



General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Joint State Government Commission
Room 108 Finance Building, 613 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120
717-787-4397

Released: July 31, 2017

***Report Summary in Response to House Resolution 910
School Districts in Pennsylvania: Ways to Work Together***

House Resolution No. 910 of 2015 directed the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a statewide study on reducing the number of school districts in the Commonwealth. The Joint State Government Commission, with assistance from the Independent Fiscal Office, was tasked with evaluating the cost savings that may materialize as a result of statewide school district consolidation, making recommendations regarding possible incentives for consolidation, and assessing not only the financial impact of school district consolidation but also the impact it would have on academic achievement.

While working on the report, the Joint State Government Commission (JSGC) conducted a series of meetings with experts and stakeholders in order to obtain a variety of perspectives on the issue. The JSGC reviewed existing literature on the theoretical foundations of school district consolidation in the United States and researched its history in Pennsylvania and other states.

School district consolidation is a complex process that involves multiple contributing factors and can have multiple impacts on the schools and the community. The report contains a detailed analysis of advantages and challenges of school districts consolidation. It discusses both physical consolidation, or merger, and functional consolidation, or collaboration in various areas without a formal administrative merger of two districts. One section describes the only school district in Pennsylvania that was formed as a result of a voluntary merger since the 1960s - the Central Valley School District. Various collaborative efforts are illustrated by several case studies of the Commonwealth districts that have a variety of contractual agreements. The role of intermediate units in school districts' cooperation is also discussed.

A separate section of the report contains several hypothetical school district reorganization scenarios. It includes the qualitative analyses performed by the JSGC staff and fiscal analyses conducted by the IFO.

The report offers a set of recommendations to the General Assembly, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and those school districts that may be considering reorganization. The recommendations, based on the report findings, are intended to facilitate various consolidation efforts in the Commonwealth and make them more successful.

The full report is available on our website <http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/>