



**WESTERN NEW YORK EDUCATIONAL SERVICE COUNCIL**  
Robert W. Christmann, Executive Director

May 13, 2014

[www.wnyesc.org](http://www.wnyesc.org)

Dr. Ralph Marino, Jr., Superintendent  
Horseheads Central School District  
One Raider Lane  
Horseheads, NY 14845

Dear Dr. Marino:

On behalf of the Western New York Educational Service Council, I am submitting the attached proposal to conduct a Reorganization Feasibility Study to assist the Elmira Heights Central School District and the Horseheads Central School District in analyzing whether a possible merger is in the best interests of both school communities.

We understand the comprehensive nature of the work to be completed as indicated in the Request for Proposals. We have broad experience with these types of studies having completed more than 35 similar projects since 1969. Our most recent efforts involved the Canton and Potsdam Central School Districts in St. Lawrence County, (currently nearing completion) and the Brocton - Westfield Central School Districts in 2013. The Brocton - Westfield work was given high praise by the Erie 2 BOCES District Superintendent, the two local superintendents and their boards of education, and most importantly, the focus groups and community committee members from whom we actively sought input. We would expect no less from the Canton and Potsdam participants. We were also very proud to have received the praise of Suzanne Spear, the New York State Education Department official who supervises and approves these studies. One of the measures of our success came in June, 2013 when, in a resident vote previously defeated based on a different consultant's work, both communities approved the "straw vote" by margins of 4-1 and 5-1. While their final vote was approved in one district and not in the other, we did our very best to create a positive result. We strongly encourage your reference checks on the quality of our work.

We are confident that we can complete this study project within the timeframes desired by both boards of education. Perhaps the most important consideration in selecting an organization is the qualifications and expertise of its consultants who will be conducting the study. We will form a team of highly qualified former district leaders who have previously completed reorganizational studies and who understand the culture and schools of the Southern Tier region. In addition to our work in completing reorganizational studies, we have done extensive previous work in the Horseheads Central School District over the last ten years. This specific prior and ongoing professional activity will form a foundation for our reorganizational study.

We are very pleased that you have given the Western New York Educational Service Council the opportunity to be considered for this study of great importance to so many individuals associated with the Elmira Heights and Horseheads Central School Districts.

Sincerely,

Robert Christmann, Executive Director  
Western New York Educational Service Council  
RWC/dab

Enc.

Graduate School of Education

**A  
PROPOSAL  
TO CONDUCT  
A  
FEASIBILITY STUDY  
FOR  
THE PURPOSE OF CENTRALIZATION  
OF  
ELMIRA HEIGHTS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
AND  
HORSEHEADS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Western New York Educational Service Council  
222 Baldy Hall – University at Buffalo  
Buffalo, New York 14260  
(716) 645-2932  
[www.wnyesc.org](http://www.wnyesc.org)**

**Robert Christmann, Executive Director  
May 2014**

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## **Technical Proposal:**

# **ELMIRA HEIGHTS AND HORSEHEADS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS CONSOLIDATION STUDY**

### **Introduction**

The Western New York Educational Service Council (WNYESC) submits the following proposal to the Elmira Heights and Horseheads Central School Districts relative to their interest in conducting a feasibility study to create a new consolidated, centralized school district comprised of these two districts, as well as determining any efficiencies other than through a merger.

The WNYESC is located on the north campus of the University at Buffalo within the Graduate School of Education. As such, it shares the vast resources of the University when providing services to school districts. The Council is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents and has conducted over 35 reorganization studies in New York State school districts and BOCES in its 42-year history, including our current work for the Potsdam and Canton Boards of Education. No other organization in New York State has completed as many merger studies as has the Western New York Educational Service Council. In addition, the Council's cadre of consultants has conducted dozens of audits and reviews in curriculum, finance, facilities, support services and human resources over the last three decades. A summary of those districts in which we have completed projects is attached at the end of this document.

The Study Team chosen by the WNYESC will be highly qualified to do this work. Its' consultants have an unusual depth and breadth of practical experience in the field and represents many years of consultant work in all critical areas of school operations and functions. Most of them are retired superintendents and assistant superintendents with roots in Western New York, who understand the culture and schools of the upstate New York region. They bring both objectivity and expertise to the process. Robert Christmann will serve as lead consultant. Mr. Christmann's biography is included in Appendix D. The team may also enlist other specialists for the study, as needed, to assist in gathering, reviewing and analyzing information.

Based on the collection of a wide array of data, site visits, surveys and several on-site meetings with representatives of both districts, the team will review, analyze and report each district's current status and compare that to a proposed centralized district and other plausible cost-savings options that could preserve student programs and community identities.

It is the conviction of the WNYESC that this study presents a unique opportunity for the Elmira Heights and Horseheads school communities to meet its identified goals and

objectives in conducting a reorganizational study for a possible consolidation of the two districts by accomplishing the following:

- a) Identify possible operational efficiencies which would be realized by combining the school districts.
- b) Determine the impact on educational opportunities for students which would result from combining the school districts.
- c) Provide an estimate of the potential cost savings and the impact on local property taxes, both short-term and long term, that would be realized by combining the school districts.

In addition, we believe that feedback from the staff and students, community leaders and residents of both districts are critical to the validity and success of any reorganization study. The process outlined in this document will reflect the expectations contained in your joint RFP.

## **A. PROCESS AND TIMELINES**

This proposal provides that the WNYESC act as the facilitating agent and primary resource to the two participating districts, its staff and community. Appendix A illustrates the timeline and organizational structure.

If selected, the WNYESC would initiate the study in a joint meeting of the two Boards of Education in July, 2014. At this time, the Boards will have the opportunity to pose any questions and entertain any discussion regarding reorganization, including Education Law or Regulations and Rules for Classified Civil Service pertaining to school district reorganization. The WNYESC will also recommend a process to work through the study. Essentially, the tentative timelines would be from July 2014 through September, 2015. (This date may be modified to meet Board expectations for the 2014-15 school year, or other recommendations brought forward in the final report.)

### **PROPOSED TIMELINE**

By May 16, 2014	Request for Proposal response submitted
By June 23, 2014	Consultant firm selected and contract signed for the commencement of the study
July-August, 2014	Boards of Education and team will meet to determine the Community Advisory Committee, its charge and to review entire proposal
September, 2014 -May, 2015	Data gathering and analysis, meetings with Community Advisory Committee, Superintendents and Boards of Education
February, 2015	Mid-Study review to joint Boards of Education

### PROPOSED TIMELINE (cont'd)

June, 2015	Draft of final report submitted to SED and both Boards of Education
September, 2015	Final feasibility report will be presented to the boards and adopted with revisions if desired.
October-November, 2015	Public meetings to review the final report
December, 2015	Advisory referendum
January, 2016	Statutory referendum
July, 2016	Start of new district

### **B. SCOPE OF WORK TO BE PERFORMED**

Based on site visits and data collection, the feasibility study will form the basis of the fundamental review of all instructional programs as well as the overall cost analysis. It is expected that the feasibility study will focus on a detailed analysis of critical functions for each district separately and as a centralized district.

We envision four categories of essential function areas to be studied...

- a) Finance and Facilities,
- b) Community Culture and Support Services,
- c) Curriculum, Instruction and Student Programs,
- d) Human Resources and Proposed Staff Organization,

...which will include the following topical areas:

Students/Enrollment Trends  
Educators/Personnel  
Business Office Operations  
Financial/Tax Trends  
Community/School Demographics  
Economic Impact on Each Community  
Transportation Services  
Food Services  
Athletic Program Management  
Curriculum Coordination

Class Scheduling  
Facilities Management  
Human Resources  
Instructional Information Services [student data management]  
School District Reorganization  
Technology and Use Coordination  
Application to State Aid Formula  
Financial Impact on Building Aid  
SED Rules and Regulations Relative to Changes in Union Contracts

Additional topical areas may be included as developed through facilitation in preliminary meetings with the Superintendents, participating Board of Education members, business/community members, district and building administrators and parents, students and staff. The consultant team may suggest additional functions and will cooperate fully with SED representatives in regard to every aspect of this feasibility study.

Obviously, there will be overlapping information among these categories. In more detail, these functions may include:

### **1) Financial and Economic Analysis**

#### **Finance and Facilities Committee**

- a) Closely analyze cost projections and savings wherever possible.
- b) Review prior and current year expenditure, revenue, property wealth and tax rate patterns for each district.
- c) Given enrollment trends and demographics, develop assumptions and project a budget for the consolidated district.
- d) Project the impact of Foundation Aid and Incentive Aid on tax rates in a consolidated district.
- e) Identify the financial advantages and disadvantages of a consolidated district.
- f) Make recommendations for economies and efficiencies with or without a consolidation.
- g) Review each district's use and application of technology platforms.
- h) Review the existing facilities of each district (age, use, condition, future needs and potential construction costs).
- i) Project the facilities needed should a consolidation occur, including the use of buildings and needed refurbishment and construction.
- j) Estimate the cost of refurbishment and new construction in a consolidated district that reflect the impact of incentive aid and other applicable state aids.

**2) Community Culture (demographics and traditions) and Support Services Analysis (transportation, food services, business offices, technology)**

**Community and Support Services**

- a) Review the historic origin and growth of the two communities and their schools.
- b) Analyze student enrollment projections.
- c) Monitor community feedback on websites through surveys and blogs.
- d) Identify demographic similarities and differences as seen historically in their commitment to public education.
- e) Review each district's transportation, custodial and maintenance, and food services programs, including any that are privatized.
- f) Review each district's capital equipment devoted to transportation, buildings and grounds, and food services, as well as personnel and other costs.
- g) Review the use and application of technology in each of these services.
- h) Project what the transportation policies, fleet, staffing and facilities might look like in a consolidated district and how "green thinking" could expedite and economize.
- i) Project what the buildings and grounds and food services policies and staffing might look like in a consolidated district.
- j) School board governance.
- k) Meet with each town assessor to gather data to assess pending charges and any potential impacts.
- l) Meet with local employers identified by both districts to determine their employment projections, employment historical averages, any anticipated business expansions or future pilot programs as well as longevity expectations.

**3) Student Program Analysis (enrollment trends, curricular and extra-curricular programs, including sports)**

**Curriculum, Instruction and Student Programs**

- a) Review and analyze similarities and differences in the instructional programs PK-12 in each district, including the educational programs for students with special needs, programs contracted through BOCES, and PK-16 programs partnered with colleges and universities, identifying increased educational opportunities for students as well as increased resource efficiencies as a result of centralization and a detailed analysis of all classroom programs.
- b) Given the enrollment trends and projections, review and recommend a grade level structure in both ends of the consolidated district that meets the learning needs of the children and takes advantage of the existing or future facilities.
- c) Review and analyze the similarities and differences in the instructional technology platforms, data reporting systems and major programs in each district with recommendations for possible enhanced student opportunities and increased technology efficiencies.



- d) Review the co/extra-curricular programs and make recommendations for possible increased student opportunities.
- e) Review the athletic programs, and recommend how they might expand, combine and be managed.
- f) Brainstorm the many, varied, creative program opportunities that a consolidated district could offer all students, including cutting edge technology, entrepreneurship and others.

**4) Human Resources Analysis (instructional, non-instructional and district office staffing and contracts)**

Human Resources and Staff Organization

- a) Review how each district is organized and governed administratively and instructionally.
- b) Review the current professional and civil service staffing of each district.
- c) Project how a consolidated Board and school staff would transition and be structurally organized.
- d) Review and analyze each district's staff contracts or negotiated agreements for similarities and differences that would need to be addressed in a possible consolidation of the districts.
- e) Review the recruitment and interview processes for hiring new staff as well as retention practices for similarities and differences that would need to be considered in a possible consolidation.

**C. METHODOLOGY AND WORK PLAN**

The consultant team will meet regularly and facilitate a kick-off and subsequent progress sessions for the school districts. There will also be opportunities for school and community participation, as well as Board of Education members, relative to the progress and preliminary findings of the feasibility study.

In order to attain the broadest and most comprehensive perspectives from the two school communities there will be two levels of participation:

1. A Joint Districts' Committee consisting of approximately 10 representatives from each community, appointed by each school board. The group would meet with the consultant team several times (typically 5-6 sessions) up to monthly over the study period to verify and analyze the data, as well as to develop and provide insights.

2. In addition to coordinating efforts with the Joint Districts' Committee in each district, the team will conduct Focus Group meetings and focus interviews in each district so that a wider group of school and community members can be involved in the study. These focus group meetings/interviews serve two purposes. The first is to allow the team members to present vital information relative to the work being done to all who attend the focus group

sessions. The second is to gather input from many sources that will be used to provide a wider community perspective. Suggested focus groups include but are not limited to parents, teachers, support staff, students, building and district administration, union representatives, booster organizations, senior citizens, and business/community leaders. In addition, individual representatives will be interviewed using a standardized interview format and questions so that many people will have input to the same areas of concern and interest. This collection and analysis of perception data will be important as the study moves to completion. All meetings will be open to the public. We will advise and assist the district with media and public information related to the study. There will be updates provided to the Greater Southern Tier District Superintendent

3. There will be regular contact with both school superintendents to provide information to and seek advice from these school leaders.

#### **D. GATHERING THE DATA AND REPORTING TO THE DISTRICT**

The Council's consultants will acquire the necessary information from many sources. First, they will request a list of information documents from each district's officials, as noted in Appendix C. There are numerous websites, including SED, which will provide even more. Members who serve on the Joint Districts' Committee or in Focus Forum Groups will add anecdotal and first hand background information as well.

Appendix B helps to illustrate the data gathering process. Information in all of the essential function areas (Financial Data Analysis, Community Culture Analysis (including demographics and enrollment), Student Program Analysis, and Human Resources Analysis) will be gathered for each district and then for a combined district.

It is important to note that some of the essential function areas are critical to most of the other components. For example, Demographics and Enrollment affect facilities, finance, curriculum, support services – virtually everything. As such, we will analyze live birth data and historical enrollment data in using the statistically appropriate projection method of cohort survival.

Also, Technology now impacts many school district programs and operations, including business functions, management systems, student learning, and communication. In each district there will no doubt be differences in technology that will be analyzed carefully in the recommendations for the Combined Services Report.

A mid-study report will be submitted to the Joint Board in March, 2015, and it will include data summations and progress. Within the final report to the districts, the WNYESC consultant team will include two types of reports: Individual District Reports and Combined Services Reports, both of which will be presented in narrative format and include supporting details. Individual District Reports will include information as to current levels of effectiveness or ineffectiveness in the finalized list of recommendations with cost projections and savings as to any functions under centralization. The Combined Services Report will be presented to both districts and the BOCES and include narrative

information and data-supported recommendations for centralization, or other plausible efficiencies and organizational configurations.

It is anticipated that the recording and reproduction of minutes from the Joint Districts' Committee will be the responsibility of the district hosting the meeting (alternating sites for meetings). Consultants will keep minutes and participation lists from the Focus Group meetings and provide them to the district within five working days. The cost of reproducing copies of the final document for distribution at public meetings will be assumed by each of the districts for their communities. Any costs related to preparation of the copy ready for the final report will be borne by the Service Council.

All of the data gathered and analyzed will help to generate Individual District Reports which will impact the Combined Services Report. The committees and reports will pay close attention to cost projections and savings. The key in the process is to find which programs and systems are effective, which ones are ineffective or outdated, and then, if feasible and attractive to both communities, build new ones for the future.

As stated earlier, interim and final reports will be made to the Elmira Heights and Horseheads Boards of Education and each community. The final report and accompanying recommendations will be made in a combined meeting by the consultants prior to any board approval of an advisory vote. If requested, the consultants will provide presentations to each community in public pre-referendum sessions.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

With its broad and deep experience serving school districts in Western New York, the WNYESC is uniquely qualified to conduct this Feasibility Study for the purpose of centralizing the Elmira Heights and Horseheads Central School Districts. It has the vast resources of the State University of New York at Buffalo, a full time office staff and a cadre of skillful, experienced consultants.

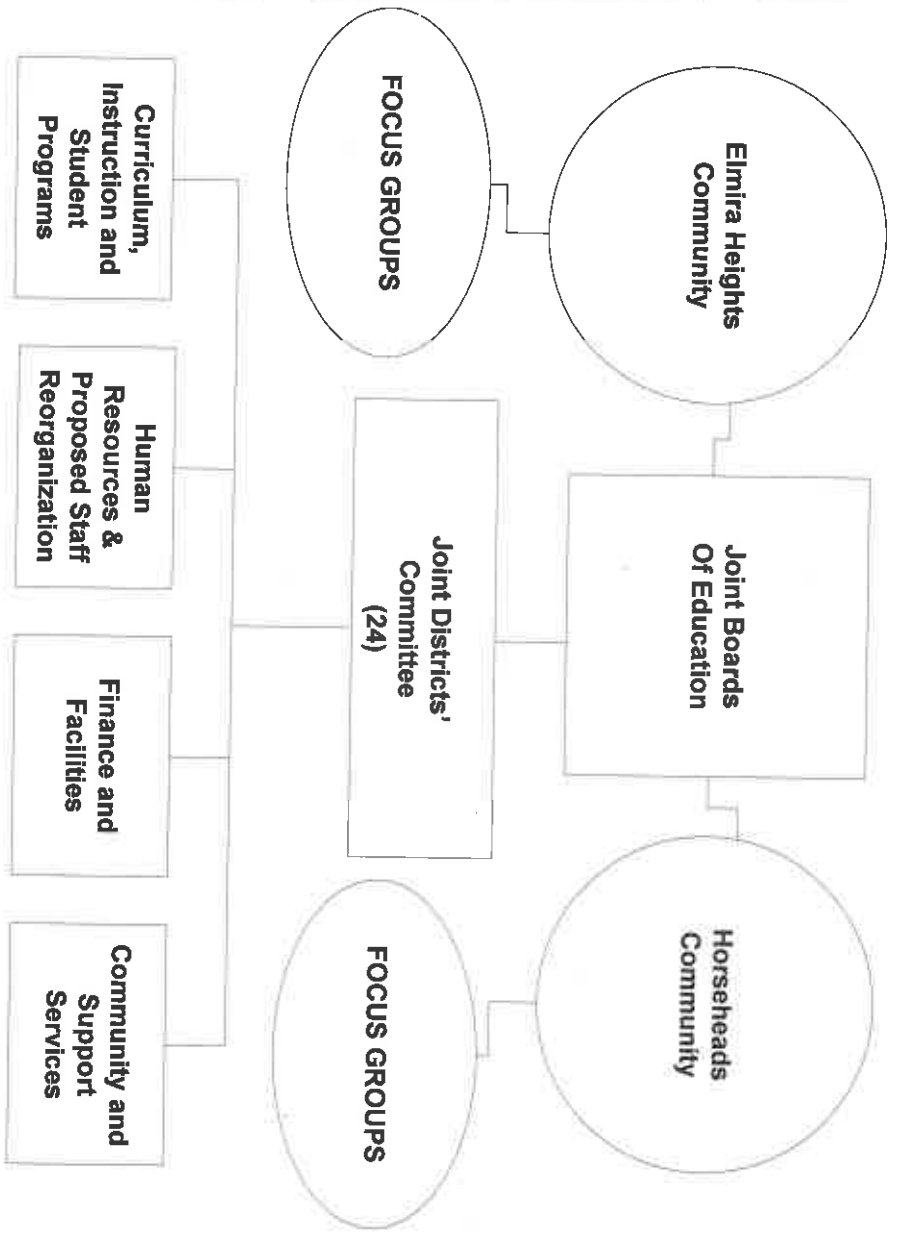
We believe this study presents an extraordinary opportunity for the two communities to review the strengths and resources of each system. This review will result in a projection of how a new, combined district or other efficiencies and organizational configurations could benefit student educational and support programs, fiscal stability and community relationships.

**TIMELINES**

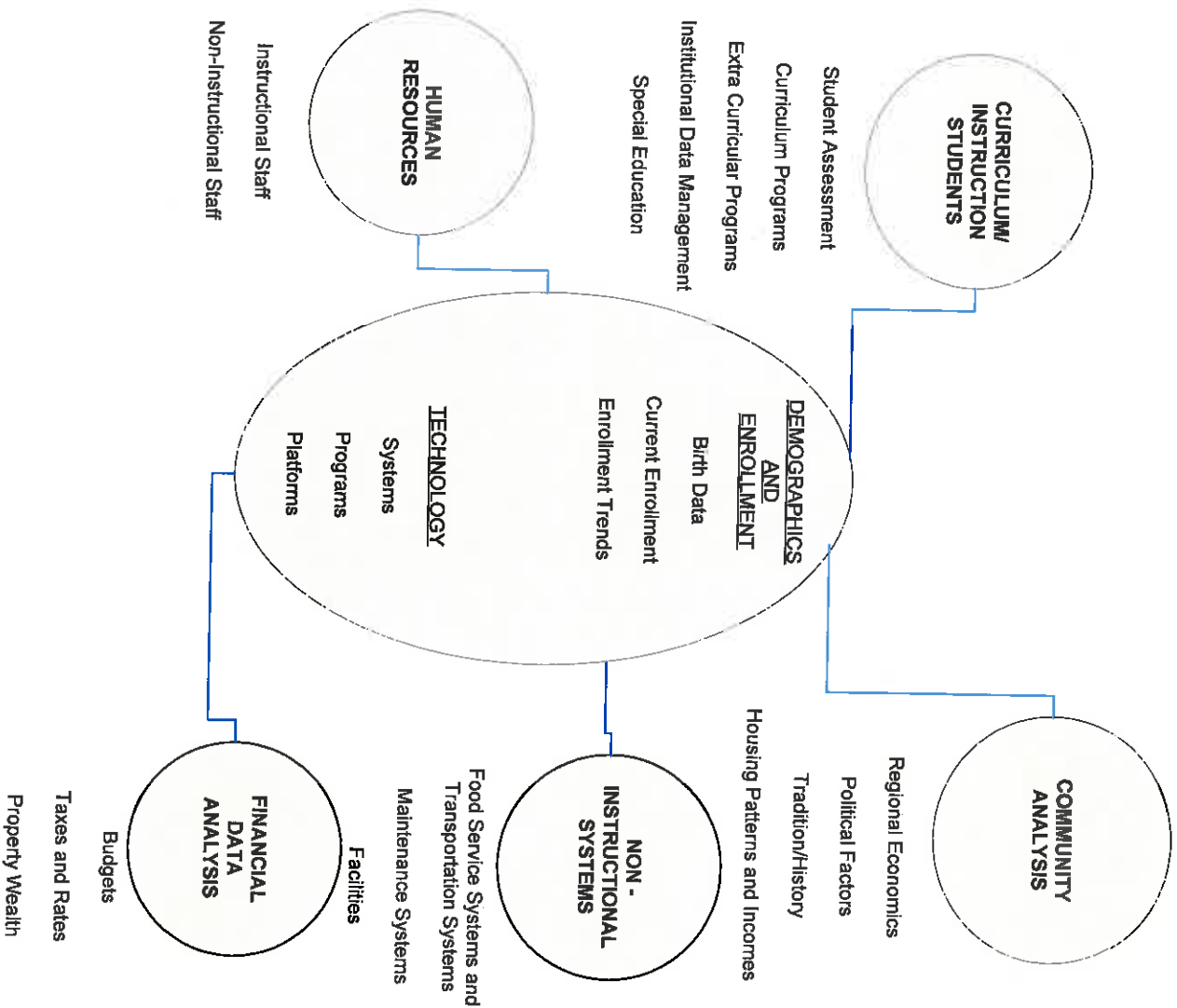


**Appendix A  
Timeline and Organizational  
Structure**

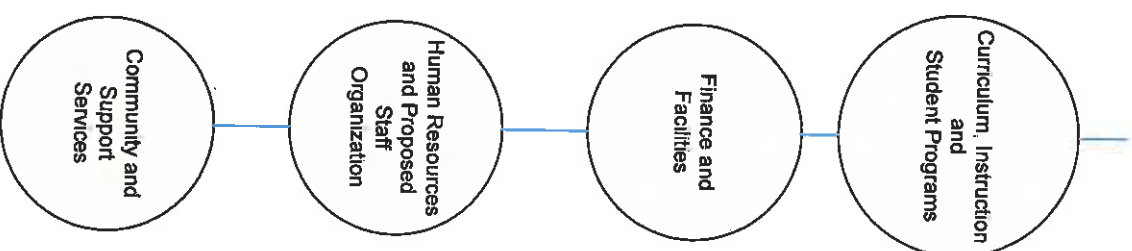
**ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS**



## Appendix B Essential Function Reports For Each District



### COMBINED SERVICES REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS



## Appendix C

### Information Request List

1. Instructional and Non-instructional Contracts by District
2. Staffing numbers for Instructional and Non-instructional Staff by District
3. BOCES Shared Services Participation by District
4. Organizational Charts by District
5. Bus Fleet by District
6. Grade Level Configuration by District
7. Overview of School Performance by District as reported on the New York State Report Card
8. Current Building/District Enrollment
9. Enrollment of Students Attending Private/Parochial Schools by District
10. Facility and Capacity Use of Building by Building/by District
11. Transiency of Student Enrollment by Building by District
12. Building Data/Condition by Building/by District
13. Technology Platforms, Management and Staffing
14. Special Education Programs and Shared/Purchased Services
15. Building Level Schedules
16. Financial Data Reports and Budgets

## APPENDIX D

### **BIOGRAPHY ROBERT CHRISTMANN LEAD CONSULTANT**

In his 45 year educational career, Robert has served as an elementary and middle school teacher, an elementary and secondary principal, an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction and for the past 22 years as a New York State Superintendent. Following his retirement in October, 2012 as Grand Island Central School District Superintendent, he continued to serve the school district as its interim superintendent until January 2013.

He served for eight years as an adjunct professor through SUNY Oswego in the full year Superintendent Development Program which prepares administrators to become future Superintendents.

He served as an elected school board member in the Kenmore-Tonawanda UFSD. He has represented superintendents on a statewide basis as a member of the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) House of Delegates, Executive Committee, Commissioners Advisory Council and as an officer, including the presidency of the organization through 2012.

On a national level, he continues to serve as an elected member of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Governing Board through June, 2015.

He has frequently spoken at local, statewide and national conferences and workshops and remains active in many service organizations and community activities.

His leadership and service too many educational and civic groups have earned him numerous awards.

## Appendix E

### Previous Reorganization Studies Completed by the Western New York Educational Service Council

<u>Date</u>	<u>Districts</u>
Current	Canton and Potsdam Central School Districts
2013	Brocton and Westfield Central School Districts
2009	Brocton and Fredonia Central School Districts

### Reference Contacts

William Gregory  
Superintendent  
Canton Central School District  
99 State Street  
Canton, NY 13617  
(315)386-8561  
[wgregory@ccsdk12.org](mailto:wgregory@ccsdk12.org)

Patrick Brady  
Superintendent  
Potsdam Central School District  
29 Leroy Street  
Potsdam, NY 13676  
(315)265-2000  
[pbrady@potsdam.k12.ny.us](mailto:pbrady@potsdam.k12.ny.us)

Thomas Burns  
District Superintendent  
St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES  
P.O. Box 231  
139 State Street  
Canton, NY 13617  
(315)386-4504  
[tburns@sllboces.org](mailto:tburns@sllboces.org)

John Hertlein  
Superintendent  
Brocton Central School District  
138 West Main Street  
(716)792-2173  
[jhertlein@broc.wnyric.org](mailto:jhertlein@broc.wnyric.org)

Dr. David O'Rourke  
District Superintendent  
Erie 2 BOCES  
8685 Erie Road  
Angola, NY 14006  
(716)676-8753  
[dorourke@e2ccb.org](mailto:dorourke@e2ccb.org)

David Davison  
Superintendent  
Westfield Central School District  
203 East Main Street  
Westfield, NY 14787  
(716)326-2151  
[ddavison@wacs2.wnyric.org](mailto:ddavison@wacs2.wnyric.org)



**Prior Western New York Educational Service Council District Involvement  
(most recent 10 year period)**

Akron Central School District  
Alden Central School District  
Allegany-Limestone Central School District  
Altmar Parish Williamstown Central School District  
Amherst Central School District  
Baldwinsville Central School District  
Binghamton City School District  
Brunswick Central School District  
Byron-Bergen Central School District  
Canandaigua City School District  
Chatham Central School District  
Corning Central School District  
Cornwall Central School  
Delhi Central School District  
Depew Union Free School District  
Dryden Central School District  
East Aurora Union Free School District  
Elmira City School District  
Enlarged City School District of Middletown, New York  
Enterprise Charter School  
Fairport Central School District  
Florida Union Free School District  
Frontier Central School District  
Genesee Valley Central School District  
Global Charter School  
Grand Island Central School District  
Green Tech High Charter School  
Greenwood Lake Union Free School District  
Hamburg Central School District  
Honeoye Falls-Lima Central School District  
Horseheads Central School District  
Keshequa Central School District  
Lakeshore Central School District  
Lancaster Central School District  
Marcus Whitman Central School District  
Medina Central School District  
Mexico Academy and Central School District  
Monticello Central School District  
North Collins Central School District  
North Rose-Wolcott Central School District  
North Tonawanda City School District  
Olean City School District  
Oneonta City School District  
Orange-Ulster BOCES  
Orchard Park Central School District  
Oswego City School District  
Pembroke Central School District  
Penfield Central School District  
Penn Yan Central School District  
Pine Plains Central School District  
Rome City School District  
Seaford Union Free School District  
Shenendehowa Central School District  
Skaneateles Central School District  
South Colonie Central School District  
South Orangetown Central School District  
Springville-Griffith Institute and CSD  
Sullivan West Central School District  
Taconic Hills Central School District  
Tonawanda City School District  
Vestal Central School District  
Warwick Valley Central School District  
Wayne Central School District  
Webster Central School District  
Warren County School District(Pennsylvania)  
Whitney Point Central School District

**Horseheads–Elmira Heights Central School Districts  
Financial Summary**

Western New York Educational Service Council  
University at Buffalo  
222 Baldy Hall  
Buffalo, New York 14260-1000

This document certifies that Robert Christmann, is the Executive Director of the Western New York Educational Service Council, duly appointed by the Board of Directors on October 1, 2012. He is thereby empowered to submit any and all bids and to sign contracts on behalf of the organization.

The Total All-inclusive Maximum Price for the Feasibility Study and Reports as submitted is \$49,000. The Western New York Educational Service Council will not seek reimbursement for travel, lodging, meals or any other out-of-pocket expenses in connection with the completion of the Feasibility Study.

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Robert W. Christmann  
Executive Director  
Western New York Educational Service Council

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Date

## Schedule of Professional Fees and Expenses

### 1. Professional Fees

The 3-4 member team involved in the study anticipates a minimum of 60 full work days at a rate of \$700. per day, for a maximum total not to exceed \$42,000.

### 2. Support Services Fees

Includes secretarial support, materials, copying, travel expenses, research and technical specialists \$ 7,000.

Total All-Inclusive Maximum Price for Feasibility Study \$49,000.

## Additional Professional Fees and Expenses

Additional professional services as requested by the School Districts to perform work agreed upon as an extension of the services necessary and provided for the completion of the proposal shall be offered at the rate of \$700. per consultant day, plus the necessary and documented expenses.

## Manner of Payment

Unless there is further discussion and agreement to the contrary at the initial meeting of the districts' teams, all payments will be made to the Western New York Educational Service Council in two (2) installments as follows:

August, 2014	\$ 5,000
February, 2015	\$22,000
Upon completion of the final report	\$22,000