UPDATE: Feasibility Study September 22, 2026: Considering Consolidation for the Duquesne City School District

Reminder: The Public-School Code of 2026 indicates that the state-mandated Feasibility Study requires a completion date of March 1, 2027.

The Project Team shall submit a report, including findings and recommendations, to the Secretary of Education, the Education Committee of the Senate and the Education Committee of the House of Representatives, no later than March 1, 2027. The Report shall include a plan that addresses the consolidation of the School District with an identified School District and an evaluation of safety and security issues, building and facility requirements, governance issues, financial impacts and necessary enhancements to educational program offerings.

The Court-Appointed Receiver and Chief Recovery Officer have been in regular contact through virtual meetings with the Special Advisor to the Secretary and the PFM Managing Director relative to the Feasibility Study, Phase 2.

Prior to the Advisory Committee Meetings, the School Board scheduled a Forum on August 11th in the school auditorium to hear the Duquesne community regarding the possible consolidation with a local school district.

The first Advisory Committee meeting was held on September 3, 2026, with an Orientation session, covering roles and expectations; and determining dates and times for the other Advisory Committee meetings. Information gathered through this process will be shared appropriately by the Chief Recovery Officer at Receiver Business Meetings and summary notes provided by PFM will be posted on the School District website.

The Advisory Committee met Governance, September 17 @ 4:30 p.m. The Advisory Committee will meet on the following dates and times; the respective topics will be Safety and Security, October 7 @ 4:30 p.m.; Facilities and Programs, October 29 @ 3:30 p.m.; Enrollment/Staffing, November 18 @ 3:30 p.m.; and Finances, December 10 @ 4:30 p.m.

The Chief Recovery Officer and Feasibility Study Project Team will review progress and move forward with Phase 2 of the Feasibility Study and will engage members of the Advisory Committee as outlined in the Status Update.

The Duquesne Team has launched an all-out effort to gather all the data that is needed for Phase 2 of the Feasibility Study.

The Chief Recovery Officer has instructed PFM to send the Student Survey in Google form to the Superintendent, who will schedule 6th - 8th graders to complete the survey online; completed surveys will be directed to PFM.

Respectfully: Dr. John C Hansen; Dr. William Kerr

Feasibility Study/Consolidation Questions – Answers
Receiver Business Meeting
September 22, 2026

September 22, 2026

Prepared by: Crystal Irdi, Board Secretary
Approved by: Dr. William Kerr, Court-Appointed Receiver
Dr. John Hansen, Chief Recovery Officer
Dr. Sue Mariani, Superintendent

Dr. John Hansen, Chief Recovery Officer and Liaison for the Duquesne City School District, read a prepared update about the state-mandated Feasibility Study sanctioned by Act 47 of 2026 (attached.)

Questions / Comments / Feedback:

School Board Directors

Question 1: Inquired if McKeesport and Duquesne Advisory Committees meet and compare notes.

Answer: Yes

Question 2: Inquired how often will the two Advisory Committees meet together between now and March.

Answer: As often as the Committees can.

Answer: Every move we make, every recommendation we might hear will be shared. There is a project team that will take the information to the PA Department of Education and the PA Secretary of Education. The Advisory Team has no vote, no decision-making capabilities.

Question 3: Inquired if the Board will be provided with rosters of both Advisory Committees.

Answer: We have provided you with ours; we do not have McKeesport's roster.

Question 4: Inquired if their Advisory Committee is set up like Duquesne's.

Answer: That can't be answered right now. It may be private since there is community member's private contact information included.

Question 5: Inquired if Board Directors can participate as spectators at the Advisory Committee meetings.

Answer: No, it was made clear that each Advisory Committee has (2) Board Directors each and an alternative.

Question 6: Inquired if the Board Directors will receive copies of Advisory Committee meeting minutes.

Answer: Yes, a summary of the meeting, slides, agenda, etc.

Question 7: Inquired if the Advisory Committee meeting minutes can be mailed to their homes.

Answer: Yes, and email.

Question 8: Commented that the definition of merger and consolidation, differed to (2) sources – Oxfords Language Dictionary and Websters Collegiate Dictionary – would give you a very concise definition of each word.

Answer: It's statutory defined by law not a dictionary definition which would be of little help in this situation.

Feasibility Study/Consolidation Questions – Answers
Receiver Business Meeting
September 22, 2026

Question 9: Inquired if the meeting on Governance took in where we are going to fit in as representatives.

Answer: Responded that one of the things planned for conversation but it was not adequately covered. One of the items that will be brought up again.

Answer: Stated it's well written for terms of merger not for consolidation. We don't yet know.

Question 10: Inquired if the district mergers or consolidates if the Board will be elected by district or at large.

Answer: Stated belief that will be addressed in the near future.

Question 11: Commented that the McKeesport School Board is currently top-heavy with White Oak residents.

Question 12: Inquired if tuition rates are expected to be raised next year for 9-12th graders according to the Court agreement.

Answer: Yes, per the settlement agreement it increases based on the Adjusted Act 1 Index. This year it increased by 3.5%

Question 13: Inquired if a decision isn't made, because of the court verdict how will that be managed with making this decision the so we don't go bankrupt for paying tuition.

Answer: It's very complicated; we still have students in grades 9-12 and how they will transition and how that will work - no one knows. It's a process – take it one day, one week at a time. These questions will eventually get answered.

Question 14: Inquired if it possible that every board meeting is publicized through social media pages, city council page, etc.

Answer: Yes, dates of the meetings are on the website but will make an effort to make it more prominent.

Answer: Yes, we'll place them in a more prominent way and advertise that there is public discussion of the feasibility study at the end of each meeting. As a side note, the District is in frequent contact with our solicitors.

Question 15: Inquired if it costs West Mifflin $16,500 to educate their children and it costs Duquesne $18,500, does West Mifflin tuition increase for them.

Answer: It's an annual increase calculated by PDE following a settlement agreement based on the Index.

Answer: West Mifflin was the only complainant in that lawsuit.

_____ (Public Questions resumed; see next section) [1]

Question 16: Inquired that if Duquesne is forced to consolidate with McKeesport so the tuition would continue to go up.

Answer: Answered that we are tuition based so whatever PDE calculates, that is what we pay. If a consolidation / merger, there wouldn't be tuition.

Answer: There would be no tuition for secondary tuition to East Allegheny and West Mifflin. It would be like any other school district. Charter tuition costs would still be in effect.

Question 17: Inquired if Duquesne and McKeesport go together but the $16,500 isn't what West Mifflin pays.

Answer: Explained that West Mifflin doesn't pay another public school tuition for the education their students.

Answer: The aim is to keep the students who are already at West Mifflin and/or East Allegheny comfortable for the remainder of their education.

Answer: Wanted to point out that in grades 9-12, there are 20 students at East Allegheny; 207 at West Mifflin.

Question 18: Advisory Committee meeting for Safety & Security, asked if they will discuss rivalry.

Answer: Believes that students between both school districts will get along.

Question 19: Commented that a lot of student's consort / play together for youth athletic leagues. The Committee specifically discussed 6th grade students. We are not discussing today's 12th graders. Problems have not been observed currently.

Question 20: Commented that he doesn't believe that (rivalry) will be a major problem. It will be a small segment of students who will have issues with each other.

_____ (Public Questions resumed; see next section) [2]

Public Attendees

Question 1: In response to Dr. Hansen's update mentioning that the Feasibility Study is now entering into Phase 2, inquired what Phase 1 was.

Answer: The Phase 1 stage was the initiation of the Feasibility Study in the Spring which process identified McKeesport School District as the best match for Duquesne. There were positives and negatives examined between the school districts being considered (East Allegheny, McKeesport, and West Mifflin).

Question 2: From the recent Feasibility Study Advisory Committee meeting who spoke of a separate school district merger; inquired why he frequently spoke of the consolidation instead of considering a merger. Some of the facts provided regarding how the process with the combining of the School Boards will happen seem more in line with a merger.

Answer: That is correct. In terms of merger, it's well written in the School Code. Everyone in that meeting walked away with a good idea of what is meant by merger. What is more difficult to define is what will happen during a consolidation. It was the state legislators that chose that this should be a consolidation. This is Dr. Hansen's perspective (opinion) – what has the most flexibility that can bring these two districts together. A merger is very strict but it has been used in the past; consolidation not as much. Going the way of consolidation provides more flexibility – putting together the best of both school districts. There is pressure to meet the March 1, 2027 deadline. We have a lot of work to do. It is possible that the districts will merge instead but it will first go to legislators.

Feasibility Study/Consolidation Questions – Answers
Receiver Business Meeting
September 22, 2026

Question 3: Inquired if a merger would give the Duquesne community a more equal voice. At this point if feels like we are being told what to do.

Answer: Stated that the opportunity lays in both hands; the decision has to be what both parties want.

Question 4: Inquired as to what type of questions would be asked in the 6-8th grade student survey that will be released soon.

Answer: Both McKeesport and Duquesne students are to be targeted; it will be posted on both District's websites and parents will be alerted and will have the option to opt their student(s) out of participating.

Question 5: Inquired who chose the individuals for the Feasibility Advisory Board and if they volunteered.

Answer: Dr. Kerr and Dr. Mariani helped put together – members of the school and public community. Yes, they volunteered.

Question 6: Did these people sign up for this position or were they asked directly to be on the Advisory Committee?

Answer: Followed list provided from the PA Dept of Education as to who was asked.

Answer: Yes, they were asked. There were some categories – administrators, teachers, members of the school board, community members, etc.

Answer: Recently learned that from community members that a City of Duquesne Council member was interested in being included on the Advisory Committee. PDE category guidelines were followed to decide Committee members.

Question 7: Not sure if meeting dates will be aligned. Stated that they will discuss it amongst the Council members to see who will participate.

Answer: Meeting dates are set, if a council member is asked to be on it, then dates / times will be provided.

Answer: We followed the guidelines in the initial report. Advisory Committee appointments were identified from administration, teachers, unions and so forth. It was not necessarily an oversight, but we will ask if the City Council and/or Mayor can join. We want our community to be heard. Participation and discussions have been fluid. PFM will bring more clarity to the difference between merger and consolidation. The statute is clear in reference to consolidation.

Question 8: Try to keep patience with individuals asking questions prematurely. We've been down this route before. This may be new to you (administration) but it's not new to Duquesne.

Answer: Thank you.

Question 9: In August 2007, we were given two weeks to sign up our students for either East Allegheny or West Mifflin. Asked if there is a possibility of that occurring again.

Answer: That was an awful situation and we do not want to repeat that. We have to do everything in our power that if it does happen we have to make sure that it's what both parties want.

Question 10: McKeesport School District released a text / email to all staff inquiring who would like to be Advisory Committee members. Asked if that is what Duquesne did.

Feasibility Study/Consolidation Questions – Answers
Receiver Business Meeting
September 22, 2026

Answer: The District followed the guidelines and asked at the Community Forum (Aug. 11th) that if anyone was interested in participating to contact us.

Answer: It's a serious time commitment – we followed the guidelines; individuals did turn us down. We didn't intentionally leave anyone out.

Answer: The schedule has been set for the end of the work day. It was one of the District's requests to help ensure participation. We're committed to keeping everyone informed. It's to be a very transparent process, but it is a process. There is a meeting tomorrow to discuss what programs at Duquesne can be continued.

Question 11: At the end of the last Advisory Committee meeting, inquired who will make the final determination.

Answer: First the information will be reviewed by the PA Dept of Education; next it will be considered by the PA Secretary of Education who will then present it to the House / Senate for deliberation. They may send it back. It's not a done deal.

Question 12: Inquired if Dr. Kerr and Dr. Hansen represent the PA Dept of Education.

Answer: Yes, in two capacities – the Chief Recovery Officer (Hansen) and the liaison for the Feasibility Study. Dr. Kerr as the Court-Appointed Receiver. Another liaison has been assigned to the McKeesport School District. We are challenged to ensure that everyone has a voice.

_____ (School Board Questions began – see top section)

_____ (Public Comment resumed) [1]

Question 13: Inquired what happens after December 10, 2026.

Answer: Everything gathered during Phase 2 will be forwarded to the Project team, determine what is relevant and what can help us make a good decision and then present to the legislators. If the legislators cannot decide, it has to go back to the PA Dept of Education.

Question 14: Commented that after the Woodland Hills merger disaster, legislators said that they would not force another merger.

Answer: 500 school districts in the Commonwealth is too many for our size of state. There are many great schools but there has to be some sanity brought to how many districts there are. It's been a topic for about 30 years.

_____ (School Board Questions resumed – see top section) [2]

Question 15: We know that they (PDE) have (2) schools established, with McKeesport having multiple buildings, and inquired if Duquesne students will remain in the current building.

Answer: It is a priority that Duquesne elementary students stay here.

Question 16: Inquired that if they are just going to stay here, why don't they [PA Department of Education and legislators] leave Duquesne alone.

Time allotted for public Q & A expired at 6:08 PM; public Receiver Business Meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM.