

Tri-District BOE Statement (March 2022)

The Boards of Education of Atlantic Highlands Elementary, Highlands Elementary, and Henry Hudson Regional would like to update the community regarding the school districts' dedication to investigating school regionalization, and it is our position that the schools should lead the investigation into school regionalization rather than the municipalities. The schools have been working diligently to stay up-to-date on state and local developments while moving forward with a state-funded regionalization study. Here are some facts demonstrating the schools' commitment to exploring regionalization:

- the three school districts applied for, and in May of 2021 were awarded, a \$65,000 Local Efficiency Achievement Program Grant (or LEAP grant) from the state of New Jersey to investigate TWO possibilities:
 - the feasibility of consolidating our 3 schools into one district
 - the feasibility of consolidating our 3 schools plus neighboring districts into one district
- over the summer and fall of 2021, the school districts moved forward with the LEAP grant, including receiving and approving proposals from experts in four areas: a legal analysis, demographic study, facilities analysis, and educational assessment/finance analysis
- in January 2022, contracts with the following experts were signed and their work began:
 - The Busch Law Group – Legal Analysis
 - Ross Haber Associates – Demographic Study
 - SSP Architects – Facilities/Physical Plant Analysis
 - Kean University – Educational Assessment and Educational Finance Analysis
- the school districts anticipate that all experts will complete their analyses by May 2022, giving schools time to make recommendations regarding what is in the best interests of school and town communities

We believe that it is critically important to wait for the LEAP study to be completed to ensure that we fully understand the recommendations of the experts (legal, demographic, facilities, educational/financial) regarding whether and in what form regionalization might best meet the needs of the school and town communities. While the 3 schools already have many shared services, we look forward to sharing even more services to further align curriculum, programming and opportunities for students *and* to ensure fiscal responsibility and greater efficiencies in school operations. Community members who have questions or concerns about regionalization or the LEAP grant should contact the Tri-District Superintendent, Dr. Tara Beams, who is best suited to answer questions at this time. We also welcome community members to attend our respective school board meetings where updates on regionalization have and will continue to be shared on a regular basis.