

Regionalization Plans for New York Public Schools

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Inception

September 9, 2024- Board of Regents approved, by emergency adoption, a new Part 124 of the Commissioner's Regulation, and a separate subpart 124-2 outlining how component districts and BOCES must work collaboratively.



Commissioner's Part 124 Regulation

Regulations set forth by a state's education department or similar authority that dictate specific operational, procedural, or compliance requirements. In the context of New York State, for example, Part 124 of the Commissioner of Education's Regulations addresses specific education policies, such as accommodations for students with disabilities, procedural guidelines for schools, or mandates related to curriculum or student rights.

What is REGIONALIZATION?

- The process “of creating equitable educational opportunities for all students through collaborative partnerships among school districts, BOCES, and other stakeholders.”¹ Component school districts must work with the District Superintendent “to develop and implement a regionalization plan at least every ten years that shall include, but not be limited to, initiatives for enhancing educational opportunities, strategies for operational efficiencies, mechanisms for ongoing evaluation, and other information as prescribed by the Commissioner.

The PROBLEM



There are growing inequities in educational opportunities for students in New York State, particularly in under-resourced and rural areas, due to enrollment and fiscal issues.




Why it matters: New York State is committed to preparing every student for an increasingly diverse and dynamic workforce and allowing them to build their future in the community of their choosing.

What is happening?

State Aid formula modifications have impacted over 300 school districts. A Foundation Aid study has been undertaken with a report due December 1, 2024. Transformational graduation measures have been proposed that will require significant changes in our schools in the very near future.

Regionalization: is a collaborative model for creating equitable educational opportunities for all students that leverages the state's existing capabilities, talent, and infrastructure. By engaging in regionalization planning, schools and districts may identify, explore, and pursue a variety of possible solutions to the academic and operational challenges they face by tapping into the full span of resources that already exist in their larger region.



- Regionalization refers to a broad tool for addressing student needs and operational efficiencies through shared resources, grounded in a process of continuous needs assessment and cross-district coordination. New York State's educational landscape already features many examples of partnerships across schools and districts as well as existing regionalization infrastructure, such as cross-district contracts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

- There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to creating opportunities for students. The resulting outcomes and action items from regionalization will vary from region to region, building upon the strengths inherent in local communities and reflecting innovative ideas from the individuals who live in them.

Define Region

- Regionalization conversations are facilitated through the state's 37 Sole Supervisory Districts and the District Superintendent that leads each one. They are commonly referred to as the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) regions as each Sole Supervisory District houses a regional BOCES that provides cooperative educational programs for two or more school districts.

Purpose of Regionalization

- Many schools and districts are facing seemingly insurmountable and intractable challenges in areas such as teacher recruitment, advanced course offerings, and funding/aid. Not all schools and districts across the state face equal or similar hardships, and many contributing factors are outside the control of local school districts and the Department.


- Enduring solutions to district challenges must be developed and implemented locally through shared resources and support. The lack of student opportunities and fiscal concerns across the state will continue until districts start considering regional solutions to their academic and operational issues. The time to act is now, while districts have time to think through regional issues from areas of strength, rather than waiting until they are facing moments of greater crisis.



- The aim is to move from a system that promotes siloed, limited opportunities for some students to a mutually beneficial model where districts within and across regions partner to deliver life-changing experiences for students and to solve local challenges through local solutions. Collaboration and partnership are central to regionalization and are necessary to close the opportunity and transcript gap* in all historically underserved communities across New York State.

- The purpose of requiring statewide regionalization planning is to provide an equitable structure for districts to compile, discuss, and analyze data on educational opportunity and supports available in their region for all of their students, in order to inventory areas of strength, gaps that may exist, and support needs for fulfilling local visions for education and schooling, consistent with Board of Regents priorities and commitments.


Goals of Regionalization

- Regionalization seeks to leverage the collective strength and capacity of the state to identify current and innovative ways to address challenges and mitigate their impact on student trajectories and outcomes. The goals of regionalization are:

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- To implement a collaborative model for schools and districts to identify, explore, and pursue a variety of possible solutions to the academic and operational challenges they face by tapping into the full span of capabilities that already exist in their larger region;
 - To establish a continuous improvement process for schools and districts to review, reflect, and update regionalization data and plans on a 10-year cycle.

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- All districts can benefit from regionalization efforts. Benefits include:
 - Creating equitable opportunities for ALL students;
 - Establishing a systematic mechanism for districts to engage in continual improvement; and
 - Developing a model for addressing ongoing educational and fiscal

Each component district in a supervisory district works with the District Superintendent to create a regionalization plan that is designed to improve student opportunities (resulting in 37 plans).



NOTE: Upon completion of the regional plan, school districts need only pursue implementation of activities they have agreed or consented to for their local context in the final plan.

10 Year Cycle

Strengths & Needs Tool

Implementation

Convenings

Regionalization Plan

Interim Progress Report

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of a dark asphalt surface. Several white, hand-painted arrows are visible, all pointing towards the right side of the frame. The arrows are slightly worn and vary in size and position. A solid black horizontal bar is positioned in the lower third of the image, and a solid orange rectangle is located in the bottom right corner.

What's Next

Step 1: Strengths and Needs Review- (12/6/24)

Each component district of the state's Sole Supervisory Districts will complete a formal review using a Strengths & Needs Tool provided by NYSED to determine the types of efforts and supports needed to improve student opportunities as well as their school and district operational efficiencies, with the goal of ensuring that each student can meet the vision of a high school graduate portrayed in the New York State Portrait of a Graduate

Step 2: Regional Convening and Stakeholders Agreement - (Beginning 11/1/24)

- Across New York State, component districts will engage in local discussions with other districts and stakeholders in their Sole Supervisory District with the goal of developing regional plans and recommendations for creating and enhancing equitable access to opportunities and supports for ALL students. Non-BOCES component districts and local stakeholders will be invited to participate in the conversations. The discussions will be facilitated by the District Superintendents who serve as representatives of the Commissioner of Education.

Step 3- Regional Interim Progress Report (4/1/25)

- The District Superintendent, in collaboration with the component districts, will lead the writing of the interim progress report based on data and ideas discussed at the convenings. These reports will provide NYSED with information that could help shape budget and legislative priorities, lead to policy or regulation changes, as well as prompt the Department to provide new or additional types of support for the planning process.

Step 4- Regional Plan and Recommendations Development (10/1/25)

- The District Superintendent, in collaboration with the component districts, will lead the writing of the final regional plan and recommendations and submit to NYSED. NYSED will review the plan and determine if the plan sufficiently ensures that all students in the region have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities.

Step 5-Regional Plan for Implementation of Activities (Fall 2026)

- Regional plans will commence implementation no later than the start of school year (SY) 2026-2027

Some concerns
to be considered:



Impact on local control

Regionalization undermines local governance, removing decision-making from local school boards and communities. The potential for parents and local leaders that regional governing bodies may not fully understand or prioritize the unique needs of individual districts is more likely than not.

Compromises efforts for equity

- While one goal of regionalization is to address inequities in funding and resources, it could unintentionally widen disparities. Districts like Edgemont, who do not have a high reliance on state aid may be forced into sharing resources with less affluent districts, potentially leading to tensions or diluted quality and opportunities for our district.

Consequence on Small Districts

For small districts like Edgemont the fear of losing identity and community connection if merged into larger regional entities is possible. Districts like Edgemont is the hub for local pride and community activities, and regionalization could erode this role.



Administrative Capacity

- Logistical challenges of merging district resources, including aligning curricula, negotiating contracts, consolidating transportation, and integrating technology systems create complexities could lead to inefficiencies and additional costs in the short term.

Tax Implications

- Regionalization could result in shifts in property tax burdens, potentially increasing taxes for residents of some districts while lowering them for others. This uneven impact is a significant concern.

Cultural and Academic Uniqueness

- Edgemont has unique educational programs, offerings, traditions, and community culture. Regionalization might homogenize these differences, leading to a loss of diversity in educational approaches.

No Evidence of Success

- There is a lack of strong evidence that regionalization improves student outcomes. While some studies suggest potential cost savings, others indicate that these savings may be offset by implementation costs or diminished quality of services.

THIS JUST IN.....11/26/24



Clarification on Monitoring and Amendments

Section 124-2.5(d) will be revised to note that suggested amendments to regionalization plans will remain advisory rather than mandatory. This ensures that districts maintain full control over the plans they develop.



Voluntary Participation Acknowledgment

To address concerns about mandatory participation, a new provision (Section 124-2.8) will be added, which allows districts in consultation with their school boards, to elect not to participate in the regionalization planning process by submitting written notification by January 15, 2025.



Districts may delay submission of the Strength and Needs Tool while they confer with their Boards of Education regarding continued participation in the regionalization planning process. Should the district choose not to participate, they will not be required to submit the Strength and Needs Tool.

Questions

