Education Commission of the States

- Created by states, for states, in 1965 to track state policy trends, translate academic research, provide unbiased advice and create opportunities for state leaders to learn from one another.

- 53 member states, territories and the District of Columbia

- Contact: www.ecs.org (303) 299.3600
Plan to Reorganize
Clark County School Districts

1. Background

1. Deconsolidation in Other States

2. Issues With Deconsolidation

3. Open Discussion of the Committee’s Goals
Consolidation of School Districts

• Number of school districts in the U.S (Average district size):
  – 1940: 117,108 (219)
  – 1970: 17,995 (2,530)
  – 2011: 13,588 (3,650)

• Reason districts consolidated:
  – Provide students with a more comprehensive education experience
  – Reduce costs
Consolidation of School Districts

• In 1956 the "Peabody Report" recommended that the state consolidate down from 186 districts to 17 county-wide districts.

• Average district size in Nevada:
  – 1956: 234
  – 1957: 2,563
  – 2012: 25,860

Consolidation of School Districts

• 1957: 14 school districts in Clark County were consolidated into a single county-wide district

• Clark County District Today:
  • Student enrollment: 318,000
  • Number of schools: 356
  • Physical size: 8,012 square miles
  • Number of teachers: 15,000
  • Total revenue (2014-15): $3.16 billion
Clark County Schools

• Clark County School District today:
  – Fifth largest school district in the county
  – Larger student enrollment than 11 states
  – Over 6 times larger in size than Rhode Island

• If the district were broken into 14 separate districts again:
  – Average enrollment: 22,700
  – Average number of schools: 25
  – Average District size: 572 sq. miles
  – Average number of teachers: 1,100
Types of Deconsolidation

1. Large school district broken into separate smaller districts

2. Creation of autonomist/semi-autonomist units within the district – with the district and sub-units each assigned powers/duties

3. Regional service areas created with all powers/duties stilled controlled at the district level
Reasons for Deconsolidation

1. Socioeconomic/racial reasons

1. Greater local control/loss of connection between schools and the district

2. Cost savings
Deconsolidation: Socioeconomic/Racial

• From the 1940s to the 1960s some large city or county school districts were broken-up along racial/economic lines

• This created intercity school districts with large populations of low-income and minority students

• The federal government has made it clear that they will review any deconsolidation plan that splits the district along racial lines
District Examples
Memphis/Shelby County

– In 2011 the Memphis school district voted to combine with the Shelby County district

– In 2014 the six suburban school districts in Shelby county were each allowed to break away from the county district and create their own districts
District Examples

Omaha

Enrollment: 45,000

– In 2006 legislation was passed to deconsolidate the Omaha school district into 3 smaller districts
– The deconsolidation plan had to do with both tax issues and local control
– The three districts would have been split on racial lines
– Threat of litigation derailed the program
Greater Local Control

In some large districts:

– There is a general feeling that the district is just too big to serve each student’s needs
– Parents feel they do not have enough of a voice in school policy
– Educators and other school staff feel disconnected from the district administration
– Layers of bureaucracy make it difficult for the community to be involved in schools
District Example
Los Angeles

Enrollment: 634,000

– In 2000 the school district adopted a plan to divide into 11 local districts
– The goal was to make the district “more responsive to the parents and communities, more streamlined and efficient in its use of public resources, and more focused in getting results”
– The plan was adopted in two months and implemented in 81 days
District Examples

Los Angeles

• In 2001 the 11 local districts began operation

• In 2004 the 11 local districts were reduced to 8

• In 2012 the 8 local districts were replaced by 5 “Educational Service Centers”

• In 2015 the 5 “Educational Service Centers” were replaced by 6 geographically based regional districts
District Example
New York City

Enrollment: 937,000

- The NYC school district is divided into 32 geographic districts
- These 32 geographic districts serve an average of just under 30,000 students
- Each geographic district has its own superintendent and receives guidance from a local council made up of parents and local representatives
District Example
New York City

– In 2002 the city created “School Networks” to empower principals to make the best decisions for their schools
  – Each network contains approximately 25 schools
  – The networks are not necessarily along geographic lines
  – Each network receives 14 support staff
  – This program replaced the district’s previous school district offices which were on geographic lines
Cost Savings

- Researchers agree that large school districts can suffer “diseconomies of scale”

- Researchers differ on what size districts have to be to witness these diseconomies (Numbers range from 30,000 to 80,000)
Cost Savings

- Districts may still be able to deliver some services at lower costs no matter how large they become: capital, food services, high-needs special education and transportation.

- Current examples appear to show that for districts to produce any cost savings they will need to fully break-up into smaller districts.
District Example
Jordan School District (Utah)

Enrollment: 80,000

- In 2006 the school district conducted a feasibility study to break the district in half
- In 2007 voters approved breaking the district apart – with the new district now called the “Canyons School District”
- It has been estimated that the one time cost of breaking the district apart was over $59 million
Issues with Deconsolidation
(Breaking Districts Apart)

• How large will the new district be?

• How can you ensure that the districts are not being broken apart on racial, ethnic or economic lines?

• What will the enrollment policies be? *(What happens to students who live on dividing line between districts?)*
Issues with Deconsolidation
(Breaking Districts Apart)

• A full transition could take several years
  – There needs to be a division of assists/liabilities
  – New administration offices have to be set-up for the new districts
  – There has to be a decision if the old district will continue to provide any services (capital, transportation, etc.)
  – The new districts have to ensure that they are complying with both federal and state laws
Issues with Deconsolidation
(Creating Autonomist Precincts)

• How many precincts will be created?

• How will you staff each precinct?

• What will the enrollment policies be?
  – What happens to students who live on dividing line between precincts?
  – Will students be able to choose their own school?
  – Will transportation be provided? – If so, by who?
  – Who will run alternative/career tech schools?
Issues with Deconsolidation  
(Creating Autonomist Precincts)

• It needs to be made clear which powers the district will retain and which the precincts will have:
  • Alternative schools
  • Capital/bonding
  • Career and technical education
  • Collective bargaining
  • Course/grade offerings
  • Food services
  • Special education
  • Teacher school assignment
  • Transportation
Issues with Deconsolidation

(Regional Service Areas)

• What are your expectations for these service areas and how will you measure their value?

• Will these service areas have any powers of their own? If so, what are they?

• How will they be designed to assist school personnel?
School Funding Issues
(Breaking Districts Apart)

• There needs to be a decision if each district will have its own taxing authority

• The state will also need decide if the old Clark County District will still provide services and if so what kind of taxing authority it will have

• Their might be a delay in federal funds following students depending on how the new districts are structured

• It is possible that the new districts will receive different amounts of Title I funding depending on their composition
School Funding Issues
(Creating Autonomist Precincts)

• Legislation requires:
  – That the committee ensure that the Clark County School District is funded in accordance with the Nevada Plan
  – That funding be distributed on a per pupil basis to the newly created precincts

• This may be difficult to achieve depending on how the district’s powers/duties are divided

• There should be no issue with federal funding
School Funding Issues
(Regional Service Areas)

• The creation of regional service areas would not change the way that federal or state dollars are distributed to districts
Open Discussion