

MILLTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Milltown, New Jersey 08850 – 1643

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Consolidation:

- Milltown, Helmetta and Spotswood currently have a successful send-receive relationship.
- The original legislation called for all non-operating districts to be dissolved by spring 2009 but that was delayed a bit...at this point all non-operating districts have been merged with their send-receive district. Residents of those towns did not vote on the measure and that was not a surprise since it was in accord with the state statute. Helmetta is a non-operating district, all Helmetta students attend Spotswood Schools K-12. One board member from Helmetta has now joined the Spotswood Board of Education and in the spring 2010 Helmetta residents along with Spotswood residents may run for all 5 seats on that Board.
- Before consolidation may proceed a feasibility study (funded by the State of NJ) will take place to determine if it is financially feasible for the consolidation of any K-8 district into a K-12 school district. In Middlesex County there are 3 possible consolidation opportunities: Milltown with Spotswood; Jamesburg with Monroe; and Cranbury with Princeton (Mercer County). To date no feasibility studies have been completed. Recently the state announced that 12 pilot feasibility studies from various places around New Jersey will take place this fall. No school district in Middlesex County is involved with the pilot.
- After the feasibility study, a plan must be created by the Executive County Superintendent and is due to the Commissioner of Education (Lucille Davy) in March 2010. After review and approval by the Commissioner voters will see the plan.
- Once a consolidation plan is approved by the Commissioner, it will go before voting taxpayers at the next school board/budget election either in April 2010 or in November if the school board election is moved to the time of the general election. At this time, there will not be a special election since this would be an additional cost to the taxpayer and the goal is to reduce taxes.
- The voters in both towns (for example Milltown and Spotswood) would both have to approve the consolidation plan in order for it to move forward, as the legislation is now written.
- If and when a consolidation plan is approved by voters in both towns, a new Board of Education (BOE) will be formed to include representatives from each town in proportionate share.
- Once the new BOE is formed, an interview process would take place to determine the leadership of the new consolidated district. The new BOE would select the new Superintendent, Business Administrator, and other Central Office administrators.
- Students would continue to attend their "neighborhood" schools except of course for the high school. Staff may be moved to other schools, but students would not unless there was a specialized program in one location that was not in every location and the student would need

to attend that program (such as those driven by an IEP). Busing of students would be very costly thereby defeating one of the reasons to consolidate.

- Before consolidation could move forward, salary guides, benefits packages, and other contract language would have to be resolved between the districts to ensure consistency in every area. One negotiated agreement would cover all unionized personnel and other guides would have to be developed for all those in any bargaining unit.

Points to Consider:

- Milltown is currently configured to minimize cost and be sensitive to the taxpayers. We do not have a stand-alone superintendent of schools. This position was eliminated 5 years ago. The superintendent is also the principal of the Pre-K to grade 3 school (known as a CSA). There are no vice-principals in the district and no guidance department. The only administrators are the CSA (Chief School Administrator), the Principal of Joyce Kilmer School, the Business Administrator, and the Director of Student Support Services. The Director of Student Support Services is in charge of all special education related services, budgets, and evaluations; as well as the Gifted and Talented/Enrichment program, Pre-K Expansion, and also assists with the Basic Skills Improvement Program. In addition, she is responsible for the IDEA grant and much of the ASSA report, both are annual responsibilities.
- Eliminating the “Central Office” of either district to save money in the consolidation will not eliminate the CSA since that person in Milltown is also the principal of a school and cannot, by law, be removed. The only positions that are duplicated are the business administrator and the director; however, due to the increased work load there would probably have to be support added to the new central office to assist the appointed business administrator and director of the new consolidated district.
- A new Board of Education would have to be established (elected) that would represent the populations appropriately. For example, right now there are 9 BOE members on the Milltown BOE, 5 members on the Spotswood BOE, and 3 members were from Helmetta (prior to their merge with Spotswood). If the three districts are consolidated based on population, the new board may have 9 members, 4 from Spotswood, 4 from Milltown, and 1 from Helmetta. This has not yet been determined.
- There would have to be an interview process to determine the new central office staff of the new consolidated district after the new BOE is elected to determine who the Superintendent, Business Administrator, and Director of Student Support Services will be. It should not be assumed that the new central office staff will be from Spotswood. There are seniority issues and the law is unclear right now how this will move forward.
- The consolidation will impact taxpayers simply because the salary guides from each district will differ. The new consolidated school district will have to come to agreement on a single salary guide and benefits package. The negotiated agreements from each school district are currently very different i.e. salary, extracurricular activities compensation, benefits, tuition reimbursement, sick days/personal days, etc. All items will more than likely be upgraded to the higher compensation package which will be very costly for the taxpayer.

If anyone has any questions about this process or needs clarification, please feel free to contact Dr. Madison at lmadison@milltownps.org or (732) 214-2365. This will likely be a topic of interest at the upcoming Bi-district meeting between Spotswood/Helmetta and Milltown on October 13, 2009 at 7:30 PM in the Parkview School All-Purpose Room. All are welcome.