

October 31, 2024

Dear Syosset Community:

I'm aware that a recent regulation adopted by the State Board of Regents regarding a "Regionalization" planning process has caused some consternation and some confusion.

Before going into details, let me be clear that Syosset would fight any attempt to undermine local control of our schools, to compel partnerships that aren't in our community's interest, redistribute taxpayer funds to other jurisdictions, or merge our District with others.

However, the New York State Education Department (NYSED), who implement the Regents' policies, have provided written assurances that none of the above are contemplated. I'll provide you with the specifics as well as some helpful context.

What is Regionalization? The Regents adopted two regulations in September and October that require districts to participate in [a regional planning process](#) that includes:

- filling out a survey with information about our District's strengths and weaknesses as well as some sense of our long-range plans, and;
- holding regional meetings to develop a plan.

The survey data already exists in State Education Department databases, and our mission and vision statements guide our plans. The regional meetings are intended to identify additional strategies to improve educational opportunities for students or ways to cooperate and become more cost-effective. The regional plan is not required to be adopted until a year from now, October 2025, for implementation a year later in the 2026-27 school year.

Don't we already have regional efforts? Yes. There are already mechanisms for regional cooperation which have resulted in dozens of examples of efficiencies and student opportunities:

- educational, back-office, internet and cyber security services offered by BOCES, like Barry Tech and special education services for high needs students;
- "piggybacking" on public bids for goods and services;
- cooperating on transportation routes to and from non-public schools or to competitions like DECA;
- conducting threat assessment training jointly so we can use national experts;
- occasionally sharing facilities – Jericho used our auditorium while theirs was undergoing repairs;
- and much more.

As stewards of public funds, we're always open to finding ways to operate more efficiently – as long as it benefits our kids and our community.

Once the Regional plan is developed, would we be forced to participate? No, we only have to attend planning meetings. NYSED explicitly stated this in their [Frequently Asked Questions document](#):

“Does my school district have to participate?”

“All component districts of a Sole Supervisory District are required to participate in the regional conversations and planning process, including completion of their local reflections in the Strengths & Needs Tool. Non-BOCES component school districts, such as the Big

Five school districts, are invited to participate in the conversations occurring in their neighboring region(s).

“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.” (emphasis in the original)


Is there any truth to the rumor that this would merge school districts with each other or the BOCES?
No. The State Education Department (SED, which works for the Board of Regents) has explicitly stated that this is not an initiative to merge school districts. [Their website states:](#)

“What it (Regionalization) is *not*: The Regionalization Initiative is *not* about reorganization (e.g., merger, consolidation, annexation), nor does it mandate districts participate in particular activities under a regional plan.”

The SED leadership also made a presentation to Nassau and Suffolk School Board Association members via [webinar](#) on Tuesday evening. One of the [NYSED slides](#) from that presentation clearly makes the same assertion:

Fact from Fiction

- Regionalization is **NOT**:
 - FALSE** ○ About eroding local control.
 - FALSE** ○ About mergers, reorganization, or eliminating local school districts.
 - FALSE** ○ A way to force districts into taking actions or including things in their regionalization plans that they do not want to undertake.
 - FALSE** ○ Only about services and supports that the BOCES can provide, or a way to increase the power of a BOCES (i.e. “BOCES will govern local districts”).
 - FALSE** ○ A way to create new accountability systems.
 - FALSE** ○ About District Superintendents developing the plan.

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NYSED is currently taking public comment on the proposed regulation, and it is my hope that they will make amendments to the language that make it more clearly consistent with what they’ve posted on their website, in order to further reduce confusion.

We are proud of the amazing educational system this community has built over the years and, as always, we’ll only pursue those opportunities that benefit our students and our residents. We’ll keep the community informed of any significant developments and we’ll be ready to act, should any of those developments be concerning.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tom Rogers
Superintendent of Schools