation received considerable negative reaction from the public. Specifically, most districts maintained the desire to adhere to local control and the opportunity to be involved in their children's education. Thus, local control
appeared to be of primary concern in spite of the increased financial incentives by the New York State Department of Education to local districts to consider consolidating with other school districts. In essence, while the incentives of lower taxes and improved educational opportunities are major incentives to consolidate, local control appears to remain of paramount concern.

Duncombe and others (1994) also researched the feasibility of consolidation of New York's school districts. Consolidation of public schools was encouraged by the State of New York. The research provided in this study not only involved school district consolidation, but also developed a theoretical framework that highlighted several dimensions of economies of scale while concomitantly defining an empirical cost function for schooling. Duncombe and others researched 610 of the 696 New York school districts in 1990. Statistical results indicated that a sizable cost saving could be derived from consolidating districts with less than 500 pupils. Thus, the study suggested that districts of less than 500 be consolidated with a neighboring district. The results indicated that relatively few New York districts were candidates for full consolidation, but some may benefit from sharing administrative services.
Kilbride (1995) discussed the consolidation of Roman Catholic elementary schools within a New York state diocese. Her study focused on the issues concerned with the control, support, and participation in school governance and finance in one particular region in one diocese. The major purpose of the research was to analyze the dynamics involved in consolidating five parish-based Catholic elementary schools into a single parish school. Consolidation included school governance, policymaking, finance, and school plant. The research indicated that the process of restructuring from a parish-based Catholic school model to a regional based philosophy was successful and did create a new form of Catholic education in the region.

The Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) also discussed progress in Illinois relative to school district reorganization. Specifically, in fiscal year 1980, there were 1,011 public school districts throughout the state. By fiscal year 1995, that number had been reduced to 913 school districts or a reduction of 98 public school districts throughout the state. "The average annual decline in the total number of school districts in the state accelerated from one in the early 1980s, to four in the middle 1980s, to about nine in both the late 1980s
and the 1990s" (p.24).

Motivation to merge school districts can be traced to the authorization by the Illinois General Assembly in 1983 of three supplementary state aid payments to newly consolidated school districts. Subsequently, in 1995, the state enacted the School District Reorganization Act. This Act provided local school districts with incentive aid to encourage mergers. Such incentives included two annual payments for 3 years for "any loss in general state aid resulting from a merger; and the difference in teacher salaries among the merged districts" (p.24).

Although it was noted that Illinois had made significant progress in consolidating its public schools, it was reported in the "Reassessment and Status of School District Reorganization in Illinois: 1994" that the State still had much to do to uniformly consolidate its public schools. The report indicated that there were still an excessive number of school districts. Furthermore, the school district organizational patterns were inconsistent and included 414 K-12 districts, 406 elementary districts, and 108 high school districts. Over 23% of the State's high schools had enrollments of 200 students or fewer. The report indicated that the Illinois State Board of Education was "committed to continuing the reorganization efforts due
to increasing evidence that the process will enhance learning by increasing the breadth and depth of the high school curriculums and the financial stability of elementary districts" (p.25).

Like New Jersey, North Dakota has no state policy designed to promote the consolidation of public school districts. The Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) reported that any reduction in the number of school districts within North Dakota is a direct result of the United States farm policy that included a decline in aid to the State's farms. Additionally, the reduction in the size of families over the last two decades has impacted on the operation of school districts in the State. North Dakota operates 70 school districts with student enrollments of less than 75 students. The State also reduced the number of school districts by about 70 since the late 1980s.

The topic of school district consolidation has also been a topic of interest and research by individuals throughout the United States. Kamerzell's (1994) qualitative study involved the exploration and beliefs of community members regarding consolidation of the towns of Scottsbluff and Gering, Nebraska. The focus of the study delved into the participants' views relative to the
advantages and disadvantages of consolidation, its impact on the community, and its impact on students from the two communities. Kamerzell analyzed the two community's resistance to change, their attitudes toward consolidation, what processes for consolidating the schools should be followed, and what leadership would be necessary to convince the community to support consolidation. The information gleaned emphasized the importance of considering the more human and personal issues related to the consolidation of school districts, as the identity and the leadership of school and community are closely intertwined. Kamerzell concluded that the logical, rational arguments that recommended school district consolidation might not be enough for a school community to give up control of its local schools. Furthermore, Kamerzell recommended that prior to any merger, an extensive study involving the logistics of how to combine two governing boards, staff, administration, facilities, and curricula be completed.

McMahon (1986) researched the attitudes and opinions of public school superintendents in Michigan regarding school consolidation. The population for this study involved all 529 public school superintendents. Of the 106 selected for the sample, 103 (97%) participated in the
study. The research instrument consisted of a 25-question survey administered by telephone by the researcher. The analysis provided: (a) a description and discussion of the responses regarding each survey question, (b) the relationship between the superintendents' attitudes toward consolidation and demographic variables and (c) cross tabulations between selected sets of variables. From the data, the following conclusions were supported: (1) 63.1% of the Michigan public school superintendents supported school consolidation in their own districts, (2) superintendents' main concerns focused on legislative involvement in consolidation and state-mandated consolidation in those local districts where state standards had not been met, (3) the provision of financial incentives to encourage consolidation, (4) a K-12 organizational plan for consolidation, (5) the perception that significant support was not forthcoming from various groups in the districts, (6) specific characteristics of a school district that may influence a decision to consolidate included the geographic distance of the proposed district and the economic make-up of the proposed district, and (7) the consortium was seen as a viable alternative to consolidation.

As a corollary to this study, LeTarte (1992) explored
the financial implications of school district consolidation within the State of Michigan. The Michigan legislature in 1989 and again in 1991 proposed bills designed to reduce the number of school districts within the state to a maximum of 200. The 200 school districts would have a minimum student population of 2,000 students per district. LeTarte's study attempted to develop a school district model that reflected the legislature's initiatives and apply financial factors against the model in order to determine the financial impact. The findings of the study indicated savings in administrative costs and quantity purchasing; however, the study also indicated that with school district consolidation, there were increased costs in instructional staff salaries, pupil transportation, and additional classroom space. Thus, LeTarte's findings suggested that contrary to what had been recommended by proponents of school district consolidation, in essence, consolidation of schools does not automatically reduce costs, but actually can increase the cost of operations.

Young (1994) in his study titled "Questioning Consolidation" and its applicability to consolidating the school districts in Tennessee suggested that school district consolidation would not save money or improve educational quality. His research indicated that, on the
contrary, consolidation increased costs, decreased enrollments, reduced interschool competitiveness, leveled down curriculum, encouraged the decline in support for public education, decreased the public's satisfaction, and resulted in additional labor and contractual difficulties.

Groen and Murray (2004) reported the State of Arizona's plans to consolidate school districts as a means of reducing administrative costs while concomitantly increasing the amount of money spent within the classroom. Specifically, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Hone, in concert with Pinnacle West Vice President, Martin L. Shultz, advocated school districts of 6,000 students or more serve as models of administrative savings. However, statistics emanating from a Syracuse University meta-analysis, which analyzed 30 years of research on the subject of school district consolidation indicated, "dis-economies of scale" begin to emerge when districts grow larger than 6,000 students. Sizable dis-economies of scale may begin to emerge from districts above 15,000* (p.2).

In the same report by Groen and Murray (2004), it was noted that UCLA management professor William Ouchi studied nine school systems including the three largest in the United States. His findings indicated that a centralized management model advocated by the consolidation of school
districts actually leads to administrative bloat and not the streamlining of school administration. Ouchi indicated that only 45% of the education dollars spent by the highly centralized Los Angeles Unified School District actually is spent in the classroom.

Groen and Murray (2004) also examined Arizona's 209 school districts and noted that small districts that averaged 300 students and medium districts that averaged 2,400 students were as administratively efficient as the state's 10 largest districts. Additionally, Arizona's three top performing districts with the lowest per-pupil administrative costs were small or medium sized school districts and not those that had over 6,000 students as advocated by State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Horne.

Groen and Murray (2004) summarized their report by suggesting that school district consolidation might be a viable option for some school districts and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. They did not recommend that the state legislature impose school district consolidation. The quality of the educational programs offered to students must, at all times, be considered in consolidation discussions.

The Louisiana Department of Education, in a report
Small School Districts and Economies of Scale (2003), again visited the issue of school district consolidation in relation to cost effectiveness and student performance. The report noted the following conclusions:

The Notion of Economies of Scale: Advantages

1. Expenditures per student generally rise, as district sizes fall below about 750 students, and expenditures per student are relatively constant at enrollment levels above 1,000 students.

2. Holding student performance constant, it is evidenced that school district consolidation substantially lowers operating costs.

3. The larger a school district gets, the more resources it devotes to secondary or even non-essential activities.

4. Instead of making up a larger percent of the budget as school district size increases, the percentage spent on teachers, books and teaching materials decreases.

The Notion of Economies of Scale: Disadvantages

1. Scale economies enjoyed by large districts can come at the expense of the efficient production of educational outcomes.

2. Two inefficient districts combining do not
necessarily merge into one efficient one.

Outcomes of District Consolidation

1. Local school officials should be wary of merging several smaller elementary schools at least if the goal of the merger is improved performance.

2. After a school closure, out migration, population decline and neighborhood deterioration are set in motion and support for public education diminishes.

Alternative Recommendations to District Consolidation

1. Districts can share services such as personnel, programs, equipment, instructional materials, teachers, ancillary services, transportation, staff development, counseling services, special education, and vocational education.

2. Implement or increase the use of regional service units to take over some of the services normally provided by districts to increase efficiency and economies of scale.

3. Distance learning offers small school districts the ability to provide core and advanced courses that would otherwise not be available or not financially viable.

Summary

1. There is no solid foundation for the belief that
elimination of school districts will improve education, enhance cost effectiveness or promote greater equality and, except for extraordinary circumstances, district reorganization should be a voluntary decision of local voters and school boards.

2. Size does not guarantee success, as "good schools come in all sizes."

3. Disputes on school mergers or consolidations may be costly diversions from the more important issues of disadvantage and equal opportunity, especially as they relate to school performance. (Louisiana Dept of Education, pp.1-2)

Ley (1994) reported on the topic of school district consolidation as discussed at the 16th Annual Montana Rural Education Conference held in June 1994. Specifically, four attitudes were expressed. They included: (a) voluntary consolidation was not opposed, but forced consolidation was discouraged; (b) there was a very strong identification with the local control of public schools; (c) regional consolidation of educational services was considered an option for better use of limited financial resources and (d) improved administrative and operative efficiency.
Adams (1994) reported upon the issue of school consolidation within the State of Kentucky. Specifically, this report was written at the request of the governor of Kentucky who was attempting to determine if educational costs within the state would be reduced by consolidating school districts. An analysis of the relationship between district size and state educational costs indicated that the state would not save costs by consolidating small districts. As with New Jersey’s funding of school districts, Kentucky’s major determinant of state education cost included the basic per pupil assistance in both elementary and secondary school and the required contribution to local public schools in the form of local property taxes. The variation in state educational expenditures was primarily related to district property wealth and not district size. Additionally, the report pointed out considerations other than costs impeded school consolidation. These included student achievement, local identity, and district operations.

Aherne (1992) provided a single case study designed to investigate the reorganization of the Quimby Regional school district in Balcorn, Massachusetts. (Note: Both the name of the school district and community are pseudonyms.) The regional district was comprised of five towns initially
consisting of a 7-12 regional school district that was expanded to an all-purpose K-12 school district effective July 1, 1985. Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, Mherne's research concluded that the primary purpose of K-12 consolidation was to secure financial benefits from such an organizational pattern. However, the resistance to such a K-12 configuration was primarily due to the perceived threat of loss of local control over elementary education. Both the residents and the employees of the regional district agreed that the expansion of the regional district to a K-12 all purpose district enhanced the educational program offered, expanded support services, increased financial efficiency, and improved the efficiency of the overall administrative operation of the district.

Sher and Schaller (1986) researched the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's plan to mandate school district mergers throughout the state from the perspective of economic, educational, social, racial, and fiscal indicators. Findings indicated that there was no solid foundation for the belief that the elimination of school districts would improve the delivery of education, enhance cost effectiveness, or promote greater equality. Additionally, the study noted that except in extraordinary circumstances, district consolidation should remain a
voluntary decision of the local school board and their constituents.

Walberg and Fowler (1986) researched expenditure and size efficiencies of public school districts. Their study researched the extent to which school districts were able to increase achievement beyond socioeconomic status. Average scores on state tests, nationally normed achievement tests of third, sixth, and ninth graders in New Jersey public school districts were regressed on indexes of socioeconomic status, per pupil expenditure, and district enrollment. One of the findings indicated a consistent trend for larger districts to achieve less efficiency than smaller school districts. In general, Walberg's and Fowler's study indicated that the smaller the district, the higher the achievement when socioeconomic status and per pupil expenditures are taken into account. Thus, the results tend to question the practice of school district consolidation as a means of improving the delivery of instruction to students.

The Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) issued a paper that provided recommendations to encourage local school districts to consolidate. The study's review of reports prepared for local school districts accompanied by interviews with district
administrators offered the following regionalization process and associated problems:

1. The general public in New Jersey views regionalization as the loss of neighborhood schools and local identity.

2. Public and political support for new consolidation initiatives will require demonstration that regional systems produce substantial operational savings, better program offerings, and improved facilities for less taxpayer dollars.

3. New Jersey's relatively high dependence on property taxes to fund local schools makes it unlikely that districts will consolidate without aid or stronger penalties to discourage continuance of the current system. There are few reasons compelling enough for a school district to accept a neighboring district as a regional partner, particularly if that action increases the tax rate. The smaller, poorer districts, the ones most in need of consolidating with a larger district, are the least likely to be able to do so.

4. There are major procedural and legal obstacles facing districts considering reorganization. The general procedural requirements to establish
regional districts are expensive and complicated, especially for poorer districts. Statutory restrictions on withdrawal from current affiliations also reinforce maintenance of the current system. (pp. 4-5)

The Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) offered the following recommendations relative to regionalization:

1. The Legislature should establish a policy of promoting school district regionalization by providing incentive funding to encourage potential district consolidation. If transportation systems were regionalized, upwards of $50,000,000 could be channeled into funds through the state aid formula to ease the consolidation process.

2. The Legislature should consider modifying the requirements for withdrawal from present affiliations in order to promote development of more districts with a kindergarten to twelfth (K-12) design.

3. The Department of Education should develop a feasibility model of districts, primarily built on present affiliations, which are best suited to K-12 consolidation. Consideration should be given to the potential for the breakup of some larger regional
districts in order to facilitate K-12 development. Particular attention should be given to the needs of small, poor districts.

4. The State should expand the available information to quantify potential operational savings, facilities and infrastructure savings, and the benefits of educational program offerings that could be gained through consolidation of school districts.

5. The State should develop a plan to end sending/receiving relationships.

6. The State should assume a more aggressive role in encouraging regional approaches in new school construction or expansion of existing facilities. Possible initiatives include reviewing the potential relevance of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan in requiring assessment of regional needs in school facility, finance and construction; incorporating a regional needs component for the funding of school facilities in the 'School Efficiency Act', and including goals and strategies for a regional approach to the development of future school construction in the Department of Education's proposed Strategic Plan. (p.5)
Deregionalization

The Union County Regional School District, a 9-12 regional established in 1937 by the communities of Berkeley Heights, Clark, Garwood, Mountainside, and Springfield, began to discuss the possible dissolution of the regional in 1993. The New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization (1999) reported that by 1993, "formal requests from various communities led to the introduction and eventual enactment of legislation relating to dissolution procedures for regional school districts" (p. 27). In the case of Union County Regional, the Assembly Task Force Report of 1999 further related some of the factors that led to deregionalization. These included, "The regional board members and administrators seemed unresponsive to the communities' desires as witnessed by the board of education's decision to close the high school building in Kenilworth; school curriculum did not meet the specific needs of each town; there were concerns about the efficiency of the district as the district had the highest per pupil cost in the state ($16,376) for regular education" (p. 27). Additionally, because district costs were based on equalized valuation, districts paid disproportionate amounts. As an example,
Mountainside paid over $20,000 per pupil and Garwood paid $8,000 per pupil.

The issue of deregionalization was placed before the voters in all the constituent communities on May 14, 1996. The New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization (1999) noted that both Clark and Garwood voted against the dissolution of the regional school district. All other constituent communities voted for dissolution.

The impact of deregionalization in a specific constituent district is worth noting. The New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization (1999) reported that

The Township of Clark experienced a .77 per $100 of assessed valuation increase in property taxes and a budget reduction of $975,000. Clark also experienced a loss of the subsidy it was receiving from the other members of the regional school district, because even though Clark students represented 25% of the student body, Clark only paid 22% of the costs. Clark also was burdened with increased costs due to the fact that the law permitted staff members of the regional district, based on seniority, to choose districts for
which they wished to work and the overwhelming number of senior staff members chose Clark. (p.28)

The Task Force Report also indicated that over $1,000,000 was spent in legal fees in the deregulation process. The formal dissolution of the Union County Regional School District was completed by June 30, 1997.

The most recent regional school district to deregionalize was the Lower Camden County 7-12 Regional School District. The New Jersey Reporter, in an article by Diane Maxwell (1999), stated that on May 12, 1998, the member districts of the Lower Camden County 7-12 Regional School District voted in favor of dissolving their 60-year-old regional. The regional district was comprised of seven municipalities: Berlin Township, Chesilhurst, Clementon, Lindenwold, Pine Hill, Waterford, and Winslow. As related in an article written by Ginsberg and published by the Philadelphia Inquirer (June 11, 2001), the combined vote in the aforementioned seven towns was 9,500 cast with 5,172 in favor and 4,311 against dissolution. Five towns voted in favor of dissolution with the towns of Waterford and Chesilhurst voting against.

The Philadelphia Inquirer's article of June 11, 2001, further related that a regional school district is often established as a means for smaller towns to combine their
resources for the purpose of building schools, to buy buses, and to offer a comprehensive curriculum. When Lower Camden Regional was founded in 1941, the constituent districts fit that description. They were small municipalities, but growing in population. During the decades since the inception of the regional district, many of the communities that comprised the regional district experienced significant population growth. Maxwell (1999) reported that Winslow Township in the 1970s anticipated that 10,000 new homes would be built within the decade. Concern over property taxes, home rule, the need for additional schools to accommodate increased enrollment, defeated bond referenda in 1983 and again in 1993, and a diverse socioeconomic constituency within sending districts led to the vote to dissolve the Lower Camden County Regional District.

The vote for dissolution of the regional district was a formidable step in the process of deregionalization. However, the more critical issue that faced the seven municipalities after the vote in favor of dissolution was a plan to provide for the educational needs of the constituents, K-12. Maxwell (1999) reported that "by law, each municipality, upon dissolution, would take control of the schools within its boundaries; after that, they were on
their own. Commissioner of Education Klagholz had decreed that dissolution would not take place until every child in every district had a seat in a suitable learning environment. Therefore, even with voters taking action on May 12, 1998, dissolution was still many months and possibly years away (pp. 24-25).

Ginsberg (2001), staff writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer reported that on June 29, 2001, dissolution of the Lower Camden Regional School District would become a reality. The towns of Pine Hill, Lindenwold, and Winslow were scheduled to become K-12 school districts. Clementon and Berlin Township expanded their elementary districts to include both the seventh and eighth grades and established sending-receiving relationships for their high school students. The community of Chesilhurst would continue to send their students in Grades 7 through 12 to Winslow on a tuition basis thus paying a tuition rate of about $9,000 per pupil. Waterford entered into an agreement to send their students to the Hammonton School District in Atlantic County at a tuition rate of approximately $9,000 per pupil.

Factors that Promote or Hinder Regionalization

Ittleson (1992) discussed specific concerns relative to school district consolidation. Most notably, his study indicated that districts, even contiguous to one another,
do not share the same educational philosophy, expectations, or tax base. Other concerns expressed by districts considering consolidation include issues relative to staffing, loss of local control, and transportation.

Petracco (1992) suggested that regionalization may be considered a viable option for districts due to the following factors: "economic pressures on small districts struggling to survive; political pressure at the state level to reduce the cost of education; and recommendations from the QSA Commission to reduce the number of school districts to as few as 100 by the year 2000" (p.14).

Petracco (1992) also indicated that other roadblocks to regionalization included the desire for local educational agencies (LEAs) to retain local control over the community resources provided by the public schools. Public education is founded on the philosophy of community involvement in the schools and the programs offered to children within the schools. Thus, the school board serves to interpret the needs and desires of the community and to reflect those needs and desires within the district's programs and policies. A concern relative to school district consolidation is to give up autonomy and its applicability in determining the program and services offered to children.
Petracco (1992) also noted that prior to 1992, more than 50 districts had undertaken feasibility studies to determine the advantages and disadvantages of possible school district consolidation. Some districts' feasibility studies resulted in unsuccessful referenda on the proposal of consolidation. Others were discarded prior to being placed on the ballot. Very few were successful. However, as Petracco pointed out, change is not easy particularly when there appears to be no major reason to change or if the impact of the change is less favorable for one partner than the other. Petracco also noted that disparate property wealth of the communities considering regionalization appeared to be one of the primary disincentives to a commitment to regionalize.

Lepore (2004), in a position paper for the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, listed different regionalization studies that have taken place in New Jersey and primarily designed to determine the financial feasibility of regionalization. The results were reported as follows:

1. Buena Regional and Newfield Borough studied the feasibility of combining their two K-12 districts into one larger K-12 district. The study found the total cost savings would be $7,572 in the first
year and $32,572 in the second year. However, Buena Borough’s taxes would increase while Buena Township and Newfield’s taxes would be lower.

2. Mantua, Harrison, and Clearview Boards of Education studied the feasibility of expanding Clearview Regional to a K-12 district. The study indicated there would be an actual tax rate increase in Mantua and Harrison Townships rather than a decrease.

3. In the West Morris Regional District, the constituent districts studied six alternative options; at least one of the communities would be required to increase taxes to support the consolidation.

4. Barrington and Haddon Heights studied the feasibility of combining to create one K-12 regional district. The study concluded that any merger would result in an 11-cent increase in the Haddon Heights tax rate but a 3-cent decrease in the Barrington tax rate.

5. The Greater Egg Harbor Regional District and Egg Harbor City, Galloway Township, Hamilton Township and Mullica Township studied methods to organize in a more efficient manner. The study found that
consolidating these districts into one regional
district would result in costs that were
$4,612,213 higher than the individual budgets
under the status quo. Consolidating these
districts into two regional districts would result
in costs that would be $2,109,689 higher than the
status quo. The actual tax rate impact on the
districts was mixed in both options with some
districts realizing savings while other districts
requiring a tax increase.

6. The Northern Valley Consortium consisting of
Closter, Demarest, Harrington Park, Haworth,
Northvale, Norwood, Old Tappan, and Northern
Valley Regional High School District studied the
feasibility of the creation of one K-12 district
consisting of all the districts. Under the
proposal, the tax rate would increase for Closter,
Demarest, Harrington Park, Norwood, and Old
Tappan, and decrease for Haworth and Northvale.
The total costs would be $1,973,666 higher in the
K-12 regional than under the existing structure.

7. Dunellen, Middlesex, Bound Brook, and South Bound
Brook studied the feasibility of consolidating and
found that Bound Brook and Middlesex would realize
an increase in their taxes, while Sound Bound Brook and Durellon would realize a decrease in their tax rates.

8. Somerset Hills Regional and Bedminster Township studied the feasibility of enlarging the Somerset Hills Regional to include Bedminster for grades K-12. The study concluded that the plan would result in an increase in costs in the amount of $512,954 for the first year, $323,945 in the second year, and $243,945 in the third year.

9. The Western Monmouth County Panhandle districts consisting of Roosevelt, Millstone, Allentown, and Upper Freehold Regional studied consolidation under several scenarios which included: (1) regionalization of all districts into one K-12 district, (2) Millstone and Upper Freehold forming a K-12 regional without Roosevelt, and (3) the districts forming a 7-12 regional with three K-6 districts. Under the first scenario, projected taxes would increase for Millstone, Allentown, and Upper Freehold, but decrease for Roosevelt. Under the second scenario, Millstone, Allentown and Upper Freehold would all experience substantial tax increases. Under the third scenario, all
districts would likewise experience tax increases.

10. Wildwood City, Wildwood Crest, North Wildwood, and West Wildwood studied several regionalization models: a K-12 regional, a 7-12 regional and a 9-12 regional. The tax impact varied depending upon the scenario, but in every scenario there would be a resulting tax increase for some of the districts and tax decreases for others. (pp. 2-3)

Analogous to some of the information reported by Lepore (2004), Sciarrillo (2006) analyzed 19 feasibility studies completed by New Jersey public school districts considering regionalization or deregionalization. The purpose of Sciarrillo’s analysis was to determine whether specific factors noted in each of the respective feasibility studies were essential to boards of education with regard to their decision-making process. Additionally, could a hierarchy of factors be developed that could impact either positively or negatively on a district’s ability to regionalize or deregionalize? The 19 studies examined in Sciarrillo’s study were commissioned by school districts between the years of 1994 and 2005. Most followed the state recommended format. Only a few consulting companies were commissioned to complete the feasibility studies, with Centennium Consultants completing
a majority of the studies. Most of the feasibility studies followed a model promulgated by the New Jersey State Department of Education and thus contained specific elements within each report. These elements included the following: organizational pattern (K-12, K-8, etc.), financial impact, enrollment data and future enrollment projections, racial impact study, facility implications, apportionment of board seats, staffing issues, and legal implications.

Sciarrillo (2006) reviewed the data provided within each feasibility study, identified the factors important to the decision-making process of the respective board of education members, assessed each factor's relative importance in weighing the potential alternatives, and provided a list of 21 conclusions to be drawn from the analysis of the 19 feasibility studies. Of particular note was that the delivery of curriculum and instruction within a K-12 environment was considered a primary factor in regionalization studies and transcended financial considerations within the regionalization process. The following are a summary of findings as reported by Sciarrillo:

1. Districts are consistently encouraged to create either independent or regional K-12 districts and
are generally discouraged from creating limited purpose regional school districts.

2. Control over an articulated K-12 educational program may be a more important factor than financial impact in the regionalization/deregionalization decision-making process.

3. Converting limited purpose regional school districts to K-12 all purpose regional school districts does not consistently increase or decrease overall costs.

4. Converting send/receive relationships to all-purpose K-12 regional school districts decreases overall costs more often than not.

5. Converting send/receive relationships to limited purpose regional school districts generally increases overall costs.

6. Constituents of limited purpose school districts demonstrate greater dissatisfaction than constituents of all-purpose school districts.

7. Constituents seek withdrawal from limited purpose regional school districts to eliminate payment of a disproportionate share of district costs.

8. Withdrawal from limited purpose regional school
districts generally reduces overall costs for the withdrawing constituent.

9. Unilateral withdrawal of constituent districts from limited purpose regional school districts does not consistently increase or decrease overall costs for the remaining regional school district.

10. Apportioning regional district costs based only on equalized valuations typically creates disparities in payments between districts.

11. Apportioning regional district costs based upon a combination of equalized valuations and enrollment is the preferred method of apportionment.

12. The construction of new facilities or renovation/improvement of existing facilities is a significant consideration in the regionalization/deregionalization decision-making process.

13. Local issues such as the loss of neighborhood schools, loss of "home rule," increased transportation time for students, and the need to redistribute students are highlighted in the studies and are potentially serious obstacles to K-12 all purpose regionalization.

14. The impact of regionalization/deregionalization on
school district tax rates is a primary focus of the studies.

15. Racial balance, although addressed in the studies, is not stressed as a critical factor in the regionalization/deregionalization decision-making process.

16. Board representation is not a critical factor in the regionalization/deregionalization process.

17. Uncertainties exist regarding whether a regional district that is comprised of one Abbott district and one non-Abbott district retains an Abbott classification.

18. Reduction in staff is not articulated as a critical factor in the regionalization/deregionalization decision-making process.

19. No studies address the impact of regionalization or deregionalization on labor relations and how the power between unions and management may shift as a result of a change in the status quo.

20. Feasibility studies may be outcome-driven by the parties commissioning the studies.

21. A limited number of companies/individuals conduct feasibility studies, all of which generally follow
the same format and analysis recommended by the
Department of Education in its Advisory Report.
(pp. 231 - 232)

Labor issues also appeared to be a concern for
districts considering consolidation. Cluley (1992) noted
that any decision to consolidate school districts should be
based on student interests and economic factors. In
instances by which a limited purpose district is dissolved
in favor of an all-purpose district, employees have certain
statutory rights. These are noted in N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-49
which states that all employees of the dissolving district
"shall be transferred to and continue respective
employment" in the regional district. The statute also
states that "right of tenure" shall not be affected by
transfer to a regional. Similar protections are granted to
7-12 teachers upon creation of a limited purpose junior
and/or senior high school. However, the law does not state
that employees must maintain any of the terms and
conditions previously derived in negotiated agreements.

Cluley (1992) also indicated that other issues to
consider include the legal right to organize to negotiate
terms and conditions of employment. Bargaining units could
include certain employment classifications or an all-
inclusive unit sometimes referred to as a "wall to wall"
unit. In determining the structure of the bargaining unit(s), it would be incumbent upon a new district to negotiate a structure that meets the board's economic and operational needs.

Cornell and Ottaviano (1992) recommended to their respective school districts (Mendham Township and Mendham Borough) that they establish a committee to prepare an impact study on consolidation. Both superintendents developed a list of educational benefits that included the expanding of course options for students. The superintendents also discussed problems relative to consolidation. Such problems included: transportation costs and travel time, limited competitive athletic teams, staff morale and labor concerns, community resistance to school closings, school curriculum and educational philosophies and loss of state aid funds.

Cornell and Ottaviano (1992) reported that in their respective communities, the greatest roadblock to consolidation was the state funding formula. The superintendents recommended that in considering consolidation, the legislature should explore the feasibility of amending the existing formula for appropriating funds. They also suggested the possibility of monetary incentives as an incentive to be utilized to
help overcome the initial difficulties in school district consolidation.

Factors that may be influential in a successful consolidation can be seen in the Chatham Regional Study (1986). This study was submitted and approved by the New Jersey Department of Education as the initial step required for regionalization as listed within Chapter 13 of Title 18A. The basic objectives of the study focused on the educational programs offered within the two communities, the use of the school facilities including school/grade organizational patterns, staffing, and financial impact. Another concern addressed in this study involved school governance and its applicability to regionalization. It should be noted that when two districts, known as constituent districts, form a regional district, the constituents must exercise governance responsibility through the creation of a new board of education. Determining the apportionment of board of education seats could be a roadblock to school district consolidation. In the case of the Chatham Regional Study, it was determined that the newly created board of education would consist of four members from Chatham Borough and five members from Chatham Township.
Beauchea (1993) investigated whether common variables could be determined that could predict a successful or unsuccessful consolidation of two or more public school districts. Her study involved 30 school districts throughout the United States with 12 of the districts located in New Jersey. Eighteen of the thirty reorganization case studies were reviewed from nine different states. Seventeen of the cases were state or university research studies. One study was a feasibility study completed independently for two New Jersey school districts considering consolidation. By examining the responses to a survey given to all 30 respondents, Beauchea was able to develop a database that listed variables defined as both primary and secondary reasons for the 30 school districts involved in this study to consider consolidation. A review of the variables discussed within this study indicated that enrollment was the primary reason for school districts to consider consolidation. However, Beauchea's study also determined that enrollment alone was not enough to predict a successful school district consolidation. Her study suggested that enrollment tied to other variables might be necessary for school district consolidation efforts to succeed. The variables considered in this study and listed as both primary and secondary
factors included: curriculum enhancement, financial incentives, building and facility problems, district size, integration and socioeconomic issues, per pupil expenditures, and the community's voluntary willingness to consolidate.

Not all studies emanating from New Jersey advocated regionalization for local school districts. The New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization chaired by Assemblyman Joseph Malone (1999) released findings that indicated regionalization does not always result in savings for the local property owner or that the desire for home rule is the motivating factor to reject regionalization. Instead, specific local issues may determine the feasibility of regionalization. Such issues may include: increased per pupil costs, increased teacher salaries as the higher salary guides are usually adopted by the newly formed regional, loss of state aid for districts with low property values, and inequitable representation on school boards.

The Task Force Report (The New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization, 1999) also contained specific recommendations that could possibly enhance regionalization for certain school districts. Of primary importance was
the need to change the current equalized valuation method of apportioning costs. No specific formula was recommended but the Task Force stated, "There should be a realistic mechanism which compels equitable adjustments in the distribution of costs among constituent municipalities" (p. ii).

In summary, a review of the literature, consisting of state statutes, reports, position papers, independent research studies, and relevant articles on the topic of school district consolidation, has indicated that the delivery of instruction and the quality of that delivery might not be determined by the size of the school district. However, the literature does indicate that there has been extensive effort in New Jersey to consolidate school districts in order to provide comprehensive educational services to schools and communities at reduced costs to the local taxpayer. The Report of the State Commission to Study the Next Steps of Regionalization and Consolidation in the School Districts in New Jersey (NJDOE, 1969) was one of the first state studies to make formal recommendations relative to consolidation. Thirty-five years later, New Jersey still continues to maintain over 600 school districts and does not have a state policy to address the issue of school district consolidation. Additionally, New
Jersey has the lowest number of students per district of major industrial states and, according to Education Vital Signs (1999), the highest per pupil expenditure in the country. The New Jersey Department of Education’s Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing (1995) indicated that much of the cost is attributed to administration and duplication of services due to the many small public school districts located throughout the state.

Further review of the literature indicated studies that support school district consolidation as a means of reducing costs as well as improving the delivery of educational services to students. Still other studies, such as that by Sher and Schaller (1986), questioned consolidation as a means of cost effectively improving the delivery of services to students. One national study authored by Beauchea (1991) provided a database of variables that were determined to affect a school district’s consolidation efforts. However, this study was not confined to New Jersey school districts and the research was completed prior to other consolidation and dissolution efforts that have taken place in New Jersey since 1993. The need to update the existing research regarding school district consolidation in New Jersey as
well as the need to identify those factors that enhance or hinder a district’s ability to consolidate or dissolve provides the focus and the rationale for this study.
Chapter III
Methodology

This study was designed to examine the outcomes of school district consolidation and dissolution efforts in the state of New Jersey from 1993 through 2003. The study will update the data and conclusions determined in a previous school district consolidation study conducted by Sara Beauchea in 1993 in partial fulfillment of her doctoral studies at Seton Hall University. Beauchea's study was designed to explore the outcomes of school district mergers across the nation. The research methodology employed a database to sort the primary objectives and overall outcomes of 30 school districts that had already consolidated or were in the process of reorganizing their school systems. Beauchea's data collection initially included a review of the literature on school district consolidation, telephone interviews, university articles, and consolidation feasibility studies. Her research methodology included a telephone survey to the superintendents and/or business administrators of the 30 participating school districts.

Beauchea's (1993) telephone survey was initially field tested by responses derived from both superintendents and business administrators. Subsequently, Beauchea developed a
database for the purpose of determining the primary objectives and overall outcomes to be attained by the 30 districts involved in her study. The formulation of a spreadsheet permitted the researcher to present the database information in a statistical format. This format assisted in providing statistical conclusions designed to determine if larger school districts are better in meeting the educational needs of their constituents.

This researcher's intent is to interview superintendents employed by school districts that have placed the issue of regionalization or deregionalization on the ballot for consideration by the voters between the years of 1993 and 2003 in order to determine their perceptions relative to factors that, when present, can assist school districts in their regionalization or deregionalization efforts. The format of inquiry is similar to the study conducted in 1993 by Beauchea. The survey questions discussed in the aforementioned study will be utilized to interview superintendents and/or their designees from those New Jersey school districts that have completed the required New Jersey State Department of Education feasibility study regarding school district consolidation or dissolution and have received approval from the New Jersey Commissioner of Education to present
the issue of consolidation/dissolution on the ballot for voter consideration. Responses gleaned from the superintendents to the questions during the interview process were utilized to develop a database that will list the primary and secondary reasons school districts considered consolidation or dissolution and the overall outcomes of the districts involved in either the consolidation or dissolution process. Tables indicating the primary reasons for successful or unsuccessful consolidations/dissolutions of school districts are included with the intent to determine whether there are some perceptual commonalities identified by the participant superintendents or designees that indicate specific factors to be identified which could contribute to a positive or negative outcome relative to school district consolidation or dissolution of a limited purpose school district in New Jersey.

Sample

The sample for this study was extracted from a New Jersey School Boards Association's list of school districts that had completed consolidation or dissolution feasibility studies required by the New Jersey Department of Education from the years 1993 through 2003. This sample of school districts was determined as a means of updating a prior
study completed by Beauchea in 1993 in partial fulfillment of her doctoral studies at Seton Hall University. It should be noted that once a school district completes the required feasibility study, and has received approval from the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, the district is eligible to place the question of consolidation or dissolution on the ballot for voter approval or disapproval. Twenty school districts exercised this option in New Jersey since 1993. They include: Independence Township; Liberty Township; Bernardsville; Far Hills; Peapack-Gladstone; Hashbrouck Heights; Wood-Ridge; the constituent districts of the Union County Regional High School District which was comprised of the districts of Berkeley Heights, Clark, Fanilworth, Mountainside, Garwood, and Springfield Boards of Education; and the constituent districts of the Lower Camden County Regional School District which included Berlin, Waterford, Winslow Townships, Pine Hill, Clementon, Lindenwold, and Chesilhurst Boroughs. Thus, the responses from the superintendents or designees from the respective public school districts include the superintendents/designees of the two newly regionalized districts, the superintendents/designees of the two deregionalized districts and the two superintendents/designees representing the two districts
that experienced a defeat of their regionalization efforts. A total of 17 superintendents/desigees were involved in the interview process and comprise the data to be analyzed in this study.

Interview

To examine the perceptions of superintendents and respective desigees relative to the issue of school district consolidation or dissolution, a series of questions previously developed by Beauchea (1993) were used to interview superintendents whose districts considered school district consolidation or dissolution and placed the question on the ballot for voter consideration during the years of 1993 to 2003. Additional questions were included to address the issue of school district dissolution not discussed in the Beauchea study. The questions are listed in Appendix B.

According to Beauchea (1993), the questions were developed from a review of the literature involving school consolidation, from case and consolidation studies, and interviews. The questions were field tested prior to being used in her study. Beauchea's respondents included superintendents and business administrators. One exception was a teacher from the Morris School District who had previously written her dissertation regarding the Morris
School District merger.

Beauchea's (1993) study was primarily qualitative in nature and used a telephone survey to garner responses from respondents to her survey questions. It is the intent of the researcher to utilize the questions listed in her study as well as other questions imbedded in the literature to interview the superintendents of the districts involved in school district consolidation or dissolution studies since 1993. Their responses shall form the body of research for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary unit of analysis included the responses of the superintendents or designees to the interview questions. The school districts and the names of their respective superintendents were obtained from a list requested and received from the New Jersey School Boards Association. The list was confirmed by the New Jersey Department of Education via the department's respective county offices.

With the receipt of approval from the Institutional Review Board of Seton Hall University (see Appendix D), the superintendents involved in this study were contacted by the researcher via letter identifying herself as a New Jersey superintendent of schools and a doctoral student at
Seton Hall University (see Appendix E). The intent of the study was discussed and the superintendents or designees were asked to participate in a personal interview regarding issues relating to school district consolidation or dissolution. Additional correspondence that explains the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a statement identifying the researcher as a superintendent and student at Seton Hall University was sent to all superintendents involved in this study prior to the scheduled interview. Additionally, the correspondence disseminated to all superintendents involved in this study discussed the researcher's intent to maintain confidentiality of respondents. Confidentiality was again assured during the interview process. Responses of the superintendents or designees were recorded by the researcher, transcribed, and included in Appendix C of this research study. A master list of all participants shall be kept by the researcher and appropriately coded to ensure confidentiality of the respondents.

Data Analysis

Data analysis attempted to determine the relationship between the 20 New Jersey school districts that considered consolidation or dissolution from 1993 through 2003 and the factors that affected the success or failure of their
efforts. This qualitative study attempted to interview all 17 superintendents or designees of New Jersey school districts to determine the superintendents' perceptions relative to:

1. those factors that can be identified as necessary for a successful school district consolidation,
2. those factors that contribute to the unsuccessful consolidation of school districts,
3. those factors that can be identified as essential for a successful dissolution of a regional school district,
4. those factors that can be identified as necessary to contribute to the unsuccessful dissolution of a regional school district and,
5. those socioeconomic factors that affect a district's ability to regionalize or deregionalize.

The research method utilized was that of a taped interview with all 17 superintendents or designees serving as the primary resource for data collection. The responses of the 17 superintendents or designees were used to determine the outcomes of the primary and subsidiary research questions listed in chapter 1 of the study.
Chapter IV
PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there are perceived common factors that, when present, influence the success or failure of a school district's regionalization or deregionalization efforts. The method of inquiry included interviews with all superintendents or their respective designees from New Jersey public school districts that placed the topic of regionalization or deregionalization on the ballot for voter approval or disapproval during the years of 1993 through 2003. The intent of the research was to determine, through the interview process and by analyzing the responses of the superintendents/designees to the interview questions, whether there were specific commonalities of responses that identified factors that, when present, could assist New Jersey public school districts in their regionalization or deregionalization efforts.

In New Jersey, during the years of 1993-2003, there were a total of 20 districts that received approval from the New Jersey Department of Education to place the issue of regionalization or deregionalization on the ballot for voter consideration. Two regional efforts were successful.
once regionalization had occurred in the two districts, namely Somerset Hills Regional and Great Meadows Regional, the subjects to be interviewed were reduced to 17 superintendents/designees that represented New Jersey public school districts involved in regionalization or deregionalization efforts during the years in question. One hundred percent of the superintendents/designees of the districts involved in this study were interviewed by the researcher using an instrument initially developed by Beauchea (1993). Additional questions were included to address the issue of school district deregionalization not previously addressed in the Beauchea study. The responses of all the superintendents/designees to the survey questions have been transcribed and are included in the appendix of this study (see Appendix C).

This chapter includes a description of the research participants, description of the database outcomes, tables indicating the primary and secondary reasons for successful or unsuccessful regionalization or deregionalization efforts, analysis of the responses of the superintendents/designees, and the overall outcomes of the districts involved.

Other information included in this chapter and gleaned during the interview process with superintendents/designees
include socioeconomic impact, perceived positive and negative outcomes due to regionalization or deregionalization efforts, and unanticipated legal issues that evolved during the deregionalization process.

Description of the Research Participants

The research participants consisted of the superintendents or designees whose districts received approval from the New Jersey Commissioner of Education to present the issue of regionalization or the deregionalization of an existing regional school district on the ballot for voter consideration. Only those New Jersey public school districts that presented the issue of regionalization or deregionalization to its voters from 1993 through 2003 were considered within this study. The districts in which the voters approved regionalization included the Independence (K-8) School District and Liberty Township (K-8) School District in Warren County. These two districts consolidated to become the Great Meadows (K-8) School District. Bernardsville (K-12), Far Hills (K-8), and Peapack-Gladstone (K-8), public school districts in Somerset County, regionalized in 1995 to become the Somerset Hills Regional School District. Hasbrouck Heights (K-12) and Wood-Ridge (K-12), two districts located in Bergen County, experienced a defeat of the question of
regionalization by their respective voters in 1997 and thus remained separate school districts.

There have been two regional school districts in which their constituent districts voted to deregionalize. The Union County Regional School District comprised of the constituent districts of Berkeley Heights, Clark, Kenilworth, Mountainside, Garwood, and Springfield voted for dissolution in 1996 to be effective on July 1, 1997. Both Clark and Garwood voted against the deregionalization.


The aforementioned represents a total of 20 school districts. After consolidation, the number of superintendents or designees to be interviewed was reduced to 17. The researcher was able to interview all 17 superintendents or designees for a total of 100% of the subjects. Fifteen superintendents involved in the regionalization or deregionalization efforts were interviewed. The superintendents of Berkeley Heights and Pine Hill recommended that the researcher interview their
respective business administrators due to their key financial involvement in the dissolution efforts of their respective regional districts. See Figure 1 for a summary of the status of the participants interviewed.

Data Analysis

To facilitate the purpose of this study, all 17 subjects were interviewed utilizing an instrument developed by Beauchesne (1993) consisting of 14 questions relative to the subjects' specific perceptions regarding regionalization and/or deregionalization and its applicability to the respondents' respective school district's efforts to regionalize or deregionalize. The survey questions included the respondents' perceptions of the primary reasons for regionalization or deregionalization, the secondary/minor reasons for regionalization or deregionalization, the method of study utilized to determine the feasibility of the regionalization study, the outcomes to be derived from the regionalization or deregionalization, concerns relative to community representation on a regional board of education, socioeconomic considerations, and whether there were any identifiable positive or negative consequences as a result of successful or unsuccessful efforts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Was Superintendent designee employed in district at time regionalization/deregionalization was taking place?</th>
<th>Yes? No?</th>
<th>If yes, what was the position held?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley Heights</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Township</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshilhurst</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clementon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garwood</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Meadows</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasbrouck Heights</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenilworth</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindenwold</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountainside</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Hill</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business Administrator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial review of the data included the review of notes or transcription of all subjects' responses to the interview questions. A database using an Excel spreadsheet was developed that listed the primary and secondary/minor reasons as perceived by the superintendents/designees for regionalization or deregionalization. It lists which districts were involved in regionalization or deregionalization efforts and whether the outcomes of the respective districts were successful or unsuccessful. This information is listed in Table 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>Primary Reasons</th>
<th>Secondary Reasons</th>
<th>Regionalization/Deregionalization</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley Heights</td>
<td>1, 4, 5</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1, 8</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesilhurst</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 8</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4, 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>9, 12</td>
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<td>Clementon</td>
<td>1, 2, 1, 9, 10, 13</td>
<td>3, 4, 13</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Garwood</td>
<td>2, 8, 1, 2, 4</td>
<td>9, 14</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8, 11, 14</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Great Meadows</td>
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<td>3, 4, 6, 3, 4</td>
<td>Regionalization</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
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<td>Hasbrouck Heights</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenilworth</td>
<td>1, 2, 8, 10, 12</td>
<td>4, 5, 8, 9</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School district</td>
<td>Primary reasons</td>
<td>Secondary reasons</td>
<td>Regionalization/ Deregionalization</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2, 3, 1, 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountainside</td>
<td>1, 4, 1, 2, 3, 11</td>
<td>4, 4, 11</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Hill</td>
<td>3, 4, 7 1, 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3, 4, 8</td>
<td>Regionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td>1, 4, 12, 14</td>
<td>5, 9</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>r/a</td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winslow</td>
<td>2, 4, 4, 7, 8, 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deregionalization</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood-Ridge</td>
<td>1, 4, 6 1,4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Regionalization</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 lists the primary reasons for successful regionalization efforts as perceived by the superintendents of respective designees. The frequencies and their corresponding percentages are also included.

Table 5
Perceived Primary Reasons for Successful Regionalization Efforts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student enrollment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per pupil expenditure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local control (desire for)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community representation on regional board/accountability of regional board</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing of one regional high school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General dissatisfaction with regional</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return 7th/8th graders to local</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary reasons</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>district</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for K-12 local school district</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller class sizes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power/autonomy among local boards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having high schools in their local districts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A review of the responses of the superintendents or designees of the four districts involved in regionalization efforts indicated that of the 16 primary reasons listed in the database in Table 4, only four reasons were selected by the four superintendents/designees. Each of the four individuals selected the same primary reasons for their respective district’s regionalization attempts. Those reasons were: financial, facilities, curriculum, and student enrollment.

Table 6 lists the secondary reasons for successful regionalization as perceived by the superintendents or designees representing districts that presented the issue
of regionalization to their respective districts for voter consideration.

Table 6
Perceived Secondary Reasons for Successful Regionalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per pupil expenditure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enrollment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community representation on regional board/ accountability of regional board</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local control (desire for)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing of one regional high school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General dissatisfaction with regional</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return 7th/8th graders to local district</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for K-12 local school district</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller class sizes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power/autonomy among local boards</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Secondary reasons
having high schools in their local
districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Total          | 10        | 100%


There were a total of 10 responses from the four superintendents/designees. Three of the four secondary reasons listed were identical to the primary reasons listed in Table 5. These include: financial, facilities, and curriculum. Curriculum issues were cited most frequently (40%) as a secondary reason for regionalization. Two superintendents also noted socioeconomic reasons as a secondary factor affecting regionalization efforts. This was the only additional reason specifically listed as a secondary factor that was not listed as a primary factor for regionalization efforts by the superintendents/designees involved in regionalization efforts in New Jersey between the years 1993 through 2003.

Table 7 lists the primary and secondary reasons for successful regionalization as perceived by the superintendents or designees representing districts that presented the issue of regionalization to their respective
districts for voter consideration. The frequencies and their corresponding percentages are also listed.

Table 7  
**Perceived Primary and Secondary Reasons for Successful Regionalization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in Table 7, there were 19 responses from the four superintendents or designees involved in regionalization efforts during the years 1993 through 2003. Three of the five reasons listed by the superintendents or designees were perceived to be both primary and secondary reasons. These include: curriculum, financial reasons, and facilities. Curriculum issues were cited most frequently (31.5%) by the respondents followed by finance and facilities with each receiving a total of 21.0% of the responses of the superintendents or designees.
There was only one unsuccessful regionalization effort in New Jersey during the years of 1991 through 2003, namely the efforts of Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge. The reasons, both primary and secondary, listed by the respective superintendents representing both Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge for the unsuccessful attempt at regionalization are listed in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*Perceived Primary and Secondary Reasons for Unsuccessful Regionalization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local control</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both superintendents listed local control as a factor perceived as contributing to the unsuccessful attempt to regionalize. One superintendent additionally perceived socioeconomics as a contributing factor. One superintendent, during the interview process, indicated that although the two communities had the same district factor group designation, it was perceived by some in both communities that one community was of higher socioeconomic status. As a result, the voters of Hasbrouck Heights
defeated the referendum. The voters of Wood-Ridge approved the referendum to regionalize. Since both communities did not approve the referendum, the question of regionalization was defeated.

Table 9 lists the primary reasons for successful deregionalization efforts as perceived by the 13 superintendents/designees representing districts involved in such studies between the years 1993 through 2003. The table lists the reasons as displayed in Table 4, the frequencies, and their corresponding percentages.

A review of the data indicates that there were 51 responses from the 13 superintendents regarding their perceptions relative to the reasons for successful deregionalization. Eight of the thirteen superintendents, or 61.5% of the respondents involved in deregionalization efforts, listed curriculum as the primary reason for deregionalization efforts, which corresponds to 13.6% of all responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local control (desire for)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per pupil expenditure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing of one regional high school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community representation on regional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>board/accountability of regional board</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General dissatisfaction with regional</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return 7th/8th graders to local district</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for K-12 local school district</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller class sizes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enrollment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power/autonomy among local boards having</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high schools in their local districts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 (continued)


Seven of the thirteen superintendents/designees, or 53.8% of the respondents, listed both financial considerations and local control as primary reasons for deregionalisation efforts within their respective communities, which correspond to 13.7% of all responses.

Table 10 lists the secondary reasons for successful deregionalization efforts as perceived by the 13 superintendents/designees representing districts involved in deregionalisation efforts between the years of 1993 and 2003. The table lists the reasons as displayed in Table 4, the frequencies, and their corresponding percentages.
Table 10

**Perceived Secondary Reasons for Successful Dereregionalization - Frequency Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for K-12 local school district</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local control (desire for)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General dissatisfaction with regional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return 7th/8th graders to local district</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per pupil expenditure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enrollment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community representation on regional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>board/accountability of regional board</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing of one regional high school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller class sizes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power/autonomy among local boards having high schools in their local districts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A review of the data expressed in Table 10 indicates that there were 37 responses from the superintendents/designees relative to the issue of secondary reasons for successful deregionalization efforts within their respective school districts. Seven superintendents/designees, or 53.3% of the respondents, listed financial concerns as a secondary reason for deregionalization efforts, which corresponds to 18.9% of all responses. Six superintendents, or 46.1% of the respondents, listed socioeconomics as a factor in deregionalization, which corresponds to 16.2% of all of the superintendents' responses. Five superintendents, or 39.4% of respondents, noted curriculum issues as a factor in deregionalization efforts, which corresponds to 13.5% of all responses.
Table 11 lists both the primary and secondary reasons for deregionalization efforts as perceived by the superintendents or their respective designees representing districts that presented the issue of deregionalization to their districts’ voters for consideration during the years 1993 through 2003. The frequencies and their corresponding percentages are also included.

A review of the data listed in Table 11 indicates that there were a total of 87 responses from the 13 superintendents or designees regarding the issue of primary and secondary reasons for deregionalization efforts as perceived by superintendents or designees representing districts involved in deregionalization efforts during 1993 through 2003. Four of the sixteen reasons listed in the database located in Table 4 garnered a total of 47 responses (54%) of the total responses of the superintendents or designees. These include financial, curriculum, local control, and socioeconomic factors.
### Table 11

**Perceived Primary and Secondary Reasons for Successful Deregionalization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local control</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per pupil expenditure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for K-12 local control</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General dissatisfaction with regional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing of one regional high school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community representation on regional board</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return 7th and 8th graders to local district</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enrollment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small class sizes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power/autonomy among local boards having high schools in their local districts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research attempted to determine reasons for unsuccessful deregionalization efforts during the years of 1993 through 2003. However, upon researching this topic, there were no unsuccessful deregionalizations during the years 1993 through 2003 thus rendering this issue moot.

Process for Regionalization and Deregionalisation

The process for regionalization and deregionalization is very clearly defined in New Jersey state statutes. Article 12 titled, Formation: Newly Formed and Enlarged Regional Districts cites the following:

18a: 13-34 Formation of regional districts;
referendum. 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 or his representative, after consolidation, study and investigation, shall determine, that it is advisable for such districts to join and create, or for such district to become:
(a) an all purpose regional school district for all the school purposes of such districts or district, or

(b) a limited purpose regional school district to provide and operate, in the territory comprised within such local districts or district, one or more of the following: elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, vocational schools, special schools, health facilities, or particular educational services or facilities, that board or boards shall by resolution frame and adopt a proposal to that effect stating also the manner in which the amounts to be raised for annual or special appropriations for such proposed regional school district, including the amounts to be raised for interest upon and redemption of bonds payable by the regional district, et seq. (N.J.S.A. 18A:13-14)

In essence, the aforementioned statute, in its entirety, provides the legal framework for school districts to regionalize and the steps listed in code to facilitate that process. In the case of Somerset Hills Regional, and the constituent districts that now comprise the regional district, three regionalization studies were completed
prior to bringing forth the question of regionalization to the voters. Respondent M of the Somerset Hills Regional School District recommended that the districts considering regionalization hire an outside consultant and not attempt to complete the feasibility study with district personnel. Respondent M additionally indicated that the amount of work and the detail that goes into the study, particularly the financials, is extensive. Centennium consultants completed the study for Somerset Hills Regional.

The Independence and Liberty School Districts also followed the state protocol and took the appropriate steps to hire outside consultants to complete a feasibility study. As in the case of Somerset Hills Regional, many studies were conducted over the years prior to bringing forth the issue of regionalization to the voters in the aforementioned districts. The final feasibility study was submitted to the Warren County Superintendent of Schools that recommended the two communities regionalize.

The final attempt to regionalize during the 1993-2003 school years in New Jersey involved the districts of Wood-Ridge and Hasbrouck Heights. The attempt was not successful and thus the only regionalization attempt brought to a vote that was defeated. Respondents H and Q indicated that the appropriate feasibility studies were
completed. Additionally, during the course of the interview, Respondent Q stressed that all required steps, as outlined in the state statutes, were followed as necessary to bring the issue of regionalization to the voters. Furthermore, Respondent Y from Hasbrouck Heights indicated that multiple feasibility studies were completed prior to the one submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education via the office of Bergen County Superintendent of Schools. All recommended regionalization.

State statutes also provide a framework for school districts to deregionalize.

Statutes 18A: 13-51 states, The board of education of any local school district constituting part of a limited purpose regional school district or the governing body of the municipality constituting a constituent district may, by resolution, apply to the county superintendent of schools to make an investigation as to the advisability of withdrawal of such local district from the regional district. A majority of the board of education of the school districts which constitute a limited purpose regional school district and the majority of the governing bodies of the municipalities which constitute the constituent school districts of a limited purpose
regional school district may, by separate resolutions, apply to the county superintendent of schools to make an investigation as to the advisability of the dissolution of the regional district et seq.


Statute 18A: 13-52 states, With regard to the dissolution of a regional school district the county superintendent may 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. In the event the county superintendent requests a feasibility study to be conducted, the county superintendent's report required pursuant to this section shall be filed within 60 days following submission of the feasibility study.


With regard to dissolution of the Union County Regional School District, two studies were conducted in accord with the aforementioned cycle requirements. Four of the constituent districts, Berkeley Heights, Kenilworth, Mountainside, and Springfield, commissioned Deloitte and Touche to complete a financial impact study. Similarly,
Education America was contracted to complete an educational feasibility study. Respondent N representing Springfield, Respondent I representing Kenilworth, and a former Berkeley Heights board of education member, Jim Kirkland, assisted in the completion of the required feasibility study.

The Lower Camden County Regional School District also completed similar feasibility studies. Feedback via the interview process indicated that both a financial impact study and an educational feasibility study were completed under the aegis of the county superintendent of schools. Additionally, Vito A. Gagliardi, Jr., attorney involved in the Union County deregionalization, served as legal consultant. Another firm was contracted to assist with staff tenure and seniority issues. At least two superintendents expressed concern during the interview process regarding both the student enrollment projections and financial impact studies that were promulgated by the consultants retained by districts comprised of the Lower Camden County Regional.

The issue of school board member apportionment was discussed during the interview process. New Jersey statutes 18A: 13-8 discusses the number of members of regional boards and how they are determined. All 17 superintendents or their respective designees were asked
whether the apportionment of board seats on a regional board was a concern within the districts planning to regionalize. All superintendent/designees involved in regionalization indicated that it was their perception that board member apportionment was not an issue in their efforts to regionalize or deregionalize as state statute clearly defines that process of apportionment. In instances of deregionalization, select districts such as Mountainside and Garwood established sending/receiving relationships and the apportionment of seats in such relationships again is clearly defined in state statute as listed 18A:38-8.1 et seq.

Outcomes

All of the superintendents involved in the study were asked their perceptions relative to the benefits derived by the successful or unsuccessful attempt at regionalization or deregionalization. The following comments were extrapolated from the interview process and summarized as noted.

There were two successful regionalizations in New Jersey during the years 1993 through 2003. In the case of the regionalization of the Independence Township and Liberty Township K-8 School Districts, the primary purposes of the regionalization were to alleviate the overcrowding
conditions in both K-8 districts by building a new middle school facility, to accommodate student enrollment from both communities, and maintain K-4 schools in both Liberty Township and Independence Township. Additionally, administrative overbden would be reduced, as the two districts would be consolidated therefore requiring only one business administrator and one superintendent. There would also be a middle school facility constructed and curriculum enhancements particularly noted at the middle school level with the implementation of the middle school teaming concept.

Regionalization accomplished the desired outcomes. Liberty Township and Independence School Districts regionalized to become the Great Meadows K-3 School District. The communities passed a referendum and thus built a new middle school to accommodate students from both school districts. Great Meadow Regional maintained two K-4 elementary schools, one located in Independence Township and one located in Liberty Township. Curriculum enhancements designed to facilitate the middle school concept were implemented and the elimination of one superintendent and one business administrator prevailed with the regionalization.
In the case of the Somerset Hills Regional School District, regionalization efforts were somewhat unique in that Far Hills and Peapack-Gladstone were non-operating districts that sent their students to Bernardsville. The primary focus of the regionalization, as reported by Respondent M of the Somerset Hills Regional K-12 School District, was the consolidation of the administrative offices of the non-operating districts, curriculum improvements and articulation, and the ability to address current and future building project issues through the office of one board of education. The passage of the referendum relative to regionalization facilitated the desired outcomes. It permitted the regional district an opportunity to consolidate the administrative offices and staff and provide program and facility upgrades. Respondent M also noted that an unexpected by-product of the regionalization process was that the communities merged socially (i.e., recreational activities such as Little League) thus permitting additional avenues for students to interface with one another, K-12.

Two school districts experienced an unsuccessful regionalization. Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge, two small K-12 school districts located in Bergen County, experienced an unsuccessful attempt to regionalize their
respective districts. The impetus for the regionalization effort in both communities focused on student enrollment. Hasbrouck Heights was experiencing an increase in student enrollment. By contrast, Wood-Ridge was experiencing a decrease in student enrollment. The intent of the regionalization effort was to use Wood-Ridge High School as a middle school for students of both communities and Hasbrouck Heights High School as the high school for students of both communities. With the defeat of the referendum, the desired outcomes were not attained.

However, shared services between the two school districts have increased in the last few years as noted by cooperative curriculum initiatives and shared athletic teams that participate in interscholastic sports under the aegis of the NJSIAA.

In terms of deregionalization, New Jersey state statutes require the majority of the constituent districts that comprise a regional and the majority of the voters of the constituent districts to approve deregionalization via referendum. In the case of the Union County Regional High School District, a limited purpose regional comprised of the districts of Berkeley Heights, Clark, Garwood, Kenilworth, Mountainside, and Springfield, four of the six constituent school districts voted for deregionalization.
All of the aforementioned districts have specific local reasons for supporting or not supporting deregionalization. The superintendents expressed these reasons during the time of the interview process.

In the case of Berkeley Heights, local control and the opportunity to offer their students a rigorous curriculum supported by the community was very important. Also, the funding disparities between constituent school districts of the regional were a strong concern. By way of example, Respondent A in Berkeley Heights noted that prior to deregionalization, the per pupil expenditure in Berkeley Heights was approximately $14,000. For the 2005-06 school year, the per pupil expenditure was approximately $11,000.

Mountainside, a constituent district of the Union County Regional High School District, voted for deregionalization. The support for deregionalization was based on financial and programmatic concerns. Prior to deregionalization, Mountainside was paying the highest per pupil expenditure of any community in the regional system. Tuition was approximately $21,500 per student. During the 2005-06 school year, Mountainside's per pupil expenditure, after deregionalization, was approximately $11,000. Mountainside sends its students to Berkeley Heights in a sending-receiving relationship. When speaking to
Respondent K of Mountainside, it was noted that the economics of Mountainside appear to align more closely with that of Berkeley Heights. The perception at the time of the deregionalization was that the curriculum offered by Berkeley Heights would become more rigorous and more aligned to the needs, interests, and abilities of the Mountainside student. Both districts have a district factor group (DFG) designation of "I" which denotes greater affluence than many of the school districts within the state. The other school districts that comprised the regional at the time of deregionalization had, and continue to have, lower district factor group designations.

The community of Kenilworth was extremely enthusiastic regarding their support of deregionalization. Respondent I of Kenilworth indicated that deregionalization was a very emotional issue in his community. First, David Brearley High School, one of the four high schools administered by the Union County Regional High School District and located in Kenilworth, was closed by the regional system allegedly because of decreased student enrollment throughout the regional system. However, many in the community, according to Respondent I, disputed the logic of closing the newest high school in the regional and the only high school fully air conditioned. As a result of the closing, Kenilworth
students were required to attend another high school in the regional system. Deregionalization would provide Kenilworth its own high school, greater curriculum articulation, K-12, local control of its schools, and the elimination of busing. All students in Kenilworth now walk to school, save for special education students.

Kenilworth also experienced unanticipated enhancements with deregionalization. Shering Plough, a local industry, donated $350,000 to the district to update the high school’s science wing and to paint the entire interior of the high school. Subsequently, Kenilworth became the Union County “Choice School District” for Grades 7-12.

Respondent I indicated that being a choice school district provided Kenilworth approximately $1,000,000 in annual revenue to improve instruction within the district. Also, Kenilworth has entered into a sending-receiving relationship with Winfield Park and, as a result of the relationship, now receives an additional $500,000 in tuition.

Kenilworth has a 10-member board of education. Nine of the members represent Kenilworth, and one represents Winfield Park. As stipulated previously, state statutes clearly delineate the appropriation for school board membership. Respondent I indicated that when the school
district was a member of the Union County Regional System, there was the perception in the community that the regional did not always represent the needs of the Kenilworth community. With Kenilworth now having its own school board of education, that perception is moot.

The voters in Springfield additionally voted for deregionalization, although it was a very close vote. Respondent N of Springfield indicated during the interview process that the positive outcomes of deregionalization included local control of school costs and programs and a fully articulated K-12 educational program for the majority of the schools districts. Also noted was that the experience in Springfield led to the involvement of the stakeholders a year before the high school takeover, thus providing opportunity to redesign the high school program while providing articulation with the K-8 program and faculty.

Two districts within the Union County Regional High School District did not vote for deregionalization. When interviewing Respondent F of Garwood, he noted that he was a product and proponent of the regional system. Respondent F expressed a belief that the curriculum offered by the regional system was extremely comprehensive and that the current high schools that formally comprised the regional
system have student enrollments that are too small to support the breadth and scope of the curriculum that was previously offered by the regional system. By way of example, Respondent F noted that the student enrollment in Kenilworth’s David Bearerley High School was so small that the school was required to become a school of choice for Union County, thus taking students from throughout the county as a means of increasing student enrollment. All of the schools that comprised the regional system offered students a comprehensive curriculum that included vocational courses. Now students interested in vocational and technical studies are required to attend the Union County Vocational and Technical School. In essence, the comprehensibility of the curriculum, according to Respondent F, had been compromised with deregionalization, and it is impossible for the current high schools that were once a part of the regional system, and now running independently, to offer the breadth and scope of programs and extracurricular activities that were found in the regional system.

The voters of Clark voted against regionalization. Respondent D of Clark indicated that although the per pupil cost of the regional was one of the highest in the state, the funding formula was somewhat kind to Clark. With
deregionalization, the funding formula changed, and the change was not positive for Clark Township. Additionally, Arthur J. Johnson High School located in Clark was in need of extensive repair. To compound the financial picture for Clark, the regional staffing in the deregionalization process was done by seniority. Therefore, the senior staff members were able to select the district that previously comprised the regional in which they wished to work. Clark had the highest salary guides of any district that had comprised the regional, therefore many of the senior staff selected to work in Clark. This increased cost for the Clark School District at the time of deregionalization, and these additional costs were not received well by the voters. After consistent budget and referendum defeats, Respondent D testified in Trenton on behalf of the Clark School District and as a means of garnering financial support for his school district.

Given the aforementioned financial concerns, Respondent D also indicated positive aspects of deregionalization. He noted that local districts were more thoroughly involved in curriculum and programmatic issues. By way of example, Respondent D indicated the number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses within his high school was increased, the vocational courses were eliminated, and the
improvements to the physical plant were extensive, thus permitting a more positive learning environment for students and staff alike. In essence, Respondent D perceived that deregionalization produced greater local control, curriculum articulation K-12, and greater academic rigor at the high school level.

In summary, Respondent N of Springfield articulated the following relative to deregionalization:

There were numerous positives and a few negatives. Some of the positives included an opportunity for articulation of program, K-12, reinvention of the high school and the ability to customize the program according to local needs, cost reduction in many areas, the elimination of duplication of services, the development of small high schools with personalized attention to students, uniform governance and policy setting, and control of the cost of education.

Respondent N further articulated what he perceived to be the negatives that evolved relative to deregionalization. These included, "hostility of some of the ‘losers’ in this win-loss situation, especially in Springfield where there was a close margin on the election for dissolution and paving uncharted territory by being the first district in the state to dissolve a regional."
Respondent N also noted in the interview that he perceived the Department of Education was unresponsive to the needs of the constituent districts and that they (the constituent districts) had to write most of the protocol and laws governing the deregionalization process. Also, staffing issues, the first few years after the deregionalization, were difficult as it took time for the regional staff to assimilate within their respective districts. According to Respondent N, staff assimilation took about 4 years with a high degree of turnover at the high school level. The final negative discussed by Respondent N was the ability for a school district to administer a small comprehensive high school with 400 plus students and the impact of that operation on the total school district.

There was one additional New Jersey deregionalization that took place during the years of 1993 through 2003, namely, that of the Lower Camden County Regional. The Lower Camden County Regional School District was comprised of seven constituent school districts: Berlin Township, Chesilhurst, Clementon, Lindenwold, Pine Hill, Waterford, and Winslow Township. Five of the constituent districts voted in favor of deregionalization, with Chesilhurst and Waterford Township defeating the referendum to deregionalize. As with the deregionalization of the Union
County Regional High School District, the superintendents of five of the constituent districts that supported deregionalization perceived the dissolution would expand and improve the curriculum offered to students, particularly at the middle school level, be cost effective, return the middle school students to their home school districts, and expand local control, at least in Grades K-8. By way of example, Respondent B of Berlin Township indicated during the interview process that with deregionalization, the district's middle school students were returned to the local district, curriculum was expanded in the middle grade levels, and the teeming approach and advisory program was put in place to assist the newly implemented middle school program. Staff development opportunities were increased and curriculum mapping became a reality. The need to transport students was reduced as the middle school students remained in their local school districts. Local control was now increased to include Grades K-8. Similar comments were articulated by Respondent E of Clementon, who noted that the return of the seventh and eighth grade students to the local district would provide greater curriculum articulation in grades K-8, smaller class sizes for the middle school students than received in the regional system, elimination of the need to
transport the seventh and eighth graders to the regional system, and an increase in local participation in the decision making process. Additionally, in order to provide the middle school students with the educational enhancements required, the district built a classroom wing and gymnasium for the middle school students, necessary to provide the educational enhancements desired by the community.

Respondent L from Pine Hill noted that due to deregionalization, the district was able to upgrade its facilities, build a new middle school wing, and provide curriculum articulation, K-12.

Respondent J from Lindenwold, a community that also voted for deregionalization, noted the following:

- The dissolution of the regional accomplished its objectives. It provided local control and resolved the geographical issues and busing. However, be careful for what you wish. In terms of financial impact there was no saving. The constituent communities were told savings would be $4,300,000 annually. In truth, there was no saving and additional millions were spent in operating costs.

Respondent J also noted that the dissolution affected the programmatic offerings. He stated that since
deregionalization occurred, the curriculum offered by the constituent districts is not as comprehensive, diversity of program and the levels of the courses offered are now absent. By way of example, Respondent J noted that the regional high school district offered five world languages. It would be most difficult to offer that breadth of program in a high school of 500 students. In terms of staffing, deregionalization, according to Respondent J, "was a divorce of biblical proportions that occurred on July 2, 2001, the day of implementation of the district configuration."

Another superintendent expressed the fact that, in retrospect, perhaps deregionalization should have been confined to the seventh and eighth grades, and the regional high schools should have remained intact.

Two constituent districts of the regional, Chesilhurst and Waterford, did not vote for deregionalization. Respondent C of Chesilhurst indicated he had concerns about the accuracy of the required feasibility studies promulgated under the aegis of the county superintendent. His perception was that the study was not conclusive and had many faults, particularly involving costs.

In terms of benefits to Chiselhurst, Respondent C's perception was that none existed. Students in Grades 7-12
continue to attend Winslow as they had done prior to the
deregionalization. Tuition costs continue to escalate.
Curriculum remains the same except for the ongoing
curriculum upgrades. Respondent C of Chesilhurst indicated
that with deregionalization, educational costs escalated as
the constituent districts of the regional could not take
advantage of economies of scale.

Respondent 0 of Waterford related that with
deregionalization, his district was required to form a new
sending-receiving relationship with Hammonton in Atlantic
County and, at present, he perceives it too premature to
determine the positive or negative results of the newly
formed sending-receiving relationship.

There was also an unexpected outcome relative to
deregionalization. Mountainside and Garwood joined against
the other four school districts within the Union County
Regional system and challenged the distribution of the
division of the real assets of the defunct regional.
Simply put, Berkeley Heights, Clark, Kenilworth, and
Springfield had high schools located within their
communities. With the deregionalization, those high
schools became the property of the local district.
Mountainside and Garwood had no regional high schools
located within their respective towns therefore they
challenged the distribution of the capital assets to the New Jersey State Supreme Court and won their case. To date, and for 5 years, the towns having high schools within the regional system pay Mountainside and Garwood additional funds from cash and liquid proceeds. The settlement was determined to be 76% of the funds to Mountainside and 24% of the settlement funds to be distributed to Garwood. The money cannot be used for programs but must go back to the property owner as property tax relief. The legal cost to determine a fair and equitable settlement was very expensive. To compound the issue, the suit is precedent setting and applicable to the Lower Camden County Regional dissolution as well. Currently litigation continues within the districts that comprised the Lower Camden Regional relative financial compensation for the school districts not having high schools within their township boundaries. Again, the legal fees have been significant and continue to be a factor in the deregionalization process.
Chapter V
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter presents a review of the purpose of this study, the research question and subsidiary questions noted in chapter I, and a summary of the research findings based on the perceptions of the superintendents or their respective designees to the interview questions. This is in concert with a review of related literature on the topic of regionalization and deregionalization efforts in New Jersey during the period of 1993 through 2003. As a final step in the study, the conclusions gleaned from the research and the recommendations are also presented.

Purpose of the Study

The research was conducted for the purpose of determining whether there are perceived common factors that, when present, influence the success or failure of a school district’s regionalization or deregionalization efforts. The method of inquiry included interviews with all superintendents or respective designees from New Jersey public school districts that placed the topic of regionalization or deregionalization on the ballot for voter approval or disapproval during the years of 1993 through 2003. The intent of the research was to determine,
through the interview process and by analyzing the responses of the superintendents and designees to the interview questions, whether there were specific commonalities of responses that identified factors that, when present, could assist New Jersey public school districts in their regionalization or deregionalization efforts. If, in fact, there are factors that can be identified that influence the success or failure of regionalization or deregionalization, the identification of such factors could assist districts in determining whether moving forward with regionalization or deregionalization efforts was feasible. Subsidiary questions include the following:

1. What factors appear to contribute to the success of New Jersey's school districts' regionalization or deregionalization efforts? What are the factors that appear to contribute to the unsuccessful consolidation or dissolution of New Jersey public school districts?

2. Does a district consolidation/dissolution contribute to a diverse curriculum?

3. What happens to the cost effectiveness in a newly formed regional district or in the
dissolution of a regional in the areas of staff and administration?

4. At what point in the consolidation process or dissolution process will economies of scale become moot?

5. Does the issue of home rule, when discussing board representation, have a major impact on consolidation or deregionalization efforts?

6. Can it be determined whether there is any correlation between factors that, when present, may successfully predict the outcome of the consolidation process? Can it be determined if there is any correlation between factors that may successfully predict the outcome of a successful deregionalization process?

Chapter 1 presented the need, theoretical rationale, purpose, limitations, delimitations, significance, and organization of this study. Chapter 2 provided the review of the related literature. Chapter 3 presented the subjects involved in the study, namely, the New Jersey superintendents and designees involved in regionalization or deregionalization efforts during the years 1993 through 2003. Chapter 4 presented an analysis of the perceptions of
the superintendents or designees as gleaned via the interview process.

The interview questions in this study were developed by Beauchea (1993) and previously utilized in her dissertation titled *A National Study of School District Consolidations: Implications for New Jersey*. Additional questions were included to address the issue of school district deregionalization not discussed in the Beauchea study. The interview questions are listed in Appendix B.

Twenty New Jersey school districts involved in regionalization or deregionalization studies during the period of 1993 through 2003 were identified utilizing statistics gleaned from the New Jersey School Boards Association and the New Jersey Department of Education. The 20 school districts, after regionalization, numbered 17, and the superintendents of the 17 districts were contacted and requested to participate in an interview. Two district business administrators, Pine Hill and Berkeley Heights, served as designees for their respective superintendents due to their financial understanding of their respective district's deregionalization efforts. A combination of quantitative and qualitative outcomes were attained by recording the responses of the superintendents and designees to the interview questions, a review of the
related literature, as well as the use of a database program to statistically analyze the data.

Overview of Conclusions

Based on the perceptions of the superintendents and their designees to the interview questions as well as the review of the literature, the following conclusions relative to regionalization and deregionalization in New Jersey during the years 1993 through 2003 are presented:

Research question 1. What are the common factors as perceived by New Jersey public school superintendents or their respective designees that, when present, influence the success or failure of regionalization or deregionalization efforts?

A review of the responses of the superintendents or designees of the four districts involved in New Jersey regionalization efforts indicated that of the 16 primary reasons listed in the database on Table 4, located in chapter 4 of this study, only four reasons were perceived by the superintendents and designees as the primary reasons for their district's regionalization attempts. Those reasons are found on Table 5, in chapter 4 of this study, and include: financial, curriculum, facilities, and student enrollment. When the secondary reasons for consolidation were included in the statistical review,
three of the four secondary reasons, as perceived by the superintendents or designees, were identical to the primary reasons listed in Table 5, located in chapter 4, of this study. These reasons are listed in Table 6, in chapter 4 and include: financial, facilities, and curriculum. Curriculum issues were cited most frequently (40%) as a secondary reason for regionalization.

From the information gleaned from the perceptions of the superintendents and designees during the interview process relative to successful or unsuccessful regionalizations, it appears that multiple local factors were instrumental in determining the success or failure of regionalization attempts. With regard to the Somerset Hills regionalization, the consolidation of the administrative offices of the non-operating districts, the ability to offer a comprehensive curriculum and improve the facilities of the newly formed regional appeared to be the focus for success. The Report of the State Committee to Study the Next Steps of Regionalization and Consolidation of School Districts (NJDOE, 1969) advocated the elimination of non-operating school districts and the delivery of curriculum within K-12 school districts. This was supported by the Quality Education Commission’s Report in 1991 and also noted by former Governor McGreevey in his State of the
State Address in 2004. The recommendation for K-12 curriculum delivery was further supported by the Commission on Business and Efficiency of the Public Schools in its report titled, Finding Opportunities for Improvement: Ideas on Regionalization and Shared Services (1995) which specifically noted the importance of offering a sequential educational experience, K-12.

As with the regionalization of Somerset Hills, the impetus of the regionalization effort in both the Liberty Township and Independence Township School Districts was the consolidation of administrative offices as a cost effective measure. However, the ability to offer students a comprehensive middle school program in a new middle school facility was the impetus for the success of the regionalization effort. Although regionalization attained the desired outcomes from a local standpoint, it did not provide a K-12 organizational format as advocated in the aforementioned literature. As a result, the Great Meadows School District, comprised of Liberty Township and Independence Township, although regionalized for K-8 instructional purposes, continues to maintain a sending-receiving relationship with a K-12 district for Grades 9-12. Liberty and Independence School Districts did consolidate their administrative offices thereby
eliminating the employment of one superintendent and one business administrator.

There was only one defeated regionalization during the years 1993 through 2003. Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge attempted to regionalize to reduce administrative costs while concomitantly maximizing the use of school facilities in both communities perceived as necessary due to declining student enrollments. Wood-Ridge voted for regionalization. The voters of Hasbrouck Heights defeated the regionalization referendum. All communities involved in a vote for regionalization must pass the question for regionalization to come to fruition.

In discussing the issue of the defeated referendum with the superintendents of both districts, it was noted by Respondent H from Hasbrouck Heights that although both communities have the same district factor group designation (DFG), there was the perception by some that the Hasbrouck Heights community was of higher socioeconomic status. That perception coupled with the concept of local control may have contributed to the defeat of the referendum.

In terms of deregionalization, there were two successful deregionalizations in New Jersey between the years 1993 through 2003. Table 9, located in chapter 4 of this study, lists the reasons, frequencies, and
corresponding percentages for successful deregionalization efforts as perceived by the 13 superintendents and designees representing districts involved in such studies between the years 1993 through 2003.

A review of the data indicates that there were 51 responses from the 13 superintendents and designees regarding their perceptions relative to the reasons for successful deregionalization. Eight of the thirteen superintendents or their respective designees, or 61.5% of the respondents involved in deregionalization efforts, listed curriculum as the primary reason for deregionalization efforts. This corresponds to 15.6% of all responses. Seven of the thirteen superintendents and their respective designees, or 53.8% of the respondents, listed both financial considerations and local control as primary reasons for deregionalization efforts within their respective communities. This corresponds to 13.7% of all responses.

Table 10, in chapter 4 of this study, also discusses the secondary reasons for deregionalization as perceived by the 13 superintendents and designees involved in deregionalization efforts. As noted in Table 10, there were 37 responses from the superintendents and designees relative to the secondary reasons for successful
deregionalizations in their respective districts. Seven superintendents and designees, or 53.8% of the respondents, listed financial concerns as a secondary reason for deregionalization efforts. This corresponds to 18.9% of all responses. Six superintendents and their designees, or 46.1% of the respondents, listed socioeconomic as a factor in successful deregionalization, which corresponds to 16.2% of the responses received from the superintendents and designees. Five superintendents and their respective designees, or 38.4% of the respondents, noted curriculum issues as a factor in deregionalization efforts, which corresponds to 13.6% of all responses.

The successes of deregionalization efforts appear to be attributed to a multiplicity of local factors. In terms of the Union County Regional High School District's successful deregionalization, the superintendents indicated during the time of the interview that curriculum, financial issues, including per pupil expenditures in select communities, and the closing of one regional high school located in Kenilworth, appeared to lead to the demise of the regional district. In terms of financial impact and per pupil expenditures, Respondent N of Springfield, a member district of the regional, indicated that he perceived deregionalization provided greater financial
incentives for some of the constituent districts of the regional. By way of example, he noted that Mountainside, a constituent district of the Union County Regional High School District, was paying a per pupil expenditure of $20,000 at the time of the deregionalization. This per pupil expenditure rate is documented in the Assembly Task Force Report on School Regionalization (1999) chaired by Assemblyman Joseph Malone. Currently, for the 2005-06 school year, Mountainside's per pupil expenditure to send its students, Grades 9-12, to the high school located in Berkeley Heights, is $11,600. Mountainside voted affirmatively for deregionalization.

By contrast, while Mountainside was paying a per pupil expenditure of over $20,000 to the regional, Garwood paid a per pupil expenditure of $8,600 to attend the regional. The disparity was due to the fact that New Jersey's per pupil costs are based on equalized property valuation. Garwood did not vote for deregionalization.

With regard to deregionalization of the Union County Regional, the New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization (1999) focused discussion of the financial impact of deregionalization on Clark Township, a constituent district of the Union County
Regional High School District. To this end, the Task Force report (1999) related the following:

The financial impact on Clark has been somewhat catastrophic. There was a $.77 per $100 of assessed valuation increase in property taxes and a budget reduction of $975,000. Clark also experienced a loss of the subsidy it was receiving from the other members of the regional school district, because even though Clark's students represented 25% of the student body, Clark only paid 22% of the costs. Clark also was burdened with increased costs due to the fact that the law permitted staff members of the regional district, based on seniority, to choose districts for which they wished to work and the overwhelming number of senior staff members chose Clark. (p. 28)

The selection by the senior staff to work in Clark was noted due to the fact that, at the time, Clark's salary guides were higher than the other constituent districts of the regional, therefore, most of the senior staff elected to work in Clark. The Township of Clark, like Garwood, did not vote for deregionalization.

Five of the six superintendents and respective designees did perceive that deregionalization improved the delivery of instruction to their secondary students. The
five superintendents further perceived that the curriculum offered by the local school districts was more comprehensive and met the individual needs of their respective students. More local control of the curriculum was also seen as a positive. Respondent F of Garwood disagreed. He indicated during the interview process that the scope and breadth of the curriculum now provided by the local districts that once comprised the Union County regional system, is not as comprehensive as that offered by the regional. By way of example, Respondent F noted that there are no vocational courses offered in the local high schools where the regional had many vocational course offerings. The five other superintendents representing districts that originally comprised the regional system disagreed and indicated that the program presently offered by the local districts meets the needs of the students residing within the local communities. The superintendent of Clark noted the increase of advanced placement courses and the degree of rigor now offered by the high school located in Clark.

During the interview process with the superintendents and designees of the Lower Camden County Regional, it was perceived there was dissatisfaction in the delivery of curriculum on the part of the constituent districts that
comprised the Lower Camden County Regional District. This was particularly evident when the superintendents and designees of the constituent districts were discussing the middle school program offered by the regional. The superintendents and designees interviewed expressed their concern with regard to large class sizes, transportation issues, concerns over curriculum articulation, and program delivery, particularly at the middle school level. With deregionalization, Pine Hill, Lindenwold, and Winslow became K-12 school districts; Clementon, Berlin Township, and Waterford returned their seventh and eighth grades to their respective local district, thus providing continuity of program, K-8. Cheshirehurst continued its relationship with Winslow Township. The cost for transportation was reduced for the middle school students as they remained within their respective local communities. The delivery of curriculum was considered to be more comprehensive at the local level and community involvement in the K-8 program was enhanced.

Two communities within the Camden County Regional District did not vote for deregionalization. Waterford Township, due to regionalization, was required to enter into an agreement with another school district located in Atlantic County. Cheshirehurst continued its sending
receiving relationship with Winslow Township for Grades 7 through 12. Respondent C of Chesilhurst noted that
deregionalization accomplished little and has made the
benefit of economy of scale moot.

In summary, the perceptions of the superintendents and
their designees relative to regionalization and
deregionalization align with some of the findings found in
the literature and noted in chapter 2 of this study. Of
note was the identification of financial issues, as
perceived by the superintendents and their designees, as a
primary factor to consider in a district's regionalization
and deregionalization efforts. This is supported by the New
Jersey's Department of Education's Comprehensive Plan for
Educational Improvement and Financing (1996), the New
Jersey Regionalization Advisory Panel's report of (1997),
the Quality Education Commission's Report of (1991) and the
Commission of Business Efficiency of the Public Schools in
its report titled, Finding Opportunities for Improvement:
Ideas on Regionalization and Shared Services (1995). The
aforementioned reports also addressed the issue of
curriculum and the delivery of instruction, K-12 and
recommended a K-12 organizational pattern for New Jersey's
public schools. Curriculum and instruction was also
perceived by the superintendents and designees as a primary
factor in both regionalization and deregionalization efforts.

With regard to financial and curriculum implications relative to regionalization, the results of studies conducted in other states are mixed. By way of example, Groen and Murray (2004), in their report regarding Arizona's plans to consolidate school districts as a means of reducing administrative costs, referenced a Syracuse University meta-analysis, which analyzed 30 years of research on the subject of school district consolidation efforts and noted that diseconomies of scale begin to occur when districts grow larger than 6,000 students. A further recommendation included in this study suggested that school districts consider regionalization on a case-by-case basis rather than imposed regionalization.

Sher and Schaller's (1986) research noted that there was no solid foundation for the belief that the elimination of school districts through the process of regionalization would improve the delivery of education, enhance cost effectiveness, or promote greater quality. It also noted that district regionalization efforts should remain voluntary.

Duncombe and others' (1994) research, regarding New York's consolidation of school districts, supported
regionalization for cost effectiveness and shared services. McMahon's (1986) research surveyed Michigan's superintendents with recommendations that included financial incentives to encourage regionalization, K-12 organizational plans for the delivery of instruction, and the need to garner support from various groups within the respective districts when considering regionalization.

Research question 2. Does a district consolidation/dissolution contribute to a diverse curriculum?

Question 2 relates to the primary and secondary reasons school districts considered regionalization or deregionalization. With regard to curriculum issues and regionalization, the superintendents involved in regionalization efforts indicated that curriculum was one of four primary factors leading to their respective district's regionalization efforts, receiving a frequency response of 22.2%. However, curriculum issues were cited most frequently as a secondary reason as well for regionalization garnering a frequency response of 40%. When the primary and secondary reasons were combined, as noted in Table 7, chapter 4 of this study, curriculum issues received a frequency response of 31.5%. This represents the highest frequency response of the
superintendents and designees.

In terms of deregionalization efforts, eight of the superintendents involved in deregionalization, or 61.5% of the respondents, listed curriculum as a primary reason for their respective school district's deregionalization efforts. Five superintendents and their respective designees, or 38.4% of the respondents, noted curriculum issues as a factor in their district's deregionalization efforts. When the primary and secondary reasons were combined as noted in Table 11, curriculum issues garnered a frequency response of 14.9%. This represents the second highest frequency response listed on Table 11 located in chapter 4 of this study.

The review of the literature regarding school district consolidation efforts appears to indicate that curriculum was not considered the primary reason for districts to consolidate. In Beauchea's (1993) national study on school district consolidation, she noted that only 3 of the 15 superintendents interviewed, or 20% of the respondents who served in districts having successful regionalizations, perceived curriculum enhancements as a reason for consolidation.

The literature supports Beauchea's (1993) study by noting that cost effectiveness is the primary reason for
consolidation efforts. In New Jersey, there are a plethora of studies indicating the need for school district consolidation as a means of reducing the costs of public education. In most instances, starting with the Report of the State Committee to Study the Next Steps of Regionalization and Consolidation in the School Districts of New Jersey (NJDOE, 1969), followed by The Organization of Educational Services and Local School Districts in New Jersey (NJDOE, 1980), the Quality Education Commission's Report (1991), the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools report titled, Finding Opportunities for Improvement: Ideas on Regionalization and Shared Services (1995) and the Comprehensive Plan for Educational Improvement and Financing (NJDOE, 1995a), all appear to focus on financial considerations with curriculum enhancements taking a secondary role in the regionalization process.

In terms of related literature and its applicability to deregionalization of New Jersey's regional school districts, there is little to reference relative to the delivery of instruction. This is probably due to the fact that deregionalization in New Jersey is a rather new concept with only two districts experiencing deregionalization. However, there is a body of research
that notes the advantages of small school communities versus large schools. Lashway (1998-99) provided a compendium of such studies that evidence strong support for small schools as reported in the Clearinghouse of Educational Policy and Management, College of Management, University of Oregon.

Research question 3. What happens to the cost effectiveness in a newly formed regional district or in the dissolution of a regional in the areas of staff and administration?

The response to this question is found in the New Jersey State Statutes. Specifically, 18A: 13-49 states:

All principals, teachers, and employees in the employ of any dissolving local district shall be transferred to and continue in their respective employments in the employ of the regional district and their rights to tenure, pension, and accumulative leave of absence accorded under the laws of the state shall not be affected by their transfer to the employ of the regional district. (N.J.S.A. 18A:13-49)

In instances of deregionalization as in the case of Union County Regional High School District and the Lower Camden County Regional deregionalizations, 18A: 13-64 states:
All employees of the regional district shall continue in their respective positions in the withdrawing district, or in each of the constituent districts in the event of a dissolution and all of their rights of tenure, seniority, pension, leave of absence and other similar benefits shall be 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 a withdrawal, any tenured employee in a school located in the withdrawing district who desires to remain in the employ of the regional district, and whose seniority under existing tenure laws so permits, may apply for and shall be granted a transfer to a position with the regional district for which he is certified which is vacant, held by a tenured employee with less seniority or by an employee without tenure; applications for such transfers shall be made within 45 days of the date of the special school election at which the withdrawal was approved. (N.J.S.A. 18A: 13-64)
With the aforementioned protections listed in code, any staff savings that would occur with regionalization or deregionalization must be noted on a case-by-case basis and cannot be generalized. By way of example, in Clark Township, one of the constituent districts in the Union County Regional High School District, staffing costs increased due to the fact that many of the senior staff members of the Union County Regional High School District selected Clark as their district of choice. Kenilworth, another constituent district of the Union County Regional High School District, ultimately received the newly tenured staff from the regional therefore staff costs were not as expensive. However, the legal challenges due to the dissolution of both the Union County Regional and the Lower County Regional were extensive and in the case of the Lower County Regional, not complete. Some of the litigation was due to staffing issues.

Research question 4. At what point in the dissolution process will economies of scale become moot?

In terms of determining when the issue of economies of scale will be moot, it is probably as varied as the number of school districts and the per pupil expenditure within the 600 plus school districts located within New Jersey. Petracco (1992) pointed out that disparate property wealth
of communities considering regionalization may be a primary disincentive for communities to commit to regionalization. The issue of property wealth and the impact on the tax rate of a community with regard to regionalization was supported by Lepore (2004), who noted in a position paper for the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, that although select school districts that completed consolidation feasibility studies can determine a cost savings in the consolidation, it does not always indicate a savings for all the participant districts. This is manifest in the following few examples:

The West Morris Regional District and the constituent districts that send students to the regional system have completed multiple feasibility studies and all of the studies indicate that a minimum of one community would be required to increase taxes to support the consolidation.

Barrington and Haddon Heights feasibility study indicated that the community of Haddon Heights would be faced with an 11-cent increase in taxes, and Barrington would evidence a 3% decrease in the tax rate.

Northern Valley Consortium consisting of the constituent districts of Closter, Demarest, Harrington Park, Haworth, Northvale, Norwood, Old Tappan, and Northern Valley Regional High School Districts additionally
considered consolidation. The resulting study indicated the tax rate would increase in Closter, Demarest, Harrington Park, Norwood, and Old Tappan and decrease in the communities of Haworth and Northvale. The total costs, according to Lepore (2004), would be $1,973,666 higher in the K-12 regional than under the existing regional. Additional examples are located in chapter 2, which is a review of the related literature.

Further, the New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization (1999) noted that

The disproportionate distribution of costs among constituent municipalities in regionalized districts is a major disincentive to regionalization. However, any formula change designed to bring parity in the costs per pupil of the constituent municipalities will result in winners and losers. (p. i)

In terms of deregionalization, there is very little research relative to the impact of economies of scale primarily due to the fact that there are only two New Jersey School districts involved in deregionalization. As with regionalization, some of the constituent districts within the regional indicated cost savings. This can be documented by the New Jersey State Legislature Assembly
Task Force on School District Regionalization (1995) which noted, that at the time of the deregionalization, Mountainside was paying a per pupil expenditure of $20,000 as a constituent member of the Union County Regional High School System. Garwood, also a member district of the regional, was paying a per pupil expenditure of $8,600. The disparity was due to the fact that costs were allocated on the basis of equalized property valuations.

However, other costs must be considered when discussing economies of scale. Construction and facility costs designed to maintain school buildings cannot take advantage of economies of scale and the legal fees involved in the deregionalization, to date, have not been resolved in the lower Camden County Regional, particularly with regard to the liquid assets of the regional.

There is additional research relative to economies of scale and diseconomies of scale that has emanated from states other than New Jersey. This includes the Boex and Vasquez (1998) study of Georgia’s efforts to consolidate districts. In that study, it was noted that the potential for cost savings was minimal except when consolidating an independent school district with a county-based school district. The result of a consolidation involving both an
independent school district and county-based school
district was approximately a $300 saving per student.

Duncombe and others (1994) noted that economies of
scale were noted in the consolidation of New York's public
schools when the district's enrollment fell below 500
students. Louisiana Department of Education's study (2003)
noted that expenditures per student generally rise when a
district's enrollment falls under 750 students. The same
study indicated that when student enrollment reaches 1000
or more, costs per pupil remained constant.

By contrast, Groen and Murray (2004), in their study
relative to Arizona's plans to consolidate school districts
as a means of reducing administrative costs, referenced a
Syracuse University meta-analysis, that analyzed 30 years
of research on the topic of school district consolidation.
They concluded that diseconomies of scale begin to emerge
when districts grow larger than 6,000 students.

Diseconomies of scale become sizable when school districts
are charged with servicing populations of 15,000.

Research question 5. Does the issue of "home rule,"
when discussing board representation, have a major impact
on consolidation efforts?

This researcher was surprised at the responses of the
17 superintendents/designees relative to the question of
board representation. With regard to both regionalization and deregionalization and their applicability to board representation, all noted that the formula for board representation was listed in state statutes as noted in 18A: 38-8.1 et seq. The statutes provide that each sending district will be entitled to a seat on the receiving district’s board according to the percentages of its pupils attending the receiving districts’ schools. The student formula is as follows:

Less than 10% of the students attending a regional, no representation on the board of education.

10% or more of the students enrolled in a sending receiving relationship, one representative on the board of education.

Two or more sending districts that collectively have at least 15% of their students attending shall have two members. (N.J.S.A. 18A: 38-8.1)

By way of example, Mountainside, in 2004, sent 254 students to the Berkeley Heights School District in Grades 9-12. The number was verified by the State Department of Education via the Union County Superintendent’s Office. Mountainside was entitled to one seat on the Berkeley Heights Board of Education.
The perceptions of the superintendents and designees regarding local control is supported in the literature as documented by the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials Report (1997), the Assembly Task Force Report chaired by Assemblyman Joseph Malone (New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization, 1999), and the Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996) which noted that New Jersey has a legacy of strong local control and home rule heritage of its public schools. Support for local control and its applicability to regionalization and deregionalization efforts outside the state of New Jersey is additionally referenced by Boex and Vasquez (1998), Woodward (1986b), Ley (1994), and Adams (1994). All of the listed studies are located in chapter 2 of this study.

Research question 6. Can it be determined if there is any correlation between factors, that when present, may successfully predict the outcome of the consolation process? Can it be determined if there is any correlation between factors that may successfully predict the outcomes of the deregionalization process?

As noted in Beauchea's study (1993), "Any district with a possible reorganization will undergo many stressful changes in the process. One way to alleviate some of the
stress would be to predict, as accurately as possible, the overall outcome of the consolidation or deregionalization process" (p.102). One of the intents of the suggested regionalization or deregionalization feasibility study is to provide data that would assist districts in determining the validity of moving forward with regionalization or deregionalization efforts. However, specific factors or combinations of factors appear to be present during successful regionalization and deregionalization attempts. The four superintendents or designees of the districts involved in regionalization indicated that of the 16 primary reasons listed in the database in Table 4, only four factors were selected by superintendents/designees. Each of the four individuals selected the same primary reasons for their respective district's regionalization attempts namely financial, facilities, curriculum, and student enrollment. When reviewing the secondary reasons for successful regionalization efforts listed in the database on Table 4, three of the secondary reasons listed in Table 6 were identical to the primary reasons listed for regionalization. These include: financial, facilities, and curriculum. Although speculation is far from scientific, one could speculate that the superintendents and designees involved in this study perceive to be of the belief that
successful consolidation may be more attainable if the specific factors listed in Tables 5 and 6 namely financial, facilities, and curriculum are evident.

A review of the information presented in Table 9 located in chapter 4 of this study, noted that of the 13 superintendents and their designees involved in successful efforts to deregionalize, eight of the superintendents and their designees, or 61.5%, listed curriculum as the primary reason for deregionalization efforts. Seven of the thirteen listed both financial considerations and local control as primary reasons for deregionalization. Secondary reasons for successful deregionalization as perceived by the superintendents indicated that 53.8%, or 7 out of the 13 superintendents or their designees, listed financial concerns as a secondary reason for deregionalization. Six superintendents and their designees, or 46.1% of the respondents, listed socioeconomic as a factor, and five superintendents and their designees, or 38.4% of the respondents, perceived that curriculum issues were a factor in deregionalization.

In the instances of successful regionalization efforts, it was perceived that specific factors, when present, appear to have an influence on the success of deregionalization. Curriculum enhancements and financial
considerations were noted as both primary and secondary 
reasons for successful deregionalization. Other reasons 
included socioeconomics and local control.

As noted when discussing regionalization, the response 
to this question is somewhat speculative given the size of 
the sample of New Jersey public school districts that have 
regionalized or deregionalized during the years 1993 
through 2003. However, it does appear that specific 
factors, when present in both successful regionalizations 
and deregionalizations, as perceived by superintendents and 
their designees, may have influenced the voters responsible 
for the success or failure of regionalization or 
deregionalization efforts within their respective 
communities. With regard to regionalization efforts, the 
factors of curriculum, financial considerations, and 
facilities were perceived by the respondents to play a 
primary role. The superintendents and designees interviewed 
relative to their district's deregionalization efforts 
focused on financial reasons, socioeconomics, and 
curriculum. The literature supporting or in conflict with 
the superintendents' and designees' perceptions with regard 
to regionalization and deregionalization was presented in 
response to the research questions 1 through 6 listed in 
chapter 5 of this study.
Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested in three specific domains: practice, policy, and future research.

Practice. New Jersey's current organizational structure of its public schools requires review. Many reports such as that authored by the Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996), the New Jersey Regionalization Advisory Panel (1998), and the New Jersey State Legislature Assembly Task Force on School District Regionalization (1999) have made recommendations designed to improve the present and future organizational patterns of New Jersey's public school districts while concomitantly addressing the issue of regionalization or deregionalization. To date, the recommendations listed in the aforementioned reports and studies express support of school district consolidation; however, current practice does not embrace the recommendations listed in the aforementioned reports. Given New Jersey's financial problems, the cost of public school education, the need to educate all students in accord with the 'thorough and efficient' clause noted in the New Jersey Constitution, the following recommendations are noted with recommendations
one and two listed in the report promulgated by the Public Affairs Research Institute of New Jersey (1996).

1. Provide financial assistance to those school districts interested in completing regionalization studies in accord with state statutes. Of particular note are the districts that embrace the following organizational structures: K-6 and K-8 school districts with less than 300 students, limited purpose regional school districts, districts totally surrounded by another district, and districts involved in sending-receiving relationships.

2. Eliminate all non-operating public school districts. This topic was additionally discussed by former Governor James McGreevey in his state of the state address of 2004.

3. The current state funding formula (CEIFA) be modified to accommodate school districts that have taken the issue of regionalization to their voters and have received approval to consolidate. Recommendations as noted by Sciarillo (2006) include the creation of additional aid to prevent losses when districts merge, debt service aid, and financial
assistance for anticipated regionalization start-up costs.

4. Research regionalization efforts in other states to determine strategies designed to improve efforts in New Jersey. Of particular note are the successful efforts of Pennsylvania, Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska.

5. Research the feasibility of implementing a countywide educational system similar to that implemented in Maryland as a means of regionalizing New Jersey's public schools while concomitantly addressing the issue of funding and program equity for students attending public schools throughout New Jersey.

Policy. In terms of policy, the New Jersey Department of Education has no policy that formally addresses the issue of regionalization of New Jersey's 600 plus public schools districts. Instead, New Jersey has a plethora of position papers, reports, and recommendations that advocate the development of a formal policy to address the issue of regionalization. As documentation relative to the lack of such a policy and the recommendation to develop a policy required to address the needs of the 610 plus public school districts here in New Jersey, The Public Affairs Research
Institute of New Jersey (1996) recommended the following:
"The legislature should establish a policy of promoting school district regionalisation by providing incentive funding to encourage potential district consolidation" (p.5). Instead, New Jersey's current funding formula impedes regionalisation by its disproportionate dependence on local property taxes to fund education. Such a policy, in concert with financial incentives to address regionalisation, would encourage many districts to consider regionalisation as a means of taking advantage of economies of scale in their efforts to provide students with a thorough and efficient education as required in the New Jersey Constitution.

In addition to the need for a state policy that addresses the need for regionalization and deregionalization issues, local districts cannot abdicate their responsibility in the completion of comprehensive and accurate feasibility studies necessary for boards of education to make accurate decisions relative to the regionalization or deregionalization of their respective districts. As noted during the interview process with superintendents and designees from school districts that once comprised the Lower Camden County Regional District, it was discussed by a few respondents that they questioned
the accuracy of the financials provided by the consultants. Another superintendent indicated that in retrospect, perhaps deregionalization of the middle school grades would have been more successful, and Grades 9 - 12 should have remained within the Lower Camden County Regional. Also, Sciarillo (2006) noted in his summary of findings that perhaps "feasibility studies may be outcome driven by the parties commissioning the studies" (p. 232) and therefore not as fact driven or impartial as necessary for boards of education to make accurate decisions.

Further study. The following topics are recommended for further study in the areas of regionalization and deregionalization:

1. Survey the New Jersey's superintendents and respective board of education members throughout the state relative to their perceptions regarding the need for a uniform state policy on both regionalization and deregionalization.

2. Expand the existing regionalization study nationwide to determine whether there are correlations between variables that may successfully predict the outcome of regionalization or deregionalization efforts.

3. Study the feasibility of consolidating all of New
Jersey's 600 plus districts into county school districts, as evidenced by the State of Maryland, as a means of delivering educational services to students in a cost effective manner.

4. Survey non-operating districts as well as districts with one school building to determine those factors impeding regionalization efforts.

5. Study the feasibility of providing meaningful financial incentives for school districts considering regionalization.

6. Study the impact of race and socioeconomic on New Jersey's regionalization efforts.

7. Survey both board of education members as well as the superintendents from districts that have been involved in regionalization and deregionalization to determine what factors inhibit or promote district consolidation or dissolution.

8. Study the possibility of the New Jersey Department of Education developing a state policy relative to both regionalization and deregionalization.

9. Update A Plan for School District Consolidation in New Jersey as written by Reock (1995b) to include current data.
10. Study the current practices in place in New Jersey for deregionalization and make recommendations for improvement.
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Appendix A

Sample Districts
1. Berkeley Heights
2. Berlin Township
3. Chesilhurst
4. Clark
5. Clementon
6. Garwood
7. Great Meadows Regional
8. Hasbrouck Heights
9. Kenilworth
10. Lindenwold
11. Mountainside
12. Pine Hill
13. Somerset Hills Regional
14. Springfield
15. Waterford
16. Winslow
17. Wood-Ridge
Appendix B

Interview Questions
1. What is the name of the district?

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

3. What is today's date?

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education)?

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

13. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

14. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?
Appendix C

Interview Data
Berkeley Heights

1. What is the name of the district?

The district was, at the time, the Union County Regional High School District. The present district that I serve is the Berkeley Heights School District.

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent A

3. What is today's date?

April 22, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

The vote to dissolve occurred in 1996. The actual resolution occurred on July 1, 1997.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Six towns were involved in the dissolution. They included Berkeley Heights, Mountainside, Springfield, Kenilworth, Clark and Garwood. Mountainside sent their students to the high school in Berkeley Heights and the district continues to do so after the dissolution. Garwood presently sends their students to Clark, a relationship that was previously established when the regional existed.

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/ dissolution?

The primary reasons were both financial and educational. In terms of financial, there were inequities between the communities in funding (per pupil expenditures). By way of example, Berkeley Heights' per pupil expenditure was approximately $14,580, Mountainside was approximately $21,000 and Garwood may have been half that amount. Presently, the Berkeley Heights expenditure is approximately $11,000.
Educationally, certain communities supported the regional budget. Others did not. Therefore, it was difficult to provide the education desired by select communities as the depth of the curriculum offering was compromised.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

Financial and educational issues were the reasons. Perhaps a secondary reason was the desire by some of the communities to provide greater curriculum offerings and have the latitude to do that within their own school district.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

Not really.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

The regional initiated two very comprehensive studies. One was a financial analysis and the other was an educational analysis. Experienced and respected consultants did both of these studies.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

As stated previously, there was a financial savings to the Berkeley Heights School District as discussed in previous questions. Additionally, the community had the opportunity to add additional courses at the high school level in accord with the educational needs of the Berkeley Heights community. That was not always possible in the regional district as the regional’s policy required the same curriculum be offered in all schools and the expectations of the people in the six communities that comprised the regional were not always consistent. In essence, the benefits included a lower tax rate and greater breadth of curriculum offerings.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each
constituent community represented on the board of education?)

Not really, as they are dictated by the State. I can share the information that we received from the NJ Department of Education. Basically, correspondence indicates that Mountainside, which sends 254 students to the Berkeley Heights School District for grades 9 through 12, is entitled to one representative on the Berkeley Heights School Board. The district has an eight-member board of education. One of those members represents Mountainside.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

The values and the expectations of the respective communities involved in the regional district were somewhat different and that may reflect the socioeconomic of the respective community.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

In terms of Berkeley Heights, the dissolution has been quite positive. The community has a lower tax rate and a current and comprehensive program of instruction. You may wish to talk to representatives of the other districts.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

There were issues that were not anticipated at the time the dissolution took place. Specifically, the amount of litigation and the fees involved in the litigation were not anticipated. The stress placed on personnel at all levels was enormous.
Berlin Township

1. What is the name of the district?

Berlin Township

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent B

3. What is today's date?

May 26, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

1998

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Berlin Township, Waterford, Winslow, Chesilhurst, Clementon, Lindenwold, Pine Hill,

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

Initially, the board and community thought the districts could save money so a major consideration was financial. There was a concern that our seventh and eighth graders going to the regional were not receiving a thorough and efficient education. The town wanted its seventh and eighth grades back in the township. Also, local control, at least through grade 8, was additionally a consideration.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

I don't know if it was secondary, but the community was not pleased, in general, with the program provided to the seventh and eighth graders and desired to return students, in those grades, to the community so that the students would have the benefit of a fully articulated K-8 program. This has occurred as planned. Also, the high school
students attend, at present, Overbrook High School on a tuition basis.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

It seems very minor but sometimes people's egos get in the way. Berlin Township is a CD district. There were communities in the regional with lower and high socioeconomic status. So there was an attitude by some that one town's SES or, perhaps, culture was better, or higher than others. That served as a minor reason.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

A consultant assisted, as well as receiving legal advice.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

In terms of benefits, Berlin Township was able to keep its seventh and eighth grade students in district and provide significant upgrades to the curriculum. These upgrades included greater curriculum articulation throughout the district, curriculum review and revision utilizing the Heidisch-wats Jacobs curriculum mapping method, middle school teaming, and advisory program. Also, there have been extensive meaningful staff development initiatives and lesson plans have been replaced by unit designs.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

Local control was often articulated and we had very little representation on the board. We now have a nine-member board of education.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

I believe there were socioeconomic issues present. One got the impression that select districts thought they had
greater status than others. DEPs were not all the same. Here in Berlin Township we were somewhat in the middle with the DEP of CD.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

Yes. There were many concerns not articulated prior to the dissolution. The district is currently involved in ongoing litigation with the communities in the regional that took over high schools originally part of the regional district and located within their boundaries. The courts are trying to determine the value of the high schools so that those districts that did not have a high school within their community's boundaries could begin to receive financial compensation from the other communities of the regional. Also, the legal fees generated by the lawsuit have been significant.

We have had to lay off instructional staff and cut the time we have aides working because we cannot afford health benefits for instructional aides. Select programs have suffered. By way of example, our world language program has been reduced by one teacher and now requires some instruction by video instead of by a teacher.

Tuition costs for our high school students continue to escalate, putting additional financial strain on the district. Our district was one of the only districts in the state, if not the only district, that had no teachers union. Teacher salaries were not consistent. This caused much difficulty with the staff coming from the regional to this district. As a matter of fact, we just negotiated our first union contract and there were some hard feelings regarding placement on guides and salary. We are now a unionized district with all the attendant problems or perks of a union.

The selection of staff by the constituent districts of the regional additionally was somewhat stressful. It could be compared to a football draft.

In terms of positives, one would need to focus on the delivery of instruction K-8, the fact that our curriculum, particularly at the middle grades, is expanded and comprehensive. Also, bringing our middle school students
back to the district to articulate curriculum delivery is a great positive.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

I think there may have been hidden dangers not considered by the voters when the dissolution was voted upon.

First, financial concerns probably were not articulated as comprehensively as possible. People saw the laying off of administrators as a potential cost savings. Unfortunately, there was minimal understanding of other cost potentials such as tuition charges and the impact of future funding issues such as $1701.

No one anticipated the legal costs associated with the determination of the value of fixed assets, buildings, equipment, etc.

Also, at this time we cannot evaluate pupil performance accurately as the dissolution was only accomplished a few years ago. A longitudinal study would need to determine the value of the dissolution in terms of student performance in all districts that had once been part of the regional. Time will tell.
Chesilhurst School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Chesilhurst

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent C

3. What is today’s date?

June 20, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

1998

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Berlin, Chesilhurst, Clementon, Lindenwold, Pine Hills, Waterford and Winslow.

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

From my point of view, the constituent districts were of the opinion Winslow was too large and controlled the regional and the constituent districts of the regional. Chesilhurst did not vote for the dissolution and was not affected by the dissolution as our students continue to go to Winslow on a tuition basis.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

I do not think the dissolution was a positive action for the Lower Camden Regional so that is difficult to answer. I guess some of the districts wished to educate their seventh and eighth grade students locally. As a matter of fact, we are currently considering a feasibility study regarding that possibility here in Chesilhurst. The feasibility study will only involve seventh and eighth grades not our
high school students. They will continue to attend Winslow's high school.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

Ability to locally educate students particularly in grades seven and eight.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

The regional completed the required feasibility study under the direction of the county superintendent. It was my opinion that the study was not conclusive and had many faults, particularly involving cost's.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

I do not see any benefits. Some districts may think that educating their seventh and eighth graders locally is a benefit. For Chesilhurst this was not a benefit because all our students remained at Winslow. That would be students in grades seven through twelve. Why do I think there is no benefit is because we continued to maintain the same relationship we had with Winslow prior to the dissolution and our tuition costs are greater than what we paid when the Lower Camden County Regional was in existence.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

Not really on the part of Chesilhurst. The district is a very small district. By law, our students need to represent 10% of the enrollment to have a seat on the board. Presently, our students do not comprise 10% so we do not have a seat on the Winslow Board of Education.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?
I don't think so. We are the poorest district in the regional and that issue never was brought up.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

For Chesilhurst, there were negative consequences. The tuition rates to send our students to Winslow have increased since the dissolution and this has caused a hardship for an already poor district. Also, the board is presently discussing the possibility of considering a feasibility study for returning the seventh and eighth graders to the district. If that were to occur, the additional costs to the taxpayer would be significant.

In terms of program, our students stayed in Winslow, the largest district within the regional, so there are no major programmatic concerns. They simply are being offered what is being offered at Winslow. The only changes would be curriculum updates.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

I believe the dissolution was a mistake. With the dissolution, educational costs escalated, as the districts can no longer take advantage of "economics of scale".

Also, if there were to be any dissolution, I think it should have been confined to the seventh and eighth grades and the regional high schools should have remained intact.

When regionalizing, one needs all the districts involved in the study to agree. I believe that same standard should be applied to a dissolution - all constituents should be required to agree.
Clark School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Clark

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent D

3. What is today's date?

April 10, 2006

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

1997

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Clark, Kenilworth, Mountainside, Berkeley Heights, Garwood, and Springfield.

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

Program - Some people in the constituent districts perceived that the program was unequal in the towns. Although courses were the same, there was concern over the inequality of the delivery of instruction. Example of this could be teaching staff in one school considered to be better than in another high school in the regional. There was great dissatisfaction with the administration of the regional particularly with the tenured superintendent.

Financial - The per pupil cost in the regional was one of the highest in the state. Also, although adhering to state funding formulas, the various constituent districts did pay different per pupil expenditures. There was also the sense that homegrown control or local control was important and Kenilworth wanted its own high school to reopen.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?
Cultural issues were evident. Example – Kenilworth wanted their high school to be reopened. There was a strong athletic interest in Kenilworth and other communities had different educational expectations.

Funding formula favored specific towns.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?
   Nothing appeared to be minor.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?
   Two studies were implemented. One was a financial study conducted by Deloitte & Touche. There was also an educational feasibility study conducted.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?
    Local districts were more thoroughly involved in curriculum and programmatic issues. Example: in Clark, we were able to increase the number of honor and AP courses offered to students. Garwood continues to send their students to Clark on a tuition basis. The financial impact on Clark was significant. First, the building in Clark needed much repair. The costs of the repair were extremely high. The funding formula was significantly changed causing additional costs to the districts. Also, as a result of the dissolution of the regional, the staff was able to select the high school in which they wished to work. Since the Clark guides were the highest, Clark inherited the most senior staff and, therefore, the most expensive staff. Another cost for the community.

    The association voted in the AFT in the next election – NJEA was no longer the bargaining unit. There was a change in the number of classes taught.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)
Not really. All members of the board represented Clark except for one representative who represents the sending district of Garwood. This ratio adheres to state statute.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

Yes, the socioeconomic of the constituent districts were somewhat different - different culture, different values. The differences played a strong role in the dissolution. Also, Kenilworth may have been perceived as having lower socioeconomics than say Berkeley Heights. The regional had recently closed David Brearley High School located in Kenilworth. The community was very upset. They wanted their high school back. The dissolution gave Kenilworth its high school back to the community. It gave all communities an opportunity to offer a program of instruction that met the needs of their community.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

Positives have been discussed. They include local opportunities to offer curriculum K-12, thus, greater articulation across grades, high school offered greater rigor in Clark, great local involvement.

A negative was that much of the senior staff selected to work in Clark, thus, greater cost. Also, the need to greatly improve the high school facility and the concomitant costs were extensive.

No one anticipated the court costs or the court’s decision that the two districts not having a high school in their community, namely Garwood and Mountainside, would be paid a settlement for 5 years from the districts in which the regional high schools were located.

There was union or association unrest causing a vote to oust the NJEA in Clark.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?
Yes! The court case was interesting and you may wish to include it in your study. I would also like to share with you my testimony. Again, it may be relevant to your study.
Clementon School district

1. What is the name of the district?

Clementon

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent E

3. What is today's date?

June 17, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

The vote was in 1999.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Clementon, Chesilhurst, Lindenwold, Pine Hills, Waterford, Winslow

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

From the point of view of Clementon, it was economic. It was thought we could run a better seventh and eighth grade program for less cost. Also, home rule was another consideration. Again, it was thought that at the regional the seventh and eighth grades were overcrowded and that we, locally, could do a better job in the delivery of curriculum within our own community and within a smaller setting.

Clementon voted for the dissolution thinking there would be a saving to the taxpayer and that we would be able to offer a better program to our seventh and eighth graders here in Clementon.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/derregionalize?
Clementon is a small town that has a close relationship with all stakeholders. There is great camaraderie in the community. The district likes the close relationship, wanted to offer small classes to its seventh and eighth grade students within its own community. The town is small consisting of approximately 5000 people. Schools are in walking district and they provide a safe environment for our students.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?
Not really.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?
All the appropriate feasibility studies were completed. However, both the population projections and cost projections were not accurate.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?
Well, we were able to provide smaller class sizes and specialized services such as resource room within our own town. We had to add a classroom wing and gymnasium for our seventh and eighth grade programs so our facilities were expanded. We also tried to offer some sports programs in district but that is hard with a small population of students. The outcome was home rule for the PK-8 program; however, our students attend Overbrook High School, which is not in the community.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)
Not really. It was more the desire for home rule.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?
Not any articulated. The communities involved in the regional have lower DFUs. Three are CD districts. However, to my knowledge there was no study regarding the racial impact of the dissolution or a statistical study that involved race.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

Negatives would include the continuing litigation on the combined assets of the regional and the disbursements of the assets, the required construction to accommodate the seventh and eighth grades, the send/receiving relationship that included sending students out of county to Atlantic County and the construction and other associated costs to the taxpayers. This, coupled with laws like S1791, make it very difficult to offer a viable program in smaller school districts. One begins to do more with less. Some of the senior teachers appeared to be detached from the community.

We were able to offer more with regard to the seventh and eighth grade program, however, that is becoming more challenging as years go by simply because of the funding formula and other laws. There is community involvement and support for its schools and that is a positive.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

Yes, in retrospect I think the regional should have remained in place as a 9-12 regional. There would have been money to support high school initiatives. Additionally, there would have been no need for Waterford to attend Rammonton schools, which are not even located in Camden County.

The sending districts to the regional could have maintained their PK-8 status and provided a program in their own communities for the PK-8 population. That would have been the modification in the referendum I now would suggest.
1. What is the name of the district?

Garwood

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent F

3. What is today’s date?

May 9, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

Dissolved in 1997. The vote was in 1996.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Clark, Garwood, Mountainside, Berkeley Heights, Springfield and Kenilworth

As the superintendent of Garwood, did your students always go to Clark? No. When the regional system was in place, there was one building in Springfield and all six communities went to the one building. And then in the late 1950’s the high school in Clark was built — Arthur Johnson High School and in that school Clark and Garwood were sent to MLJ. In the 70s, the building in Kenilworth was built and then Garwood was sent to Kenilworth—late sixties early seventies. Now, by the way, there is a person in Garwood who knows every detail of the history of the regional system from the day it was formed until the day it was dissolved. She is one of my board members. So if you want to speak to her, her name is Linda Koenig. I’ll give you her phone number — it’s 908-789-0266. So, in the late sixties/early seventies Garwood was sent to Kenilworth and they stayed there until the building closed in Kenilworth. The regional system went from four buildings to three buildings in the late eighties/early nineties. In that school, Kenilworth, really it was Kenilworth and Garwood, the Kenilworth students were sent to Springfield and the Garwood students were sent back to MLJ. And they’ve been
there ever since. So, when the regional system was
dissolved in 1997, the agreement was made for Garwood to
remain at M&J in a send/receive relationship. So you're
paying tuition? Yes, we're paying tuition. A steep
 tuition? No it's reasonable - we're in the eighth of a 10-
year contract which you can have a copy if you want it.

I wasn't sure when they dissolved the district, if the
students were sent to another school. But they've been at
Clark for quite some time.

They've been at Clark since it was originally closed and
then when the system dissolved in 1997 and Kenilworth
reopened. And I know that was a very big disappointment to
the community of Kenilworth when that school was closed.

6. What were the primary reasons for the
regionalization/dissolution?

The catalyst of the whole thing was the community of
Kenilworth wanting to have a high school in their township.

The superintendent of Clark concurs that was the
significant factor. That was the catalyst.

There were other factors that moved it along. In Berkeley
Heights, Governor Livingston felt that they would be able
to maintain their own building and they had no difficulty
dissociating themselves with the other members of the
regional.

Was it a sense of various socioeconomic issues? Yes. And
having been a life-long resident of Springfield, the fear
in the town at that time was that the regionalized system
may shut down Jonathan Dayton and that they would merge
into buildings and the people of Springfield were concerned
that they wouldn't have a high school. One of the scare
tactics that was used to sell the referendum was when
Kenilworth and Springfield joined together - when
Kenilworth shut down and the Kenilworth students were sent
to Springfield - and the communities got together because
Springfield wanted to make sure they maintained a high
school in Kenilworth - wanted their school back, the scare
tactic around Springfield was you better vote to keep your
high school. If you vote to dissolve the system, you're
voting to keep your high school.
As an aside, I warned my neighbors and said if this was to happen, it would have a big effect on our sports program and most likely Jonathan Dayton would lose their football team and they all said it would never happen. Well, sure enough it did.

I spoke to someone who told me that Kenilworth has a great passion for athletics and football, in particular, so if they were to pull out, the numbers of children that would be involved in athletic programs would go down significantly. Well, they established a relationship with Kenilworth for football so any student who wanted to play football who were students at Jonathan Dayton could play on their football team.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

Some of the people that I spoke with thought there was a positive financial impact for certain communities and negative for others. I don't know if that's true. What is your sense of the financial impact here in Garwood - you're paying tuition now, did you get a better break without paying tuition?

Sure. What happened was they set up an arrangement - whatever the amount of money was going to the high school through the regional system, was the amount of money they started to work with as a factor when they were setting up tuition. So if you look at the first three years of the contract there is no increase in the tuition and that first year was based upon what would have been paid in a regional system.

And then incrementally it has gone up. So the people really had a better deal financially within the regional system.

The other reason, Kenilworth wanted their building back. Springfield was afraid they were going to lose their building. Berkeley Heights felt that they were better and Mountainside thought they'd go right in with Berkeley Heights and they would be fine.

Were they with Berkeley Heights the entire time? No, they were in Springfield for a while. They were in Springfield when I was in high school.
So you went to Jonathan Dayton? I’ve been in Springfield all my life. Actually I always remember Jonathan Dayton as having very good programs. Oh, the regional system was a wonderful system. There was an opportunity for students to concentrate in areas where they wanted to be strong, for example, television technology in the ’70s was rather new and if students were interested in doing that, regardless of which of the six communities they lived, they were bused to Berkeley Heights to high school — part of your tax dollar. Kenilworth had a beauty culture program so everybody in the six communities interested would be bused over there. And you wouldn’t have to go to the vocational school.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

What about the curriculum? Would that be considered a minor reason or major factor in the deregionalization? They sold the dissolution to the public saying that they would be able to offer the same courses that they were offering. It turns out they couldn’t, obviously, because they just didn’t have the enrollments that they had before. Now, the enrollment stayed the same at HIJ because Clark and Garwood stayed together and the same at Governor Livingston because Berkeley Heights and Mountainside stayed together. The other two buildings literally split their enrollment because they had everybody going to Springfield.

So Kenilworth and Jonathan Dayton probably lost students and, therefore, maybe the strata within their curriculum. Absolutely, Kenilworth is still, to this day, feeling the effects. Springfield has done pretty good in terms of recovering. It’s not comprehensive like it used to be. It’s more academic now.

When I spoke to Paul, he said Kenilworth is having trouble offering a comprehensive curriculum to all of the students that they are servicing. If you pick up the Cranford Chronicle, which is the local paper that covers Kenilworth, Cranford and Garwood, there are always people going to board meetings to voice their opinion about the curriculum and the course offerings.

When I spoke with Paul and asked him the same questions, he said that what really was a concern he had when Garwood and
his community got together was having enough students to expand the AP and honor program. Without Garwood being there, Clark would have had a problem with enrollment. That’s why I’m saying I don’t know how the other two buildings thought they would be able to function by splitting the enrollment.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

Deloitte & Touche. There was testimony in Trenton - I know my predecessor went to testify in terms of Garwood’s objection to breaking up the system. And that was to the State Board of Education? I think so.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

It’s very difficult because I was very much a proponent of the regional system. I personally received an outstanding education from the system. Having done my research, like you’re doing, I found that there were many benefits to school district consolidation and I just see the major benefit is to offer a comprehensive high school. So, I can’t think of any advantage.

They may have thought that at that time they’d be able to shop around and send their students to the high school of their choice. But the fact of the matter is that we are surrounded with Cranford and Westfield - both districts are full and could not accept us. In fact, recently, I spoke with both of those superintendents to see if there was a possibility of us going closer to home. Neither district can accommodate us. Clark and Kenilworth can - but the truth of the matter is, Clark is the best fit for Garwood.

And the high school in Clark, you don’t have to worry about the population increasing- that there will be a problem at the end of the 10-year contract. You don’t have to worry about them saying we need our high school just for us.

Some people think that when the contract is up in 10 years that you are free to leave. But you are not. It’s just like you’re married to that contract. Right now, we’re negotiating tuition rates. To break away from a send/receive relationship is very difficult now. Winfield broke away from Rahway and now sends to Kenilworth.
Kenilworth wanted them because they needed the enrollment. Kenilworth is also a school of choice. They take many students from Hillside because they need the enrollment. They are doing what they can to attract students. So, in a sense they still don’t have their own high school.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

There is a formula. The state has a send/receive formula. We’re entitled to one seat. So we are their 10th board member. Linda Koenig is the 10th board member.

12.Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

That depends - if you’re asking educators, I think educators have the same expectations for the children whether it’s here or on the top of the hill. If you’re asking members of the community, it depends on the educational level of the parents in that community. I would say that the majority of the parents in Berkeley Heights will value a good college education and in order to get a good college education you need to have a sound high school preparation. If you look at Kenilworth, which was still part of that regional district, you may not have the same number of parents who were college educated and would not value a quality college education, the high school preparation may be different.

How do you feel about Clark’s socioeconomic level? Would you say that Clark and Garwood parents are such that they would want their youngsters to go to college? Yes. I think that Clark is very diverse and you see all kinds. Here we are a CD factor group. It’s improving. Garwood was known to be the blue-collar community of the district. It’s not any longer. Because the train stops here, we have quite a few parents who commute into New York so most of our parents now, although we still have some senior citizens from the blue collar era, but the parents are mostly professionals.
13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

The other thing I would hear from both Springfield and Berkeley Heights was the increase in the number of AP courses. I see that from the opposite light. But what are you doing for the other side of the brain?

So instead of a comprehensive high school, it's an academic high school.

There are no comprehensive high schools left in the district and the regional was a comprehensive high school.

One of the last things Paul did before he left was eliminate shop and home economics courses.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

The only other thing I want to add is you might want to look to see why the people of Garwood are so bitter about this deregionalization. Before I expand on that, let me tell you that Mountainside filed suit against the four districts indicating they did not get the benefits of the real assets of the buildings. They then asked Garwood to join them in the suit. We agreed to join them in the suit with the outcome that when everything was settled that Garwood would get 24% of the settlement and Mountainside would get 76%. It was ruled in our favor so we’ve now received two payments from the other four districts and we will use the money this year to offset the taxes. There was a zero tax increase. So it goes back as property relief. It can’t go back to the district, only as tax relief.

So you had a zero increase and this was the first year of five years to receive the money.

So, in the 6th year, the taxes are going to go way up. That’s why Garwood is so bitter. If you go back into the history of the regional system when it was originally formed, the superintendent here in Garwood became the first superintendent of the regional district. The population of the community at that time was dense even though Garwood is now one of the smallest of the six and Springfield was the
largest because this was an industrial section of the county and the rest were not fully developed. Springfield
was all farms; Berkeley Heights was still all wooded. Clark
was a lot of farms, as well. So much of the regional
population was here. They were talking about building the
high school here in Garwood but they couldn’t obtain the
property from the county. But, the county did give them
the property in Springfield. So, Garwood feels they
started this project, they got it going, they paid the
mortgage, and they were thrown out.

I’m looking at the split in money. 24%/76% I don’t know
how they derived that split.

It was their lawsuit, we weren’t going to do it but they
felt they’d be stronger in numbers and wanted us to join
and then they came back and said they’ll throw us a bone.
Great Meadows School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Great Meadows

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent G

3. What is today's date?

April 14, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

1996

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Independence Township and Liberty Township

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

Both districts were growing. Both had space needs, as a matter of fact, Independence, and this was a school in Independence Township (Central School), we had to begin sending seventh and eighth graders to Hackettstown Middle School because we didn't have room for them here even though we added on in 1988. So, there was an addition in 1988 and then by about 1993 or 1994 we had to start sending our seventh and eighth graders to Hackettstown because of the fact that we didn't have space. Liberty Township was also filling up their schools but they never got to a point where they had to send their seventh and eighth graders out of district. The idea was to build a middle school that would accommodate fifth through eighth grade from both Liberty and Independence and each municipality would keep their K-4 school within the regional district. You know, same superintendent, same business administrator. There would be minimal disruption for the children because they would still stay in their K-4 schools and just come here
for a planned middle school that was built behind this school.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

I think cost savings were probably a factor. It is less expensive to operate one larger district than two small districts, each with a superintendent, each with a business administrator. It facilitated less administrative costs when you combined the two, and the main reason was the program that could be developed having a middle school program rather than the K-8 elementary type program.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

No, we thought the two districts had a lot in common so they shared some common areas like Great Meadows, the post office that serves part of Liberty and part of Independence. Part of Independence is a Hackettstown mailing address and part of Liberty is a Belvedere address. There is a common area, too.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

A consultant was hired. I can't remember offhand the name of the company. But, they did have a consultant that did the study for them. I think people are more apt to trust an outside consulting firm.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

What it was intended. The middle school program was the main benefit plus the space made available in the two elementary schools by moving those middle school kids into another school and the curriculum being the major thing.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)
This is a nine-member school board. Sometimes there are difficulties with the apportionment of those nine members. Were there any difficulties with that? No, it's funny how it broke down because the number of students in Independence is roughly twice the number of students from Liberty. The resident population is roughly twice in Independence what it is in Liberty so the school board composition broke down the same way. So, we have six from Independence and three from Liberty and everything is sort of in that same proportion. And people are ok with it? Yes.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

I don't think that was the case. Independence had a per capita income that was a little higher than Liberty, but not substantial. The two communities are basically the same.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

Well, there are now...I don't think there were at the time. I think it was a pretty easy sell. You've indicated financially it was better, the program was better, and I got the sense you were able to bring your seventh and eighth graders back from Hackettstown so I'd think the community would be happy about that. They definitely were. So to me it does seem like a win-win. That's not the case with everyone. There was even talk of going K-12 but we didn't have enough students and we would have affected Hackettstown in a negative way if we pulled our students out of Hackettstown High School so that was never really seriously considered.

Does Hackettstown take your students (from Independence and Liberty) Do they take anyone else? Yes, one other district, Allamuchy. It's a smaller district. Were they considered in the Independence/Liberty regionalization? Not really, I think they would have probably been invited to participate if they wanted to, at least in the study, but knowing Allamuchy, they probably opted not to. They had no interest in it. That's a more wealthy community that includes the Panther Valley Development. It's a combination of farmland and gated community.
14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

I think it's pertinent that there is talk in Liberty of pulling out and it's a purely political thing. Not coming from any parents. The parents are very satisfied with the school system and the way things are. I think there would be a lot of disappointment if that ever happened. I don't think it would pass with the voters because they would be taking a major step backwards if they pulled out - even forgetting the financial commitment they have to that middle school. It's a 10 million dollar building that was put up. They would be losing out big time so I don't think the deregionalization would occur.

I thank you for your time.
Hasbrouck Heights School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Hasbrouck Heights

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent H

3. What is today’s date?

June 9, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

The district voted not to regionalize with Wood-Ridge.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution effort?

It was Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge.

6. What were the primary reasons for the attempted regionalization/dissolution?

That is simple. To respond to Wood-Ridge’s declining student population, Hasbrouck Heights had an increase in enrollment particularly in its 7-12 high school. Various studies were completed to regionalize the two districts with the intent of using the Wood-Ridge High School as a middle school for students of both Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge and similarly utilizing Hasbrouck Heights High School for both communities.

So the primary reasons include:

- Use of facilities for both communities in grades 7-12.
- Accommodate both declining and increasing student enrollments in the two communities.
- Expansion of curriculum opportunities, particularly for high school. Such expansion included the ability to offer more AP courses as well as differentiating
instruction more within particular disciplines. Also, a greater number of electives could have been added to the secondary program. We also could have expanded co-curricular course offerings.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

Probably maximizing the use of facilities by offering more programs within the curriculum as well as co-curricular offerings.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

Not really. I think what was previously discussed was the focus of the reasons to attempt to regionalize.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

Actually, there were a number of feasibility studies completed that advocated the two districts should regionalize.

10. What do you feel would have been the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

First, the outcome of the referendum was that the two districts would not regionalize. The decision was determined by the Hasbrouck Heights voters who did not vote for deregionalization. Because the district did not regionalize, both communities initially remained at status quo. Subsequently, Hasbrouck Heights built an addition to its facility and now maintains a different organizational pattern that included middle school Grades 6, 7 and 8 instead of one secondary 7-12 pattern.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)
But definitely. Hasbrouck Heights did not wish to share its board membership, although the split on the board probably would have been 5-4 in its favor.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

Well, I think there are individuals who need to think they are better than others, where better means financially more successful, greater status, more education. I think part of that happened here in the attempt to regionalize. One community perceived themselves as the better community and wanted to maintain its local control. However, both communities are quite homogeneous and both are listed as a FG district factor group.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

One of the positives was the implementation of the middle school concept here in Hasbrouck Heights instead of a 7-12 secondary program. Of course, we added to the secondary school so the cost of the addition could be considered a negative.

With the addition of the secondary school we were also able to increase program offerings that are always a benefit.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

Yes. Although regionalization was defeated, the two communities are now involved in quite a few cooperative ventures, both in athletics and academics. We now offer select sports teams comprised of students from both Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge. This permits our students the ability to field a team and play competitively under the aegis of the NJSIAA. Without our ability to combine our student resources, we may not have had enough students in both high schools to field teams in select sports.

We are now exploring the possibility of offering additional courses that include students from both communities as a means of expanding the program we offer here.
All of this would be moot if regionalization had taken place when brought to the voters.
Kenilworth School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Kenilworth Township

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent I

3. What is today's date?

June 2, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

July 1, 1997.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Kenilworth, Clark, Garwood, Mountainside, Springfield, Berkeley Heights

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

In Kenilworth, one of the primary reasons was that of community emotion. By that I mean, the regional school district closed David Brearley High School, the newest high school in the regional and fully air conditioned due to alleged enrollment considerations and bused the Kenilworth students to another high school in the regional system. That was probably a major contributor to the dissolution here in Kenilworth.

Financial was another reason. The average per student cost was $17,000, one of the highest, if not the highest, per pupil expenditure at the time within the state of New Jersey.

Curriculum was also an issue. There was the perception that the students of Kenilworth were perhaps less
educationally motivated than some of the students from the other constituent districts and not interested or capable of taking the more rigorous courses, so they were, either consciously or unconsciously, tracked to less rigorous courses. The dissolution provided an opportunity for the district to have an opportunity to offer a truly articulated K-12 instructional scope and sequence in all areas of curriculum that met the needs of our students. Additionally, we could offer the degree of rigor desired at the high school that would permit our students the opportunity to succeed.

Local control - Having our own school board permits us to make decisions that are specific to the needs of our students. Closing our high school really served as the lightning rod for the dissolution of the regional.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

Perceptions are sometimes considered reality and in Kenilworth there was the perception that our students were not getting their "fair share" of course offering opportunities. The expectations of the high school regional administration were perceived to be not as high for Kenilworth's students as for students from the other sending districts. We were paying for a Mercedes and getting a Ford.

Busing - The idea that our students needed to be bused to a high school in another community when right in Kenilworth we had the newest high school in the regional system was probably another reason to support dissolution.

Socioeconomics - Of the adult population at the time, approximately 80% had college degrees. Many worked in the trade industries. Many first generation Americans, so the emphasis on education, specifically going on to a four-year college, was somewhat different than that of parents of some of the regional's constituent districts.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

All reasons became major, as the dissolution was an emotional issue for all.
9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

The regional did a financial study spearheaded by Deloitte & Touche; educational study chaired by Saul Cooperman's group - Educate Americas. I did additional research on small schools.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

Curriculum - We are able to implement programs and services specific to the needs of our students (PK-12). Our curriculum is more comprehensive and more rigorous.

Local Control - The community takes a greater interest in its high school. We have our own board of education that is very aware of the needs of the community. We no longer bus students to another community. Everyone walks to the neighborhood high school. The only students bused are special education students as needed.

We have developed partnerships with corporations such as Shering Flough who have donated money to our high school program. As an example, prior to reopening the high school, Shering Flough donated $350,000 to update the high school science wing as well as funds to paint the entire high school.

We are now a choice school district for Union County 7-12 grades. This provides the district with approximately $1,000,000 in additional funds to enhance our program in Kenilworth. We additionally receive $500,000 in tuition from Winfield Park in a sending/receiving relationship. We currently offer a pre-school program, full-day kindergarten, expanded AP course offerings and, in general, updated our curriculum offerings throughout our district. Much is due to the infusion of additional resources received from choice tuitions.

Taxes have not significantly increased.

In terms of vocational instruction, we utilize the services of the county vocational school instead of minimally servicing students in district.
Local control was the key to providing all of these services.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

The community wanted its own school board so that local decisions could be made. It was felt that the regional district did not always represent the needs of Kenilworth. Right now we have a 10-member board with one of those members representing Winfield Park.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

From the perception of Kenilworth - yes. We are currently listed as a CD (DPG) although that could change in the near future.

As I stated previously, there was the perception that the needs of the more affluent sending districts took precedence. It may have been simply a false perception but that perception was strong in Kenilworth. We were considered the "blue collar" community with less of our student graduates selecting to go to college after graduation from high school. The perception became stronger with the closing of Brearley High School.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

I think the positives were already discussed - local control, curriculum expansion and rigor, articulation PK-12, selection of staff, additional resources by becoming a choice district. There were some negatives: staffing became an issue. Staff based on seniority of program/discipline had opportunity to select the community in which to work. We instituted a six-period teaching day. Most staff had previously taught less so the senior staff and perhaps some of the better staff went elsewhere. What came to Kenilworth was the less mature, tenured staff.
The building was literally stripped of supplies prior to Kenilworth’s receipt of the high school and that was difficult.

There were issues between the AFT and NJEA. There were problems expanding athletic programs and filling of select assignments in the athletic program such as ticket takers. Who got those assignments became an issue.

The administration needs to grow. We did not wish to be saddled with a very senior administration (example a vice principal at the high school who had been a vice principal for over 20 years) so we did without filling many administrative positions. Now we need to grow and expand our administration.

Much more positive than negative for Kenilworth.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

I can’t think of anything right now. Please feel free to contact me if I can be any additional assistance to you.
Lindenwold School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Lindenwold

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent J

3. What is today’s date?

June 7, 2006

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

Election was on May 12, 1998.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Lindenwold, Pine Hill, Winslow, Waterford, Clementon, Chesilhurst, Berlin Township

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

The overriding reason, by far, was local control. There were additional geographic reasons - students were traveling on buses for what was perceived by some to be too long. There were also issues relating to different interests, different heritages and different educational goals of the communities.

There was also the lack of compatibility in community size. Example: Winslow at one time was a farming community with a small community population. As time evolved, the farms were sold to developers who built housing developments. The population of the community today is over 30,000 certainly large enough to sustain its own school district so the need to belong to the regional became less apparent.

By contrast, Chesilhurst, a very small K-6 district cannot possibly provide comprehensive educational services to their students K-12. The borough does not have a police
department or post office. There is one K-6 school and the superintendent serves as principal.

I actually think that local control was the motivation of the dissolution "at all cost".

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

Probably financial. The dissolution was sold on local control of schools and cost savings. However, in reality, the dissolution was very expensive.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

Local control was paramount to all.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

There were two feasibility studies done in the 1990s. Winslow petitioned to withdraw from the first study. The second or later study involved the Camden County superintendent.

Election was held in all constituent districts on May 12, 1998 - then it took almost three years to distribute the assets.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

Well, the dissolution accomplished the objectives. It provided local control - boards could make all decisions locally, resolved the geographical issues and busing, however, "be careful what you wish for".

In terms of financial impact, there was no saving. The constituent communities were told savings would be $4,300,000 annually. In truth, there was no saving and additional millions were spent in operating costs.

The dissolution affected the programmatic offerings. Curriculum was not as comprehensive, diversity of program and the levels of the courses offered are absent. Example, the regional high school district offered five world
languages. You cannot offer that breadth of program in a high school of 500 students.

In terms of staffing, it was a divorce of biblical proportions that occurred in July 1, 2001, the day of implementation of the new district configuration.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

The regional board was comprised of seven communities – two communities, the largest, got two votes, all others, one vote. No problem with representation.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

Probably, yes, but not verbalized so I really could not tell. I can say that the constituent districts had DFGs of B and C. We did not have any J and J DFGs in the regional, however, there are those that believe they are better than others.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

As noted, the objective of dissolution was attained. I'm not sure it was as positive as intended. There were three years of litigation involving the division of assets, staffing.

There was the need to foster sending and receiving relationships with new districts and tuition costs for sending/receiving relationships.

Need to build schools and the costs of those schools.

The staff is generally reconciled to the dissolution. Many lament the dissolution. Others lost jobs. It just is not the same.
Conclusion, in retrospect, the dissolution was probably a mistake. The communities received fewer programs for more money.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

I think it is interesting that all of the superintendents involved in the dissolution have either retired or are working in other school districts. I think that is an interesting statistic.
Mountainside School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Mountainside

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent K

3. What is today's date?

April 28, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

July 1, 1997

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Berkley Heights, Kenilworth, Clark, Springfield, Garwood, Mountainside

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

For one thing, there were financial reasons. Here, in Mountainside, we were a sending district paying a high tuition rate. The district wanted to send their students to Berkeley Heights as that was perceived to be the community with greater educational expectations for students than other communities involved in the regional.

Second reason after financial or perhaps the primary reason was the expectation that the education would be more educationally challenging if the district dissolved. In the regional there was the philosophy that the curriculum had to be equal in all schools. That is, the same curriculum offered in all regional high schools. However, the socioeconomics and thus the educational priorities were not the same within all communities. Here in Mountainside, it was the perception that if the Union County Regional
dissolved there would be greater autonomy in selecting an educational program more consistent with the educational needs and expectations of the community. Mountainside identified very closely with Berkeley Heights.

Additionally, there was a political reality. There was some concern with the superintendent of the regional, a tenured superintendent. He recommended the closing of one of the high schools in the regional, specifically, the one located in Kenilworth.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

In essence, the reasons came down to financial, educational, political and local control. Mountainside was committed to a quality education - the best their tax dollars could provide.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

Well, some of the regional high schools' facilities including athletic fields were not in the best condition. Berkeley Heights's facilities were perceived to be in the best condition. Mountainside wanted to take advantage of the best facilities.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

There were two major research studies. A financial study was completed by Deloitte & Touche. An educational study was also completed. I have copies of the study if you wish to include copies.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

For Mountainside, the tuition costs went down considerably and that was a significant advantage to this community. There is the perception that the program presently offered is better as, Berkeley Heights and Mountainside both are districts with high educational expectations. Some of the districts formerly enrolled in the regional may have different expectations and if the philosophy of offering the same program at all schools were accurate, the
different socioeconomics of the constituent communities could have affected the program offered in all the regional high schools.

Finally, although not a major issue, there was the perception that the high school physical plant at Berkeley Heights was in better condition. The town, therefore, was paying less tuition, the students were getting the education desired by the community, and the program offered was at the desired site.

Mountainside voted for the dissolution.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

Since Mountainside sends its students to Berkeley Heights on a tuition basis, the number of seats on the board are dictated by law. Mountainside has one seat on the Berkeley Heights Board of Education.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

Yes, the communities of the regional were not of the same district factor group and the culture of the communities did affect the program. Also, budgets tended to be defeated in specific districts thus causing problems.

Also, Kenilworth was probably a district with lower socioeconomics than say, Berkeley Heights, but angry that the high school in their community was closed. They, in turn, voted for dissolution.

In summary, Kenilworth was key as Clark and Garwood voted against the dissolution. Kenilworth, Berkeley Heights, Mountainside and Springfield voted for dissolution of the regional.

Under the Badger Bill, the majority of the constituent districts and the majority of the voters must approve the dissolution.
13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

Actually there were many positives for specific districts once de regionalization took place.

Mountainside’s tuition was reduced and they are attending their high school of choice. Additionally, their program is quite academically oriented due to the socioeconomics of the district and local control of Berkeley Heights Board of Education.

Clark was able to offer a large breadth of courses and greater diversity of programs due to local control and the receipt of students from Garwood.

Disadvantages include the receipt of buildings that needed much work particularly the high school plant located in Clark. It needed much work.

Kenilworth reopened its own high school, which the local board desired and now offers a program pre-K through 12. Local control appears important.

Also, most of the senior staff selected to go to work in Clark. By seniority, the staff of the regional was able to select their district of choice. This caused a major financial burden for Clark.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

There was another outcome of the dissolution, which involved the distribution of capital assets - equipment, other than school buildings (vehicles, maintenance, etc.). The disbursement of buildings became the property of the school district in which they were located. However, the Supreme Court of the New Jersey granted Mountainside and Garwood additional funds from cash and liquid proceeds.
Pine Hill School District

1. What is the name of the district?
Pine Hill Borough, 1003 Turnerville Road, Pine Hill, NJ 08021

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?
Respondent L

3. What is today’s date?
May 17, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?
June 20, 2001

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?
Berlin Township, Chesilhurst, Clementon, Lindenwold, Pine Hill, Waterford and Winslow.

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?
There were concerns regarding the flow of program from K-8 districts to the regional. As an example, many students from the constituent districts came to the high school with varying curriculum exposures. There was little communication and much concern about curriculum scope and sequence.

Also, there were issues about representation on the regional - Pine Hill had but one vote on the regional. Also, the regional was quite crowded so facilities also became an issue. The district was of the opinion it could offer a good program, K-12 and have more input into that program.

As an example, when the regional was in place, there were 1,500 students in the Pine Hill facilities. Now there are
approximately 950 students. There is always the issue of local politics in all districts.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

Finance, in some of the districts, was probably a secondary concern.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

All appeared at the time to be major - enrollment growth, property taxes would be additional reasons.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

There were at least two feasibility studies and a financial impact study including hiring an attorney who was involved in the dissolution of the Union County Regional.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

Facility upgrades including a new middle school, elimination of overcrowding at the high school, curriculum articulation for grades K-12.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

Presently, our Pine Hill board consists of nine Pine Hill members - one from Clementon and one from Berlin Township. Both Clementon and Berlin have one member in the sending/receiving relationship.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?
I don't think so. Our DPG is a B so we are not a wealthy district but wanted the best for our students.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

Yes. Pine Hill took over the high school located in the community. They upgraded the physical plant and now have approximately 900+ students attending versus the 1,500. Additionally, the district built a new middle school to accommodate its students and established a sending/receiving relationship with both Clementon and Berlin Township. The tuition is in the range of $10,800.

Students at the high school are no longer on split sessions. There is better classroom management. Curriculum is articulated K-12.

Negatives include increased taxes for schools and the need to pay a five-year assessment to the districts that did not have a high school within their community. That assessment is $600,000 per year. Also, many senior teaching members of the regional elected to work in Pine Hill so again the taxes were increased. There were lawsuits with the NJEA that finally were resolved.

We also lost revenue when the regional dissolved particularly for early childhood aid and breakfast program. Transportation had to be totally rerouted.

Staff resentment was also a negative.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

I can't think of anything right now, however, if you need additional information, please call.
Somerset Hills Regional

1. What is the name of the district?

Somerset Hills Regional School District

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent M

3. What is today's date? April 6, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

It was formed July 1, 1995.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Bernardsville, Far Hills, and the joint municipality of Peapack/Gladstone. They have one municipal government for the two boroughs.

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

Probably, the primary was financial. They had non-operational districts running local offices so by regionalizing we were able to dissolve those offices and the staff was then consolidated. Of course, we had to take care of the staff that was in the non-operational districts so they had to be merged into our district. The staff, for the most part, was able to be merged? Yes. It is a requirement and they were merged with our staff so they had bumping rights on our staff depending on seniority. So, we were lucky that everything worked out. We didn't have to lay anyone off.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

The secondary reason was since this was an unusual regionalization because the two districts that were already with us were not operational. So, the secondary reason I
would think is going to be curriculum. Being able to expand and offer more programs because of more students. However, in this case, it was kind of unusual in that it provided stability to our district in that we could expand the program and take on some building projects without being concerned that either one of these districts was shopping for the best price which had happened in the past.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

The plusses - keep seeing the glass half full - the big plus was that it enabled the communities to merge socially because...for a good example...instead of each municipality having Little Leagues, there's been some merging of those types of programs. The kids got to know one another K-12. Other things merged as a result of this school district regionalizing.

The huge negative includes having to get the support of three town councils in the event of budget defeat. And they all have to agree. From a selfish perspective, on a day-to-day basis, I answer to three town councils. So, instead of having one mayor calling me up with an issue, I have three...actually, four, because of Bedminster's sending relationship. So, every day I have almost forty politicians that I have to work with.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

We contracted with Centennial Consultants and having done this three times now, I would certainly never recommend a district to try to do it on their own. You really need outside consultants. The amount of work and the detailing that goes into it, particularly with the financial, needs outside consultants.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

Simply a fully articulated K-12 school district.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each
We have a 10-person board. Our board is made up of one person from Bedminster, which is our sending district, and they can only vote on grades 9-12 issues. There is one person from Far Hills. The entire distribution is based on enrollment. Peapack-Gladstone has two board representatives and there are six from Bernardsville. With regionalization, all towns must approve.

The law states that for regionalization to occur, all districts must agree. With every vote that we've ever taken here, we were required to have it pass in every town. It was clear, every time we asked for public vote on it, the election bureau always told us it had to be approved in all communities - and we recently looked into what it would take to change the funding formula and they told us the same thing - the issue must be passed in every town. It wasn't a simple majority.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

Example, this is a pretty homogenous socioeconomic area, I would think. Is there a group that is a minority population?

There isn't anything with regard to that. The only socioeconomic factor that has come up is that of the funding formula and the impact. It is not an equal impact on each town because the ratable[s] in some towns are rising faster than in others so it becomes disproportionate. So if the assessed values all rise at the same rate, the formula stays even, if the assessed values in one town go up over a period of 10 years 5% and the other town goes up 100% that becomes disproportionate and that's what we've had. Luckily it only affects 5% but 5% when you're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars per house has had some impact.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?
The big one, I think, was that it really has done an awful lot in joining the different communities. I think it's helped the communities come together.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

No. I think, in summary, it really has worked. It has been very effective. There certainly aren't any regrets. It was the right decision and continues to be the right decision.
Springfield School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Springfield Public Schools

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent N.

3. What is today's date?

May 24, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?


5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Berkeley Heights, Clark, Garwood, Kenilworth, Mountainside, Springfield

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/dissolution?

Berkeley Heights initially called the districts together to discuss issues with the lack of responsiveness of the high school district to local issues with the quality of education and cost per pupil. Districts engaged in this meeting were all of the sending districts. At a later time, Kenilworth became a primary advocate of dissolution as soon as their high school (Brearley located in Kenilworth was closed.) As time progressed, Mountainside joined the "band wagon" due to the cost of education and Springfield soon followed due to the issues of the quality of the program.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

The primary reasons listed above were the major reasons - quality, cost, and closing of a high school in Kenilworth by the regional. Secondary reasons - included the lack of
responsiveness of the high school board to local concerns and the aloofness of the administration. The local districts thought they could just do a better job.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

Power and autonomy among the local boards that had high schools located in their districts.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

A Deloitte & Touche study was commissioned by four of the sending districts, Berkeley Heights, Kenilworth, Mountainside, and Springfield. This study proved to be helpful; however, Jim Firtland, a retired member of the Berkeley Heights board and Respondent N spent numerous hours redesigning the assumptions in the financial and educational models constructed by the consultants prior to the publication of the report. Also, a series of public broadcasts were made on Cablevision by the groups.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

Local control of school costs, responsive education policy setting at the high school level, and an articulated PK-12 educational program in the majority of the reconstituted districts.

Experience in Springfield led to the involvement of the stakeholders a year before the high school takeover, and a redesign of the high school program and articulation with the PK-8 and high school faculty.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education)?

No, because the K-8 local board continued to set policy for the new PK-12 district. However, the local elections became more controversial and over the next four years board members that originally supported deregionalization were one by one removed.
How many seats was Springfield allocated on the Regional Board?

No need for an allocation since the local district now operated the PK-12 system. Prior to deregionalization, Springfield elected two representatives to the regional board.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

Yes, Berkeley Heights and Mountainside were paying the lion's share based on property assessment. Springfield was about a break-even and Kenilworth, Clark and Garwood were getting the benefit of the regional formula. All of this was about to be changed due to a move by the four constituent districts (Berkeley Heights, Kenilworth, Mountainside and Springfield.)

As far as the student demographics/socioeconomic issues, Springfield was a "GR" district at the time. Mountainside and Berkeley Heights were I districts. The remainder of the districts had DFGs of a lower level.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

Yes, there were numerous positives and a few negatives. Some of the positives included an opportunity for:
- Articulation of program PK-12
- Reinvention of the high school and customize the program according to local needs
- Cost reduction in many areas and elimination of duplication of services
- Development of small high schools with personalized attention to students
- Uniform governance and policy setting
- Control of the cost of education

Some of the negatives included:
- Hostility of some of the "losers" in this win-loss situation, especially in Springfield where there was a close margin on the election for dissolution.
b. Paving uncharted territory - being the first district in the state to dissolve a regional. Actually the DOE was unresponsive and we had to write most of the protocol and laws governing this process.
c. Staffing issues the first few years, and the difficulty of assimilation of the staff. Took about four years with a high degree of turnover at the high school level.
d. Ability to run a small comprehensive high school with 400+ students and the impact of that operation on the total district (Springfield).

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

Deregionalization was a very difficult process with much political fallout. If you are a non-tenured administrator in this process, you can almost count on your contract not being renewed. Viewed as a corporate takeover, however, with a lot more restrictions. It takes a very long time before the benefits will be realized, and there is human collateral damage along the way. In many ways, the unanticipated events that occurred in Springfield (divided community) should have been anticipated; however, when you are “neck deep” in water, you are only interested in reaching land before determining the road to follow.

I believe it was the right decision for Springfield, however, I am sure for every two people in Springfield, one will agree with me and the other would feel the other way! If you’re the “swing district” for dissolution, there is a lot of fallout that takes its toll on those in leadership positions (board members and administrators).
Waterford School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Waterford Township Public Schools

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent 0

3. What is today's date?

April 22, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?


5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Berlin Township, Lindenwold, Chesilhurst, Pine Hill, Waterford, Clementon, Winslow

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalization/ dissolution?

General dissatisfaction (Waterford, Chesilhurst voted to maintain regional setup).

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/ deregionalize?

None noted.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

None noted.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?
Comprehensive studies over many years.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

Waterford formed a partnership (send/receive) with Hammonton in neighboring Atlantic County that has been remarkably positive.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

Law is clear on this. We receive one seat on the send-receive Board. Folsom also sends students to Hammonton (prior agreement). They retained one seat as well.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

Economic for certain. Union County dissolution precedent created a host of litigation issues. Some yet unresolved in full.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccesful efforts?

Still too early to know for certain, however, all indicators are positive from Waterford's perspective.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

Dissolution is a complex matter. Legal concerns, economic concerns, and psychological issues will undoubtedly surface in any dissolution matter. What appears to be a simple matter on paper becomes remarkably complex, as was the case in Lower Camden County and Union County Regional.
Winslow School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Winslow Township

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent P

3. What is today's date?

May 12, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

May 1998 was the vote to dissolve.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Berlin Township, Chesilhurst, Clementon, Lindenwold, Pine Hill, Waterford and Winslow

6. What were the primary reasons for the regionalisation/dissolution?

For Winslow, it was a desire to raise academic standards. Also, there was the perception that the locals had little input into the regional program that two members sitting on the regional board was not sufficient to influence decisions or effect any significant change. Also, there was no accountability on the part of the regional board to the elementary district. This was manifest by a lack of curriculum articulation through the sending districts. There was no attempt to utilize the same tests within the sending districts so when students entered the high school, their preparation and exposure to the core curriculum was not aligned.

With the dissolution of the district, Winslow Township School District became a K-12 comprehensive program with curriculum articulation throughout the grades rather than a K-5 elementary school district.
7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

Winslow consisted of 48% of the students in the regional and yet the membership of the regional board did not reflect majority of the regional. The community felt disenfranchised by the regional. Politics - The desire to administer one's own school district PK-12, became very important.

8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

The desire to foster a PK-12 vision for the community. Again, the desire to increase academic rigor was extremely important. The community was changing from a rural community to one of greater affluence as new housing developments were constructed and purchase by individuals with more affluence than what had been in the district for years.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

The board contracted Vito Gagliardi, attorney involved in the dissolution of the Union County Regional School District, to serve as legal consultant. Mr. Gagliardi assisted the district with the required study. Also, a consulting group, titled Califon Associates, assisted with staff tenure and seniority issues.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

Here in Winslow, there have been very significant academic benefits for students. We now have curriculum articulation K-12, a district vision for the delivery of our program, passage of a $26 million dollar building referendum that has expanded our middle and high school buildings by 50%. We researched middle school models and visited many middle schools prior to determining the vision of the middle school, here in Winslow. As a result, our middle school program consists of a nine-period day, extensive and rigorous core programs, co-curriculum offerings, writing centers, and technology labs.
Our high school programs have increased in educational rigor. Prior to the dissolution of the regional, students were offered two AP courses. Now the high school program includes 16 AP courses. The technology within the high school has been significantly expanded. There are new science labs, TV production courses, CAD program offerings, and technology labs. The media center and gymnasium are new and expansive.

In summary, I would say the benefits include greater breadth of program offerings, significant upgrade of plant facilities, and the ability of the district to design and implement its own educational vision for the community of Winslow.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education)?

Yes. In Winslow it was thought that simply two seats on the regional board was not meaningful representation for the community and certainly not enough to reflect any change in the regional. The district wanted decision-making opportunities for program K-12 and that simply would not occur by being one constituent district in the regional system.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

There were some within our own community. Our community was initially a rural community comprised of blue-collar workers. However, each year some of the land continues to be sold to developers who have been constructing rather expensive housing developments. It has been a time of tremendous growth - 2500 housing starts in a relatively short time. The people purchasing the expensive homes are generally white-collar individuals expecting more from the district’s schools so expectations have increased with a more affluent citizenry moving into the district. However, there are still pockets of poverty in the district.
13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?

In terms of negative consequences, the staff was resistant to the dissolution. Also, the staff selection process was difficult. The consulting firm assisted in the process. The process included staff selecting the district they would work for based on seniority within their specific certifications. It was sometimes difficult for some individuals to remember we are here for the kids.

The positive for us has been great delivery of curriculum. In our elementary grades, our scores indicate the improvement in language arts, approximately 10% in math. Our GRPA and HSPA scores are still a challenge.

We also have enhanced our staff development initiatives that have benefited all. By way of example, we have recently trained many staff in Wilson reading. Other issues I indicated previously - that of curriculum articulation, K-12, vision, and much better school facilities.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

Not really. It was a most difficult process to go through. I never worked so hard. It was exhausting but I was pleased to be part of the process.
Wood-Ridge School District

1. What is the name of the district?

Wood-Ridge

2. What is the name and title of the person I am interviewing?

Respondent Q

3. What is today's date?

June 14, 2005

4. What was the year that the regional was formed/dissolved?

It was not formed, as the voters did not vote for regionalization. Actually the voters in Hasbrouck Heights defeated the referendum.

5. What towns were involved in the consolidation/dissolution?

Two towns were involved in the defeated attempt to regionalize. Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge.

6. What were the primary reasons for the attempted regionalization/dissolution?

Wood-Ridge is a small K-12 district like Hasbrouck Heights. At the time we had approximately 800 students in the K-12 district. Regionalization would have provided an opportunity to combine services; offer more at less cost under one administration.

7. What were the secondary reasons to regionalize/deregionalize?

There really were no secondary reasons. We simply believed that the combining of both school districts would assist in cost savings and greater program opportunities for both communities.
8. Are there any minor reasons that should be noted for the regionalization/deregionalization?

I think the reason was as stated previously. We could combine the two small K-12 districts into one district offering a more comprehensive program with one administration.

9. What methods of study/research were implemented to determine the feasibility of merging/dissolving?

The district followed and completed all required steps as outlined by the state to bring the issue of regionalization to the voters.

10. What do you feel were the benefits/outcomes of the regionalization/dissolution? Why?

Obviously, the voters in one of the towns involved in the regionalization attempted to defeat the question and the two districts remained as separate K-12 districts. The districts have a very community-based point of view regarding their schools.

11. Were there concerns expressed relative to the community representation on the school board (e.g., how many seats on the board were delegated to each constituent community represented on the board of education?)

Regionalization was not embraced by the voters of Hasbrouck Heights. Currently, Wood-Ridge has six board members representing Wood-Ridge and one board member, who represents Moonachie, in a sending/receiving relationship. Moonachie, sends their high school students to our high school.

12. Were there socioeconomic issues that affected the regionalization/deregionalization efforts? If so, what issues?

I don’t believe so. Both communities are middle class, white collar/blue collar and about 70-80% white. Our district factor group is FG.

13. Were there any identifiable positive or negative consequences of successful/unsuccessful efforts?
No. The issue kind of went away. The towns have a friendly rivalry and we are involved in shared services arrangements. We utilize Bergen County Jointure for some of our shared services arrangements. We have combined athletic teams (such as soccer and tennis) that are comprised of students from both Hasbrouck Heights and Wood-Ridge.

14. Is there any additional information you wish to share?

Since the regional attempt, Wood-Ridge's student population has increased from approximately 800 to over 1100 and growing. The high school, for whatever it is worth, was named one of the top 75 high schools in New Jersey by New Jersey Monthly so the need to regionalize does not seem apparent.
Appendix D

Office of Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
March 9, 2005

Karen Lake
28 Townsend Drive
Florham Park, NJ 07932

Dear Ms Lake,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled "Perceptions of New Jersey Superintendents Relative to Public School Regionalization and Deregionalization Efforts, 1993-2003". Your research protocol is hereby approved as amended through expedited review. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of this stamped Consent Form.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after the initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Razicka, Ph.D.
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc Joseph Seitar, Ph.D.

Office of Institutional Review Board
Presidents Hall
Tel: 973.313.5314 • Fax: 973.275.2978
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2641

ENRICHING THE MIND, THE HEART AND THE SPIRIT
Appendix E

Letter of Solicitation/Consent
March 7, 2005

Dear Colleague,

This researcher is a superintendent of a New Jersey public school district and a doctoral candidate in the Executive EdD. program at Seton Hall University. This letter of consent is a required component of the dissertation process and is designed to provide relevant information to all subjects involved in this study.

The intent of the researcher is to interview the superintendents or respective designees of New Jersey public school districts that have placed the question of regionalization or deregionalization on the ballot for voter consideration during the years of 1993 through 2003. The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of superintendents or their respective designees as a means of determining what factors, when present, can assist school districts in their regionalization or deregionalization efforts. The interview questions are designed to expedite the interview process. Your participation in the interview should take no more than twenty minutes.

There are twenty districts that have been involved in regionalization or deregionalization efforts in New Jersey during 1993-2003 and have placed the issue of regionalization or deregionalization on the ballot for voter consideration. The researcher's intent is to contact the superintendents of all seventeen districts for the purpose of scheduling an appointment in which to conduct an interview within the subject's respective school district regarding the topic of regionalization or deregionalization. There are no procedures that are experimental in nature.

The interview questions have been gleaned from a previous survey developed by Dr. Sarah Beauchez and utilized in her regionalization study conducted in 1993 that involved select school districts throughout the United States. The sample questions are attached for your review.

Participation in this study is voluntary on the part of all participants. Be advised that refusal to participate or discontinuing participation at any time will involve no loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

The compiled information will remain confidential and no names will be used in reporting any part of the study. Specific subjects will be coded by the researcher to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

All data gleaned from the subjects in this study will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home to maintain confidentiality.

All records will be kept confidential with only the researcher having access to research records.

College of Education and Human Services
Executive EdD. Program
Tel: 973.275.3728
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079
This researcher anticipates no foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subjects.

The findings of this research will be available to any participant in this study and may assist in their understanding of current educational research in the areas of regionalization and deregionalization.

An alternative procedure may include a telephone interview with subjects in lieu of a personal interview if requested by any of the subjects involved in this study.

If necessary, the researcher may be contacted at (908) 365-0030 X 5016 in order to address pertinent questions about the research and rights of the subjects involved in this study.

This consent additionally requests permission for audiotaping of interviews with all subjects. It is also noted that all subjects have the right to review all or any portion of the audiotapes and request that if be destroyed. Upon request, the researcher will destroy any part or all of a subject’s interview. Additionally, upon completion of the research, all copies of all audiotapes will be destroyed after a three-year period.

All subjects will be given a copy of the signed and dated Informed Consent Form.

Subject or Authorized Representative

Date

Attachment

APPROVED
MAR 09 2005
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY