

SENATE, No. 820

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 22, 1996

By Senator SCHLUTER

1 AN ACT establishing an Advisory Committee to study the governance
2 and organization of school districts and making an appropriation.

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4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

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7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that: although New Jersey
8 spends approximately 12 billion dollars a year on education, and has
9 the highest per pupil spending in the nation, a disproportionate amount
10 of these funds are used for overhead expenditures and do not reach the
11 children in the classrooms; in part, these high noninstructional costs
12 result from the large number of local school districts of varying sizes
13 and grade organization, which cannot take advantage of economies of
14 scale, thereby bearing a disproportionate administrative and overhead
15 cost; proposals to reduce the number of school districts through forced
16 regionalization or consolidation are inappropriate and unacceptable,
17 since this procedure is totally arbitrary and does not recognize the
18 benefits of "Home Rule," namely the regional diversity and local
19 support which are critical to a successful school system; the State
20 should consider the development of incentives for regionalization,
21 however, it is not clear which incentives are most appropriate; given
22 the diversity of this State, what is required is a variety of options and
23 approaches for school district structural modifications, a response
24 which is made difficult within the confines of the current organization
25 and governance of local school districts whose existence is determined
26 by municipal boundaries rather than by student demographics and
27 educational needs; this problem is exacerbated by a rigid governance
28 structure which does not permit schools and school districts to explore
29 new approaches to school organization and governance, approaches
30 which could improve the quality of education, foster efficiency in the
31 allocation of school funds and recognize the dramatic technological
32 improvements in the transmission and presentation of educational
33 programs; given these problems as well as the constitutional
34 requirement that the State must ensure a thorough and efficient
35 education in all school districts, it is in the best interests of the
36 students and all citizens of this State that a committee be established

1 to study the issue of school district organization and governance, in
2 order to develop and explore current options and new approaches
3 which, while always containing the principle of local consent, could be
4 utilized as local boards of education plan for their future growth and
5 development.

6 The Legislature further finds and declares that a case study should
7 be conducted in a county which is a microcosm of the State and which
8 reflects organizational patterns throughout the State, namely a number
9 of large regional high schools and a substantial number of small
10 elementary school districts, varying demographic patterns so that there
11 is a great disparity in space utilization and growth between the several
12 school districts, and a geographic distribution which would permit
13 reorganization outside of the confines of the traditional organization
14 and governance.

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16 2. There is established a program for a case study of the
17 governance and organization of public school districts. This study
18 shall be conducted on a pilot basis in a single county and shall utilize
19 the governance and organization of the school districts in a county of
20 the third class with a population of not less than 100,000 and not more
21 than 120,000 based upon the 1990 federal census.

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23 3. a. This study shall be conducted by an Advisory Committee to
24 consist of 28 members selected as follows:

25 (1) four municipal officials, one from each group of constituent
26 districts of each of the regional high schools in the county which is to
27 be utilized in the case study, to be selected at a meeting of all elected
28 municipal officials of the governing bodies of the county;

29 (2) one member of the county's board of chosen freeholders, to be
30 selected by that board;

31 (3) two members of the general public of the county, who are not
32 associated with educational activities, selected by the board of chosen
33 freeholders in consultation with the legislators representing the county;

34 (4) two members of boards of education of a regional high school
35 in the county, selected by all of the members of regional high school
36 boards of education in the county;

37 (5) two members of boards of education of an elementary school
38 district in the county, to be selected by all of the members of
39 elementary school boards of education in the county;

40 (6) one member of the board of education of the county vocational
41 school, to be selected by that board;

42 (7) one chief school administrator of a high school district located
43 in the county, to be appointed by the county superintendent of schools;

44 (8) two chief school administrators of elementary school districts
45 located in the county, to be appointed by the county superintendent of
46 schools;

1 (9) one high school principal, to be appointed by the county
2 superintendent of schools;

3 (10) two school business administrators, one from a high school
4 district and one from a K-8 district, to be appointed by the county
5 superintendent of schools;

6 (11) two classroom teachers who teach in the county, to be
7 selected by the majority bargaining unit for teaching staff members
8 within the county;

9 (12) the superintendent of the Educational Services Commission;

10 (13) a member of the State Board of Education, to be designated
11 by the State board;

12 (14) the county superintendent of schools, ex officio; and

13 (15) five members with knowledge and experience in education and
14 educational governance from areas of the State not included in the
15 case study, to be appointed by the Governor.

16 The members of the Senate and General Assembly representing the
17 county which is to be the subject of the case study and the
18 Commissioner of Education, or their respective designees, shall serve
19 as ex officio non-voting members of the committee.

20 b. The county superintendent of schools shall facilitate the
21 selection of Advisory Committee members of classes (1), (4) and (5)
22 above by calling meetings for their selection.

23 c. Vacancies in the appointed membership of the committee shall
24 be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made.

25 d. Members of the committee shall serve without compensation,
26 but shall be entitled to reimbursement for actual expenses necessarily
27 incurred in carrying out their duties as members of the committee,
28 within the limits of monies appropriated or otherwise made available
29 to the committee.

30 e. Appointments to the committee shall be made and qualified
31 within 60 days after the effective date of this act.

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33 4. The Advisory Committee shall hold an organizational meeting
34 within 30 days of the appointment and qualification of the full
35 membership of the committee, and shall elect a chairperson from
36 among its members and a secretary, who need not be a member of the
37 committee.

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39 5. It shall be the duty of the Advisory Committee to conduct a
40 study of the organization and governance of the school districts within
41 the county; to examine possible inefficiencies resulting from the
42 duplication of administrative functions, inadequate articulation and
43 coordination between elementary school and high school curricula or
44 other causes; review the demographic patterns within the county with
45 regard to space utilization within the schools; study the potential
46 impact and cost effectiveness of an integrated technology system on

1 the quality and availability of educational opportunities; examine
2 possible alternatives to the current governance or organization of the
3 county's school system including a county-wide school district, the
4 division and recombination of municipal school districts, alterations of
5 the current regional high school structure, the establishment of
6 county-wide magnet schools, the creation of one or several
7 county-wide or regional charter schools or any other changes or
8 innovations which would make the schools in the county more
9 efficient; to ensure that such changes would not only increase
10 efficiency but would also enhance the quality of education for all
11 pupils while maintaining local choice and local options; and, review the
12 statutes to determine what changes would be necessary or appropriate
13 to facilitate structural changes in the organization and governance of
14 the school districts within the county.

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16 6. The Advisory Committee shall be entitled to call upon the
17 assistance of the officers and employees of any State, county or
18 municipal department, board, bureau, commission or agency as it may
19 require and as may be made available to it to conduct its work, and
20 may incur such expenses as it may deem necessary, and as may be
21 within the limit of any funds appropriated or otherwise made available
22 to it, to fulfill its responsibilities. The committee shall also be entitled
23 to engage outside consultants and experts in the field of education and
24 education governance in order to assist the committee in completing
25 the study required by this act. When engaging outside experts and
26 consultants, the committee shall obtain at least three competitive
27 quotations. The successful consultant or expert shall be selected by
28 the committee on the basis of price and other factors.

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30 7. The Advisory Committee, within 18 months of its first
31 organizational meeting, shall submit to the Governor and the
32 Legislature a report setting forth the results of its study along with any
33 recommendations that the committee may wish to include. Upon
34 submittal of its report, the committee shall expire.

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36 8. There is appropriated from the General Fund the amount of
37 \$250,000 for the purposes of this act.

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39 9. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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44 This bill establishes a program for a case study of the governance
45 and organization of public school districts on a pilot basis, using a
46 single county as a demonstration project. Under the bill, the study

1 would be done in Hunterdon County. The study would be undertaken
2 by an Advisory Committee consisting of 28 members, including four
3 municipal officials, a freeholder, two members of the general public,
4 two regional high school board members, two elementary school board
5 members, a member of the county vocational school board, three chief
6 school administrators, a high school principal, two school business
7 administrators, two teachers, the superintendent of the Educational
8 Services Commission, a member of the State Board of Education, and
9 the county superintendent of schools, all from the county, and five
10 public members from other counties in the State. The Commissioner
11 of Education and the members of the Legislature representing the
12 county would be ex-officio, non-voting members of the committee.

13 The committee is to conduct a study of the organization and
14 governance of the school districts within the county; examine possible
15 inefficiencies resulting from the duplication of administrative functions
16 and other causes; review the demographic patterns within the county
17 with regard to space utilization within the schools; study the potential
18 impact and cost effectiveness of an integrated technology system on
19 the quality and availability of educational opportunities; examine
20 possible alternatives to the current governance or organization of the
21 county's school system including a county-wide school district, the
22 division and recombination of municipal school districts, alterations of
23 the current regional high school structure, the establishment of
24 county-wide magnet schools, the creation of charter schools or any
25 other changes or innovations which would make the schools in the
26 county more efficient; and review the statutes to determine what
27 changes would be necessary or appropriate to facilitate structural
28 changes in the organization and governance of the school districts
29 within the county.

30 The committee is to ensure that all recommendations maintain local
31 choice and local options, and would improve education in the school
32 system.

33 The bill appropriates \$250,000 for the work of the committee.

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38 Establishes a program for a case study of the governance and
39 organization of the several school districts within a county;
40 appropriates \$250,000.