



MERGER STUDY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS (Q&A)

November 2017 Edition

Was this merger study processed authorized by the school boards?

Yes! The Elizabethtown-Lewis Central School District and Westport School District are underway with a merger study process intended to help gather pertinent facts, figures and perspectives for the residents and school boards of both school districts to examine and consider. This merger study process was authorized spring 2017 by the Elizabethtown-Lewis school board and the Westport school board. The two school boards have contracted with Castallo & Silky, an educational consulting firm with extensive experience facilitating merger study processes such as this one.

What funding source pays for the merger study process?

This merger study process is funded by a grant from the New York State Education Department and the State Legislature that funds all the research, fact gathering, consulting fees and reporting necessary to accomplish this merger study process effectively. And the timetable for this merger study process is driven by New York State guidelines and regulations.

What will this merger study process focus on?

The merger study process will focus attention on multiple topics, including:

1. How to best make use of the long-time Westport schoolhouse and the long-time Elizabethtown-Lewis schoolhouse.
2. Prospective strengthening of instructional programs and services for students.
3. Prospective operating efficiencies associated with school administration, school finances and support staff operations such as student transportation, custodial operations, school fleet maintenance and cafeteria services.

I'm told there's a merger study advisory committee. What role does it perform?

The merger study process involves direct engagement of a twenty-member merger study advisory committee that features ten members appointed earlier this year by the Westport school board and ten members appointed earlier this year by the Elizabethtown-Lewis school board. That advisory committee provides guidance and insights to the consultants and the school superintendents of the two school districts. Also, the advisory committee helps to ensure that the consultants address key questions and

issues identified by the advisory committee as warranting consideration and examination for the two school districts.

Is the public welcome to attend advisory committee meetings?

Yes! Although discussion during advisory committee meetings is limited to the members of the advisory committee and the consultants, all residents of the two school districts are welcome to attend the meetings, observe the proceedings and listen to the discussions. Generally, the consultants offer a 'public comment' opportunity toward the end of each merger study advisory committee meeting to gather additional comment from others who attend that advisory committee gathering.



What topics are brought forward to the merger study advisory committee?

The twenty-member merger study advisory committee gathered August 2017 to examine and discuss details of the merger study process timetable, and to examine student enrollment patterns at the two school districts. The September 2017 meeting focused on instructional programs and extra-curricular offerings at the two school districts. The October 2017 meeting focused on the school buildings used by the two school districts for instructional programs. Upcoming merger study advisory committee meetings include:

December 6, 2017 will focus on transportation services, hosted at Elizabethtown-Lewis.

January 24, 2018 will focus on staffing of the schools, hosted at Westport.

February 28, 2018 will focus on financial aspects of the schools, hosted at Elizabethtown-Lewis.

April 25, 2018 will focus on the advisory committee reviewing a preliminary draft report that will feature preliminary draft findings and prospective recommendations, hosted at Westport.

What's the timetable for this merger study process?

It's anticipated this merger study process will continue throughout calendar year 2018 and into the early part of year 2019. Here's the forecasted timetable:

June 2018- A merger study report is submitted by the consulting firm to the State Education Department, as per State regulations.

August 2018- The merger study report is presented by the consulting firm to the Westport school board and the Elizabethtown-Lewis school board.

September 2018- The two school boards host information/discussion sessions for stakeholders.

October 2018- The Westport school board, and separately, the Elizabethtown-Lewis school board, have a public session discussion and school board members vote as to whether or not the merger study process should advance further to referenda voting by district residents. If one or both school boards do not vote in favor of submitting the question to a community referendum, the process is halted at this point in time.

November 2018- A preliminary advisory referendum is voted on by district residents at the Westport school district; and a separate preliminary advisory referendum is voted on by district residents at the Elizabethtown-Lewis school district. If one or both communities do not vote in favor of continuing the process, this ends the merger process.

January 2019- A final referendum is voted on by district residents at the Westport school district; and a separate final referendum is voted on by district residents at the Elizabethtown-Lewis school district. If one or both communities do not approve the final and binding referendum, the merger will not occur.

Are additional facts and reports posted on the District's Web site? Yes!

