

Building the Capacity of School Districts Across the Commonwealth

Executive Office of Education
May 29, 2009

Current Organizational Environment

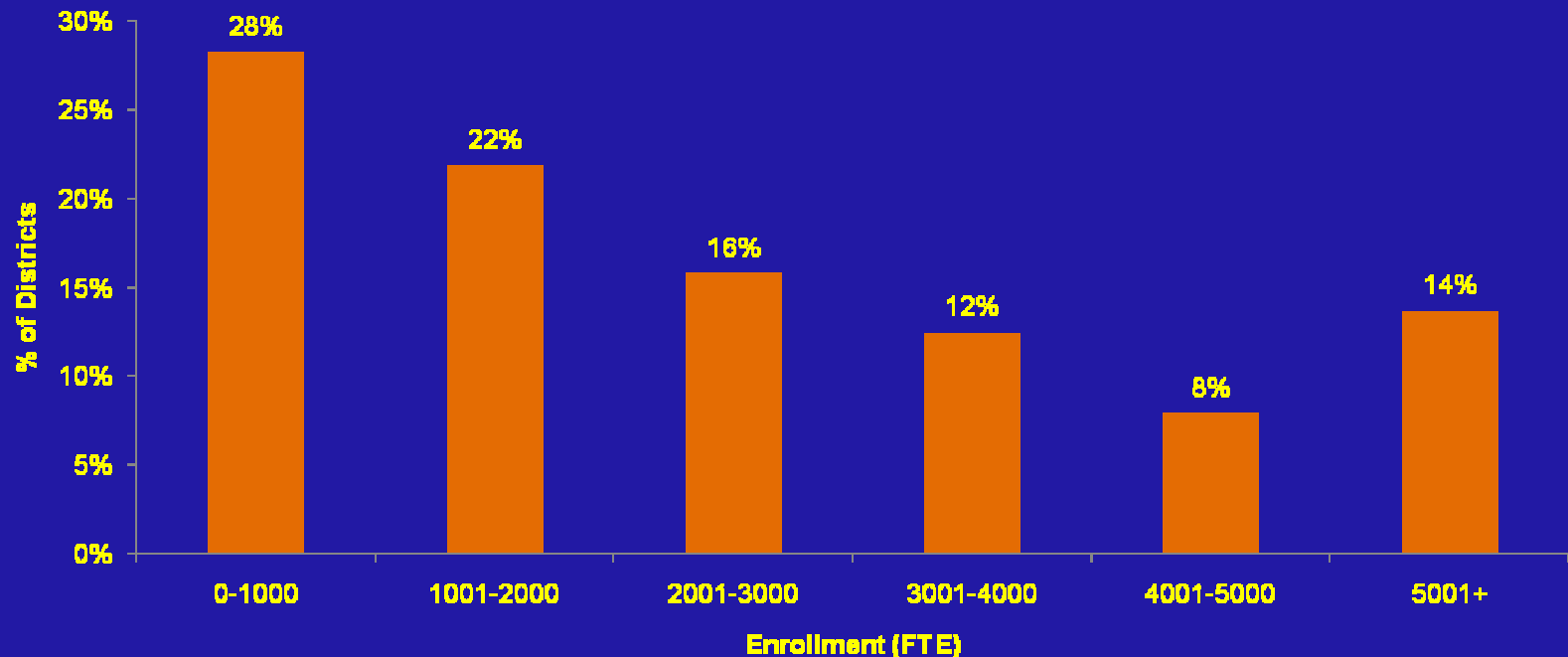
329 districts (excluding charter districts) are currently serving 958,910 students

- 177 comprehensive K-12 districts
- 32 K-12 regional districts
- 23 partial elementary or secondary regional districts
- 53 partial districts
- 30 vocational districts
- 14 tuition-out districts
- 20 superintendency unions and districts that share superintendents that encompass 73 districts

Distribution of School Districts by Size

88 percent of Massachusetts' 329 school districts enroll fewer than 5,000 students

- 79 percent enroll fewer than 4,000 students
- 51 percent enroll fewer than 2,000 students



Concerns About the Existing Environment

- Many superintendents and district administrators have multiple roles because there are not enough staff members in the central office – which means that in many cases, these administrators are unable to devote a sufficient amount of time to supporting instruction
- Some superintendents are required to respond to multiple school committees, attend multiple town meetings, and address multiple sets of administrative and operational issues
- Some districts do not have the capacity to provide all students with a broad range of rigorous academic courses, differentiated programs, and extracurricular opportunities
- Some districts are not structured to promote instructional and curricular alignment across different grade levels
- Some districts are not financially viable and also allocate more resources to bureaucratic versus instructional costs

EOE Analyses

- Review of Literature and Research
- Financial Analysis
 - *Among districts with fewer than 5,000 students, on average and holding other observable demographic and structural characteristics constant, larger districts are associated with smaller proportions of expenditures on bureaucratic costs and more on teaching and instructional salaries*
- Academic Analysis
 - *Among districts with fewer than 5,000 students, on average and holding other observable demographic and structural characteristics constant, larger districts are likely to have higher MCAS Math and ELA performance*
- Legislative Analysis

Why We Are Pursuing School District Re-Organization

- To increase the capacity of all districts to support all students in all schools by adopting more effective and efficient district structures
- To increase the financial viability of all districts across the state
- To implement consensus-driven recommendations from the Governor's Readiness Project which called for the creation and expansion of incentives for educational collaboratives to expand services and also the consolidation or regionalization of districts
- To respond to high levels of interest from district administrators, community members, legislators, and other stakeholders

Characteristics of a Higher-Capacity District

- The district central office includes enough staff members to:
 - Effectively and consistently promote high levels of achievement for all students in all schools
 - Ensure that district administrators can focus on instructional concerns without having to juggle multiple roles and responsibilities
- The district offers a broad range of rigorous academic courses (such as honors and AP courses), provides effective services and programs to students with diverse learning needs, and also offers a wide range of extracurricular programs and activities
- The district allocates a greater percentage of funding to instructional versus bureaucratic costs and operates at a high level of fiscal efficiency

Case Study

District X is a regional pre-K through grade 12 school district that serves approximately 3,800 students from two communities. Students are assigned to schools in their own town through middle school, and they converge into one regional high school.

- Demographic Information

- 90% White; 2% Asian; 2% Hispanic; 2% African American
- 18% Special Education
- 6% Free Lunch and 2% Reduced Lunch
- 3% First Language not English

- The central office includes administrative, instructional, and operational positions

- 100 percent of the teachers in the district are licensed in their teaching assignment

Case Study (continued)

- The district offers a wide array of advanced courses and electives – there are 16 Honors and 18 Advanced Placement courses and over 50 in fine and applied arts
- The high school offers 29 extracurricular sports and 51 extracurricular clubs and activities
- The district is a member of an educational collaborative that provides services related to special education, professional development, energy, transportation, and health insurance
- The district spends approximately two-thirds of its budget on student-centered or instructional expenses and the remainder on administrative and bureaucratic expenses

EOE Goals for Constructing Legislation

- Increase the capacity of all school districts across the Commonwealth to improve academic outcomes for all students and provide a broad range of high-quality academic opportunities and programmatic options for all students
- Increase the financial efficiency and viability of all districts
- Establish a clear, comprehensive, and fair process for assessing all districts
- Promote the creation of comprehensive K-12 districts
- Provide, to the extent possible, short-term financial incentives to explore regionalization and technical assistance or support as necessary to help districts

What is the EOE not trying to do?

- Establish a set number of districts for the Commonwealth
- Eliminate local autonomy, flexibility, and control
- Increase school size
- Close schools
- Reduce central office capacity
- Force regionalization on high-performing, high-capacity, and fiscally viable districts

Core Legislative Concept

- All districts in the Commonwealth will be reviewed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in accordance with an objective process that will utilize multiple indicators to assess central office capacity, academic and programmatic quality, and financial viability.

Possible Indicators:

- Central Office Capacity – total number of staff members and the number of staff members specifically focused on instruction
- Academic Achievement – MCAS scores and other student outcome data
- Instructional Opportunities – range of academic courses offered, types of differentiated programs
- Fiscal Efficiency – percentage of district funding allocated to instructional versus bureaucratic costs and the portion of operational and administrative costs that are shared with other districts

Core Legislative Concept (continued)

- On the basis of the review, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education will direct that:
 - 1) No action is needed by the district;
 - 2) The district will collaborate with one or more districts, an educational collaborative, a municipality, or other entity to address one or more areas of need identified in the review; or
 - 3) The district and partner districts will form a regional school district to address one or more areas of need identified in the review.

Core Legislative Concept (continued)

- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will work with the district to identify an appropriate partner(s) for regionalization.
- In recognition of the transition costs related to restructuring districts, efforts will be made to provide limited and one-time transition costs to facilitate the regionalization process.

Tasks of the EOE

- Continue discussions with multiple stakeholders including district and school administrators, community members, Legislators, and other stakeholders regarding the benefits of district re-organization and the core legislative concept
- Draft legislation in Summer 2009
- Collaborate with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop the process by which all districts will be reviewed

Benefits of District Re-Organization

- All school districts will have a sufficient number of highly qualified staff members in the central office, which will allow district administrators to devote sufficient and much-needed time to instruction.
- All school districts will have greater capacity to support high-quality instruction and promote high levels of achievement for all students in all schools.
- All school districts will have greater capacity to offer a broader range of high-quality academic opportunities and enriching programmatic options to all students.

Benefits of Re-Organization (continued)

- All school districts will lower operating and administrative costs through economies of scale, thereby allowing for a greater proportion of funds to be allocated to support instruction.
- A smaller number of organizational units will promote greater coherence and alignment of initiatives across the state.

Contact Information

Saeyun Lee
Executive Office of Education
617.979.8351
Saeyun.Lee@massmail.state.ma.us