



Legislative Analysis Division

A Division of the North Carolina General Assembly

Division of Local School Administrative Units

Decision Points for Committee Recommendations

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Decision Points

- Timeline for implementation
- Governance
- Transition of specialty schools
- Possible litigation issues
- Local budgeting
- Bonds and existing debt
- School capital
- Transportation and food services
- Other central administration and legal issues

Timelines and Governance

North Carolina Precedents

Timeline for implementation

- How much time is needed to transition between school systems?
 - In past mergers approved by the General Assembly, the transition period has been six months to 2 years, averaging around 1 year.
- **Decision Point: How long should the transition process be?**
- What needs to occur in this transition?
 - Referendum?
 - Establish new governance
 - Transition planning authority
 - Official start of unit

Referendum?

- Current merger laws provide an option for referendums in board of education initiated mergers.
- Mergers do not have to be submitted to voters, however.
- Some past session laws have made changes in school administrative units contingent on referendums – others have not.
- **Decision point: Should referendums be a component or option in the division process?**

Governance

- Past transition plans for school administrative units have frequently used an “interim board” to bridge the move to the new system.
- Interim board is usually in place at least 6-7 months prior to official date of new unit.

Governance

- **Decision Point: Who is on the interim board?**
 - May be elected by voters (usually requires longer time line to incorporate election cycle)
 - May be appointed by:
 - Prior board of education
 - County Commissioners
 - General Assembly
- **Decision Point: What happens to interim board on official date of new system?**
 - Frequently “converts” to the new board of the unit.
 - Depending on how created, may end term that fall or may continue to serve a designated term

Governance

- **Decision Point: How should the permanent board be constituted?**
 - Parameters are usually established by General Assembly
 - Could be elected by voters:
 - Nonpartisan or partisan
 - Even or odd years
 - Timing of election/timing to take office
 - Districts, at-large, or combination
 - Could be appointed by:
 - City council
 - County commissioners
 - General Assembly

Transition planning authority?

- In past mergers, General Assembly has empowered interim boards to do some or all of the following:
 - Make the budget request for the initial school year
 - Make contracting decisions – in some cases have required past employment contracts to be honored.
 - Make decisions on capital needs.
 - Make student assignment decisions.
- Upon the date of creation on new unit, board granted full powers of a local board of education under the General Statutes.
- **Decision Point: What authority should the interim board be given?**

Official start of unit

- All past changes in units appear to coincide with the start of the fiscal year and school year – July 1.
- Most session laws have used that as the official date to transition real estate holding, contracts, claims, etc. to the new unit.
- **Decision Point: Should July 1 be the official transition date for the system or should other dates be considered?**

Timelines and Governance

Clark County, Nevada Example

Nevada: Clark County Schools Deconsolidation

- Clark County Schools in Nevada, as of 2015, was the 5th largest school district in the United States, with more than 315,000 enrolled students. Nevada uses county lines to organize school systems.
- Beginning in 2015, the Nevada legislature began to examine concerns that “in the centralized operational model in large school districts, the operational structure and culture may result in an entrenched and inflexible operational paradigm where decisions are made by central services without regular, consistent or adequate examination, exploration and consideration of the particularized, specialized or localized circumstances, needs and concerns of each local school precinct.

Nevada: Clark County Schools Deconsolidation

- The enacted Nevada plan uses a model that keeps the existing county system for “central services” but makes each school within the large school district a “local school precinct” with greater authority.
- What can the local school precinct do?
 - Select and hire school personnel.
 - Procure equipment, services, and supplies to carry out plan of operation.
 - Create an annual balanced budget for the school.
 - Additional central authority can also be transferred under certain circumstances.

Nevada: Clark County Schools Deconsolidation

- What remains centralized?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary and benefits negotiations • Transportation • Food Services • Risk management services • Financial services (including payroll) • Equity and diversity services • Student with disability services • Legal services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building maintenance and repair/capital projects • Custodial services • English language learner master plan • Information technology • Police services • Emergency management services • State mandated assessments and accountability reports
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Nevada: Clark County Schools Deconsolidation

• Timeline?

- Initial legislation enacted in June 2015 and established advisory committee to develop plan.
- Advisory Committee met multiple times from October 2015 to July 2016.
- Advisory Committee retained technical consultant to develop plan in April 2016.
- Public input sessions were held in July and August 2016.
- State Board of Education approved plan in September 2016 with planning year for implementation in 2017-2018.
- State legislature enacted modification of plan in May 2017.

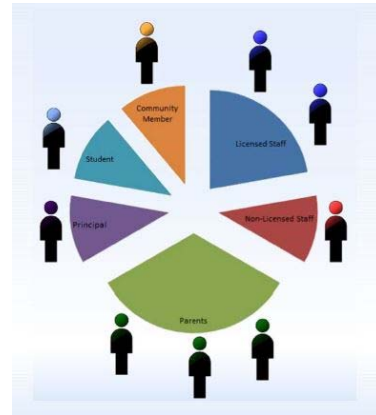
Nevada: Clark County Schools Deconsolidation

• Governance?

- Because county system was retained for “central services,” changes in governance were at individual school level.
 - Associate superintendents overseeing local school precincts hired with input from municipal and county governments
 - Organizational teams in each local school precinct to develop the plan of operation of the school.
 - Community education advisory boards created by the county commissioners or city boards to provide advice and assistance to organizational teams.

Nevada: Clark County Schools Deconsolidation

- Organizational Teams?
 - Consist of:
 - Principal (non-voting)
 - Teachers (selected by teachers).
 - Non-teacher school employee.
 - Parents (selected by all parents of enrolled students).
 - Students (elected by all students)
 - Non-voting advisory members of the community at-large.



Transition of Specialty Schools

What are Specialty Schools?

- Current law authorizes local boards of education to assign all students within the district to a specific school – often based on family address
- Many local boards of education have created programs that allow parents and students to select schools as an enrollment option:
 - Magnet schools
 - Cooperative innovative high schools
 - Career academies
- Some local boards of education have also created schools to serve certain special populations:
 - Students with disabilities
 - Alternative schools

How Could Specialty School Enrollment be Addressed?

- Short-term: Grandfather existing student enrollment
 - Allow currently enrolled students to remain enrolled in the specialty school attended at the time of transition for as long as they wish to remain at that school.
 - Allow unit where specialty school is located to count “out of unit” student for local funding purposes, and state funding to “follow the child” to that unit.

How Could Specialty School Enrollment be Addressed?

- Long-term:
 - MOU: Require access to specialty schools within the various units to be open countywide based on memorandums of understanding between the units to establish enrollment process and funding. Allow unit where specialty school is located to count “out of unit” student for local funding purposes, and state funding to “follow the child” to that unit.
 - Assumption: If a unit no longer wishes to operate a specialty school, offer other units the opportunity to assume running of the program, or existing charter schools in good standing to apply to assume the program.

How Could Specialty School Enrollment be Addressed?

- **Decision Points?**
 - **How should specialty school enrollment be addressed?**
 - Allow decisions to be made by new local units?
 - Grandfather existing students?
 - Establish long-term policy to maintain shared specialty schools or some other approach?
 - **Additional considerations?**
 - Funding needs – some specialty schools have higher per pupil costs
 - Capital issues – how to distribute long term infrastructure needs if a shared system is used