

South Hunterdon Regional High School

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Findings of Regionalization Study to Be Released at Public Meeting February 8

A feasibility study to determine whether it makes financial and educational sense to combine local school districts is nearly completed. The study's findings will be released at a public meeting scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, at the South Hunterdon Regional High School auditorium. Residents from Lambertville, Stockton, and West Amwell are encouraged to attend.

For several years, local school officials have been investigating whether there would be educational and financial benefits to combining up to four existing school districts—Lambertville, Stockton, and West Amwell elementary schools, along with South Hunterdon Regional High School—into one new regional district serving students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The feasibility study, which is required by the state as a first step toward regionalization, is meant to provide a realistic understanding of the educational and financial benefits and disadvantages of unifying the four local districts. The study, conducted by the Princeton consulting firm Porzio Bromberg & Newman took more than five months to complete. Experts from the firm will provide an overview at the meeting, and will answer questions that local residents and school or municipal officials have about the study's findings and the regionalization process.

"We are anxious to find out what recommendations the study contains for the future of education in southern Hunterdon County," said Dan Seiter, chairman of the South Hunterdon County School District Regionalization Committee. "Hopefully, the study will contain some attractive options that would enable us to save money while also improving the quality of education for our local students."

Seiter noted that the South Hunterdon County School District Regionalization Committee, which includes members of the Lambertville, SHRHS, Stockton, and West Amwell school boards as well as representatives from each of the three local communities, has set up a website to keep the public informed about the regionalization process. The website address is <http://www.southcountyregionalization.com>. "We expect to post the full text of Porzio's report on the website when it's ready, probably a day or so before the February 8 meeting," Seiter said.

Porzio's overview of the feasibility study will concentrate on four areas: analysis of the demographics of the four local school districts, with projections about future enrollment; review of the educational quality of the four local districts' current programs, and whether combining school districts could improve those programs; examination of the financial impact of

regionalization, to determine the effect on local property taxes and whether any savings could be achieved through consolidating the four districts; and investigation of the legal ramifications of undertaking such a step, should it prove to be feasible.

Should the feasibility study indicate that regionalization will deliver fiscal and educational benefits, an advisability report would be requested of the County Superintendent. That advisability report would then represent the second of five steps to regionalization. (Information about the five steps to regionalization can be found on the website <http://www.southcountyregionalization.com>). Ultimately, the three communities would be provided the opportunity to vote via a referendum prior to any plan of regionalization being implemented.

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