

## **Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Regionalization Process**

**Q. What is being considered for the education of students from Newfield, Elmer and Pittsgrove?**

A. The boards of education of Pittsgrove and Newfield obtained a grant from the State of New Jersey to study the feasibility of joining together to form a PK-12 regional school district that would be responsible for educating the students from the three communities in grades PK through 12.

**Q. How will this be determined?**

A. If initially approved by the two boards of education, and authorized by the Commissioner of Education, the voters in each community will make the ultimate determination.

**Q. When would the referendum be held?**

A. At the time the petition is approved by the Commissioner of Education, a date for the election will be established. The law permits specific dates on which this type of election may be held. Currently, those dates would be special election dates in one of the following four months: January, March, September and December.

**Q. What happens if a community does not want to participate?**

A. Current law does not require a municipality whose voters do not approve joining a new regional school district to be forced to join that regional school district.

**Q. If this is approved by the voters, who will determine who is on the newly formed regional board of education?**

A. The Executive County Superintendent of Schools will appoint initial members of the board of education. Each of the members will be appointed for staggered terms. It is anticipated that the Executive County Superintendent will appoint individuals who currently serve on the boards of education in Pittsgrove and Newfield.

As was done when the South Hunterdon Regional K-12 school district was created, we anticipate that the new board will be formed prior to the start of the new regional, which will take place on a date selected by the Executive County Superintendent (typically on July 1 following the referendum). The

current boards of education will retain control and assist the new board of education until that date. On the selected date (again, typically July 1), the new board would be in control of the new regional.

**Q. How will the number of "seats" on the new board of education for each community be determined?**

A. The governance of the newly created regional school district will be dictated by statute and may be altered under certain circumstances with authorization from the Commissioner of Education. Pursuant to state law (*N.J.S.A. 18A:13-8*) the new regional board of education will consist of nine members.

Traditionally, the seats are allocated based upon the respective populations in each community that makes up the regional district. Population is based on the decennial United States Census. The goal of the statute is to allocate the members as nearly as possible to the respective populations in those municipalities.

The consultants presented the population of each community in the original Feasibility Study. According to the last Decennial Census, a nine member board would result in the following allocation: Elmer would have 1 member; Newfield would have 1 member; and Pittsgrove would have 7 members. However, the actual allocations will be computed by the Executive County Superintendent and may differ due to changes in the census data being used.

By agreement of the current boards of education and with the Commissioner's approval, this can be modified.

**Q. How will the regionalization impact current class sizes at Pittsgrove?**

A. Class sizes at Pittsgrove will be impacted minimally, if at all, with the addition of Newfield students. For example, Franklin enrolled some 134 Newfield students in the 2021-22 school year in grades PK-6. Pittsgrove runs approximately 5 homerooms per grade in the elementary schools leading to an increase of 3-4 students per class on average but this increase is likely overstated given that not all Newfield students will be educated in the regular classroom setting.

**Q. How will the regionalization impact Pittsgrove staffing if RIFs were to occur in Delsea and Franklin?**

A. Staffing in the new regional district will not be impacted by any reduction in force in the former receiving districts nor does the feasibility study anticipate

the need for significant reduction in force due to the termination of the current sending-receiving agreements. In the unlikely event that there are RIFs in Delsea or Franklin, necessitating the transfer of staff from Delsea/Franklin to Pittsgrove, it is anticipated that this additional staffing would not be disruptive as it would merely serve to fill vacancies occurring normally through attrition and retirement.

**Q. How will the phase-in of students to Pittsgrove's schools work?**

A. It is anticipated that a full phase in to the new regional will take approximately four years. Students will stay in their current schools in Franklin or Delsea until the time comes when they would transition to another school. The Phase-In is anticipated to look as follows based on current school grade configurations in Franklin and Delsea:

<b>Student Attending</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
Franklin or Delsea (grades)	1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12	2, 11, 12	12	Full Phase-out
New Regional (grades)	PK, K, 3, 5, 7, 9	PK, K, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	PK, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	PK, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

**Q. If a student from Newfield currently attends Gloucester County Vocational or is a school choice student in another district, does that student have to change schools as well?**

A. No, any student who attends either the vocational school or a choice school may remain in that school.

**Q. How many students, per grade level, would come to Pittsgrove?**

A. The number of students from Newfield that would attend Pittsgrove is minimal. Generally, the feasibility study projected a range from 17 students per grade (at the low end) to 33 students per grade (at the high end).

**Q. How do the proposed school tax rate in the regional school district compare to existing taxes for each community after five years? What is the projected annual tax savings per year for the average house?**

A. In the feasibility study, the consultants recommend a tax allocation formula for the new district based 50% on equalized property valuation and 50% on

enrollment. This allocation will allow all three communities to experience savings from this new configuration. Newfield, as the additional community being added to the Pittsgrove/Elmer consolidated district, brings with it the majority of the savings and therefore should see the largest share of tax relief. This allocation hedges future risk associated with major fluctuations to either the equalized value or enrollment in the three communities. Using a 50%/50% allocation balances the two extremes and protects against annual fluctuations that can be disruptive to communities. The following chart outlines the current tax levies and rates (current as of the data collected in the feasibility study) with the five year projection (column labeled "Five-Year Difference") and ten year projection (column labeled "Ten-Year Difference"). The savings identified for Elmer, Pittsgrove and Newfield are annual savings. (For further explanation of these numbers, please refer to the full feasibility study, available at [https://www.pittsgrove.net/newfield\\_feasibility\\_information](https://www.pittsgrove.net/newfield_feasibility_information))

		Five-Year Average Status Quo	Five-Year Average Unified District	Five-Year Difference	Ten-Year Average Status Quo	Ten-Year Average Unified District	Ten-Year Difference
Community:	Tax Levy	\$11,662	\$11,401	\$261	\$11,505	\$11,325	\$180
<b>Pittsgrove</b>	Rate	\$1.617	\$1.581	\$0.036	\$1.538	\$1.514	\$0.024
Community:	Tax Levy	\$1,968	\$1,870	\$98	\$1,942	\$1,845	\$97
<b>Elmer</b>	Rate	\$1.712	\$1.626	\$0.085	\$1.651	\$1.568	\$0.082
Community:	Tax Levy	\$3,615	\$2,632	\$983	\$4,004	\$2,800	\$1,204
<b>Newfield</b>	Rate	\$2.238	\$1.630	\$0.609	\$2.287	\$1.599	\$0.688
Community:	Tax Levy	\$10,396	\$11,178	-\$782	\$10,161	\$10,996	-\$835
<b>Franklin</b>	Rate	\$0.683	\$0.734	-\$0.051	\$0.633	\$0.685	-\$0.052
Community:	Tax Levy	\$14,809	\$15,664	-\$855	\$14,038	\$14,959	-\$921
<b>Delsea Regional</b>	Rate	\$0.743	\$0.786	-\$0.043	\$0.665	\$0.709	-\$0.044

Notes: Numbers in 1,000's; Annual School Tax Rate in \$100 Equalized Property Value

With regard to the impact on an individual home, all three communities are projected to experience savings. The below chart outlines the average annual impact.

Community	Home Assessment	5-Year Annual Impact	10-Year Annual Impact
Pittsgrove	200,000	175	\$ 158
Elmer	200,000	167	\$ 291
Newfield	200,000	1,705	\$ 1,685

**Q. Pittsgrove and Elmer currently offer tuition free preschool through Preschool Education Aid. Would the tuition free preschool be offered to all communities in the proposed regionalized district?**

A. Upon regionalization, it is expected that the amount of aid likely would continue. While the funding from the State may not cover 100% of the costs to educate all three communities' preschool population, the provision of this free education would be up to the new regional board of education.

**Q. What is the educational benefit to the students of Elmer, Pittsgrove, and Newfield?**

A. Students will have available to them a high quality educational program at both the elementary and secondary level and inherent advantages of a seamless PK-12 governance structure. The feasibility study also identified specific areas where the proposed regionalization may lead to educational enhancements. For example, a more robust shared curriculum development and implementation office would be able to provide additional resources due to the increased student population to each school to provide strong learning connections across the schools and grade levels. The effectiveness of the curriculum implementation function similarly can be improved through more robust data collection and analysis at the central office, school and professional learning community level. The feasibility study also recommend that the new regional district use some of the additional resources provided through the addition of Newfield students to expand educational capacity in a number of areas including the addition of teachers needed to maintain class sizes, strategies to address post-pandemic related issues, and for needed professional development.

**Q. Is there anything detrimental that we are not hearing about?**

A. All advantages and disadvantages are outlined in the study.

**Q. How does the new statute handle the laws regarding special services?**

A. Special education laws were untouched by the statute facilitating regionalization. The rights of special education students remain unchanged regardless of whether a new regional is created.

**Q. How does regionalization affect property values?**

A. Since educational achievement is predicted to improve, it is presumed that regionalization will have a positive impact on property values.

**Q. What happens to the debt service currently held by the individual districts?**

A. The debt service will become the responsibility of the new regional district and will be shared among all three communities.

**Q. Will forming a new district void contracts of existing Board employees?**

A. The recommendation in the feasibility study is the dissolution of the existing consolidated Pittsgrove/Elmer school district and the creation of a new PK-12 regional school district. Under this method, all existing collective bargaining agreements would be dissolved and the new PK-12 school district would negotiate new ones. However, as the current district already is a PK-12 district, the consultants do not anticipate any need to start the bargaining process from scratch. Instead, the new board and the new associations could agree to carry over the prior agreements.

The existing legal rights of staff are undisturbed; the creation of a new district would not expand or restrict these rights. For example, tenured employees' rights to employment remain and their salaries cannot be reduced.

**Q. Will the state contribute to the cost of transportation?**

A. Transportation aid is included in the amount of State aid a school district receives. To incentivize regionalization, recently enacted legislation allows newly-formed regional school districts through the 2028-2029 school year to receive State aid in an amount that is the greater of either: (1) the amount of State school aid that the newly-created regional school district would receive as a regional school district; or (2) the sum of the amount of State aid received by each school district constituting the newly-created regional school district prior to the creation of the regional school district. As a result, the newly-formed school district's transportation aid will not be impacted through the 2028-2029 school year.

**Q. Can the new district record its school board meetings so that those who can't attend can view them after the meetings?**

A. Yes, nothing prevents a board of education from recording its meetings. Many school districts live-stream their meetings and/or post a recording of their meetings on their website.

**Q. Are there any other towns who would like to join, particularly at the high school level?**

A. Additional potential members beyond Elmer, Newfield, and Pittsgrove have not been explored. If the new board of education is interested in pursuing this potential option, it can be explored.