

Ringwood Board of Education

Position Statement on Regionalization

Due to the high level of discussion statewide on regionalization, the Ringwood Board of Education has determined that it is necessary to produce a Position Statement for release to the parents and residents of the Ringwood school community. The position of the Ringwood Board of Education is against regionalization according to a unanimous vote taken on August 17th, 2009.

Some of the reasons of concern for the Ringwood Board of Education include the following:

1. The primary emphasis of the New Jersey State's basis of enticing smaller districts to regionalize into larger districts is based on anticipated, but not verified, financial savings concerning reduced administrative salaries. While the savings on administrative salaries may be appreciable, studies do not show expected *increases* in operations in other areas and very little, if any, discussion has gone into what the effects of regionalization will be on the student population and educational achievement. Many of the anticipated goals can be accomplished without regionalization.
2. In spite of the fact that the Ringwood tax burden could be reduced by the salaries of a superintendent and a business administrator, other costs would increase the local school tax burden by more than these savings.
3. Ringwood would have to absorb part of Wanaque's tax burden for past referendums.
4. The new tax rate will have to accommodate for full day kindergarten for Ringwood students which will increase the tax burden on the Ringwood tax payers by requiring 3 to 4 additional classrooms and one or two additional full time teachers.
5. Ringwood, Wanaque and/or Lakeland may require more teachers due to possible reduced work load on some staff members when a final teachers contract is ironed out. The tax increase will be shared among the two sending districts.
6. Additional buses and drivers will be required due to increased transportation needs as stated in the "Report on the Feasibility of Adding to the Purposes of the Lakeland Regional High School District to Form an All-Purpose Regional District". Regionalization could require a significant amount of additional busing.
7. A significantly larger district may require additional personnel in the form of department leaders/heads.

8. At least one, and possibly two, assistant superintendents may be required off-setting some of the administrative savings.
9. The Ringwood tax burden would increase due to the fact that the tax proportions are based on the equalized real estate tax valuations and the number of students each town sends to the district. Ringwood historically pays more than 50% for Ringwood's Lakeland students and will do so for all Ringwood students after regionalization.
10. Ringwood will give up local control over Ringwood schools. Wanaque students will be bused to Ringwood schools and Ringwood students will be bused to Wanaque schools. The amount of busing is unknown, but busing will surely occur. Regardless of any anti-busing policy the current Ringwood Board of Education puts into place before the regionalization takes place, nothing will be binding on the new increased authority of the Lakeland Board of Education. Additional busing will occur.
11. It is inadvisable to enter into a regionalization when so many of the cost and money questions could not and would not be answered by the Commissioner of Education. The commissioner actually stated that it would most likely cost us more money to regionalize than what it currently costs to now run the Ringwood School District. Once Ringwood agrees to regionalize with Wanaque and Lakeland, the odds are that it will be impossible to terminate the agreement. Ringwood residents will be paying higher taxes on an indefinite basis. If educational achievement suffers in Ringwood due to regionalization, it will be near impossible to undo the regional consolidation. The fate of the education of the children of Ringwood should not be placed in a "let's see how it all turns out and we'll try to fix the problems as they come up" kind of a situation.
12. Due to the fact that Wanaque has already dismissed their custodians and maintenance workers and outsourced those positions, there is a definite possibility that Ringwood would be forced to do likewise and hire strangers to work in the Ringwood schools.
13. Additional building may be required for a Wanaque middle school as described in the "Report on the Feasibility of Adding to the Purposes of the Lakeland Regional High School District to Form an All-Purpose Regional District". The construction costs would be shared between Ringwood and Wanaque. The immediate need for construction may be postponed or eliminated by significant additional busing.
14. The regional feasibility study states that the regionalized district will be entitled to less state aid of approximately \$150,000 after the first 2 years.
15. Ringwood has an excellent reputation for its school system. Regionalization and lack of local control may put a damper on that reputation for families considering a move to Ringwood.

16. It is the position of the Ringwood Board of Education that the loss of local control may not ensure appropriate representation for the values, missions and ideals held by the Ringwood Community.
17. It is the position of the Ringwood Board of Education that all of the proposed benefits associated with Regionalization may be realized through better shared services, coordinated curriculum, and joint expenditures and that these efforts have none of the risks or permanency associated with the proposed Regionalization.

This list of issues and concerns should not be considered a complete list of all of the concerns for Ringwood parents and taxpayers. However, the list does emphasize that the position of the Ringwood Board of Education is against regionalization for many reasons. Primary on that list is that there is no guarantee that regionalization will not bring negative issues with it. The Ringwood Board of Education has absolutely no guarantee that education of Ringwood children will not be impaired. Student achievement in Ringwood is at a high level and we don't know for sure what the impact of a larger consolidated district will be.

The top two priorities of the Ringwood Board of Education are student achievement and the taxpayer levy. There are too many areas of possible negative impact on these concerns and the board of education looks *unfavorably* on the prospects of regionalization. If regionalization turns out unfavorable to the Ringwood taxpayer, there will likely be no way out.