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STUDY SCOPE

Regional Cooperation Between Local Boards of Education

Focus

Regional cooperation between local boards of education can vary widely, from two school districts developing a cooperative arrangement to provide adult education together, to the creation of a regional school district serving children in grades K-12. This study will examine the prevalence, advantages, and disadvantages of such efforts and identify factors related to implementing, replicating, or expanding potentially beneficial regional cooperative efforts.

Background

Regional cooperation for educational purposes is authorized in a number of different statutes, including:

- Two or more local boards of education may enter into a cooperative arrangement to share programs and services “to enable such boards to carry out the duties specified in the general statutes.” (C.G.S. Sec. 10-158a)
- Two or more local or regional boards of education may enter into an agreement to establish a regional agricultural and technology center. (C.G.S. Sec. 10-64)
- A board of education that does not have a high school may send its students to a designated high school located in another school district per an agreement between the two boards. (C.G.S. Secs. 10-33 and 10-35)
- Regional educational service centers (RESCs) may be established at the request of four or more school boards with CSDE approval. (C.G.S. Sec. 10-166a)
- Two or more towns are permitted to establish a regional school district (C.G.S. Sec. 10-39).

Currently, more than a dozen high schools have regional agricultural science and technology centers that provide training for students planning a career in agriculture. There are 17 regional school districts in the state, with the most recent established in 1987 (Regional District #19, providing grades 9-12 for students in the towns of Ashford, Mansfield, and Willington). Six Regional Education Service Centers help boards of education communicate and collaborate in such areas as professional and curriculum development, special education, and human service programs.

Regional cooperation between local boards of education has been part of the efforts of the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR), regional planning organizations, and 2002 program review committee study of regional school district governance. The recent Municipal Opportunities & Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission also studied various aspects of regional cooperation between local boards of education, and the proposed PRI study is seen as complementing rather than duplicating these efforts. In 2015, proposed bill no. 778 required PRI to “study regional cooperative agreements between local boards of education.”

Areas of Analysis

1. Identify existing cooperative efforts between two or more local boards of education including:
 - a. Regional school districts
 - b. Regional Education Service Centers
 - c. Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Centers
 - d. Shared operational arrangements (e.g., administrative services, assistive technology equipment, procurement, transportation)
 - e. Shared instructional arrangements (e.g., shared staff, special education programs)
2. Describe selected cooperative efforts including:
 - a. Number of school boards of education involved per agreement
 - b. Relative proximity of the schools involved
 - c. Grade level of educational services involved
 - d. Duration of the agreement
 - e. Purpose of the agreement
3. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of certain regional cooperative efforts
 - a. Assess the impact of the agreement on costs, service offerings, or other outcomes
4. If examples are available, examine reasons why attempts to establish cooperative arrangements or regional school districts were not completed
5. Identify cooperative arrangements between local boards of education in other states
 - a. Determine if and under what circumstances any advantageous efforts may be replicated in Connecticut
6. Describe barriers to replicating and expanding advantageous regional cooperative efforts in Connecticut
 - a. Recommend methods and practices to overcome or minimize these barriers

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