

School Consolidation Taskforce Meeting – HCR 39
February 21, 2018
Dickinson High School

Members Present: Rep. Earl Jaques, Chairman; Susan Bunting, Secretary of Education; Gerald Allen, School Board Member; D. Dusty Blakey, Superintendent Colonial; Kevin Carson, Chair Structures Subcommittee; Tammy Croce, DASA; Jill Floore; Loretta Greig; John Marinucci, DSB; Robert Overmiller, Governor’s Advisory Council for Exception Children; Jordon Rosen; Ralph Ackerman; Sean Sokolowski; Jeff Taschner, DSEA.

Welcome & Introductions: Rep. Jaques conducted the welcome and introductions of those present.

Sub-committee reports:

- a. **Academic & Student Needs:** The team debated about content of the SAIL report which was shared at the last meeting and participants were asked to review and be prepared to discuss. We recognized options differ depending on location of schools/organizations throughout the state. There may be a Boys and Girls Club in one town and not another within 50 miles. We also recognize that transportation is often a barrier in some areas. The team completed activity on reports from the SAIL report that we read. We discussed things that squared with our thinking and others that are still running around in our heads. At the end of meeting we discussed a list of 6 things we are going to recommend to the taskforce. At our next meeting on March 12th we will look at Early Childhood Education Programs, and importance of those and to what happens to children when they get into the school system.
- b. **Finance:** Mr. Sears and Mary Nash Wilson are absent. Mary sent me a report to read. Their last meeting was held on January 31, discussed position earned within the district and the 3 county wide district model. We are in the process of setting a guideline for our section. Our next meeting is scheduled for March 6 at 5:00 p.m. at Haslet Armory in Dover. We will be working on completing our recommendations.
- c. **Teachers & Staff:** Dusty Blakey – We met on February 5th, the biggest thing we did at that meeting is we looked at some data to see what districts would look like if we broke down into 3 county wide districts. We looked at data of districts with similar size, higher percentage or lower percentage of demographics related to New Castle County. There was no actual match up for demographics. Rough size of kids in New Castle County is 66,000 students, which would make it the biggest district in the nation, Kent County 25,000, ranked 207th and 318th for Sussex County with 29,000. Comparing data people within the state. What people categorized as Administrators and support were all over the place, also teachers and aides, were all over the place. Looking at data on comparative ratio per student, there was some comparable data, about the same. In many cases, there were more teachers and administrators, amount of money allocated per student a little higher versus others around the nation. What we did find is that some of our work crosses over into the other subcommittees. We need to find out what everyone is doing. No significant student achievement in larger districts around the nation.
- d. **Structures:** Kevin Carson. Our last meeting was on February 6th at Legislative Hall. Discussed School Transportation and had Karen Field Rogers do a presentation. We had a previous conversation about district employed transportation. Something was learned by all, how we operate and continue to make improvements along the way. We have future meetings scheduled for February 28 and April 11. We believe there are Subgroups to subgroups having

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conversations on countywide systems. We should consider bringing the groups together since we are having common conversations. Mr. Carson has some concerns about work we are doing and impact on existing systems and processes, ways in which we have done business. We have had these conversations before about consolidation. How are we currently legislated to operate, financially as an example? We have systems in play and formulas in play that are tied to assessment. We heard it with the ACLU lawsuit that is currently underway. System needs to be questioned and how we are going forward. What should a countywide district look like, what is the tax rate, what is assessment? Why wouldn't we just fix the system to begin with, otherwise we will produce a report just like we did 15 years ago or so. A lot of people working on this committee are getting frustrated. It has to be better for kids, we have just so many hours to get into this.

Comment made was around improving children's education and if doesn't do that we are all just wasting our time. It is believed we need to work with faculty and staff to input in the area of incomes. It is believed you can have a commonness of scale to save money, this could have been done in a smaller form of a taskforce.

Chair's comments:

Last meeting I encouraged all subcommittee chairs to get with each other to get some of these issues ironed out. I am repeating this statement. We need to get working on this and it was encouraged that all subcommittee chairs work through it. If you have some recommendations, please bring them forward to the next meeting so we can start acting on them, voting and getting them worked out early. I was shocked we are using a 1970 formula for transportation. That opened my eyes.

Subcommittee chairs we will meet afterwards about format.

Next meeting will be held on March 19th at the Smyrna High School Auditorium. Further discussion is needed around number of administrators, district office size, made up of right people to benefit the students, teachers, parents and staff. Tammy Croce has been asked to head up a committee to work on this and figure it out. A report will be made at the next scheduled meeting.

There were no public comments.

Meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.