



Augenblick, Palaich
and Associates, Inc.

Examining Resource Use and Areas for Enhanced Cooperation in York County's School Districts

Prepared by:

Dale DeCesare
John Augenblick
John Myers

Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc.
Denver, Colorado

January, 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary i

I. Introduction 1

II. Background Data and Tables 2

III. District Resource Use Analysis 13
 Findings and conclusions..... 23

IV. Areas for Increased District Cooperation..... 26
 Recommendations..... 31

Appendix A – Instrument Used to Survey York County Districts 40

Appendix B – List of Telephone Interviewees 45

Appendix C – List of Attendees at December Superintendent Meeting 46

This study was made possible with financial support from:

**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
Department of Community and Economic Development**

**County of York
Manufacturers’ Association of South Central Pennsylvania
Realtors Association of York and Adams Counties, Inc.
York County Builders Association**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was prepared by Augenblick Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA), a Denver, Colorado-based education consulting firm. APA was hired by the Center for Community Engagement at York College of Pennsylvania (the Center) to study the school districts in York County. The primary purpose of this work was to conduct an analysis of areas where York County districts can work cooperatively to improve student performance. A secondary purpose was to make a comparison of York County school district resource use with other, similarly situated districts in Pennsylvania.

In response to the Center's request, APA designed a scope of work which, as described in this report, focused on gathering a variety of data and information, including resource and staffing data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and surveys and direct interviews with York County education and community leaders.

District Cooperation Analysis Findings

In order to identify potential areas for cooperation among York County school districts, APA designed a multiple-level process for gathering input and data from school districts and other community leaders from around the county. This included district surveys, phone interviews with district and county leaders, and a culminating meeting in York County with superintendents.

Key findings that emerged from APA's work included:

- A list of some of the top identified concerns across the county.
- A list of the positive activities taking place in York County's school systems.
- Recommendations for improving efficiency and cooperation among districts.

An extensive discussion of the top identified concerns and positive activities already taking place in York County school districts is provided in Section IV of this report. Five of the top identified concerns were:

1. Almost every district noted a lack of adequate funding to meet student needs.
2. Student population growth and increasingly diverse student bodies (including growing numbers of at-risk, English language learners, or special education students) present serious challenges to the county's schools.
3. The need for a county-level or inter-district system to help collect and organize data or share best practices among districts.
4. The ability to attract and retain high quality teachers and administrators.
5. The ability to expand existing preschool offerings across the county.

Student population growth and increasingly diverse student bodies present serious challenges to the county's school systems.

An extensive list of ideas for improving how districts in York County work together also surfaced during the course of APA’s study. Several of these can be identified as high priority recommendations that should be implemented as soon as possible by district and county education leaders. These include:

- a. *Create an Interdistrict Cyber Charter School:* This online school should be staffed with fully certified teachers housed at the Lincoln Intermediate Unit. Online courses offered through the school would need to adhere to a common curriculum while allowing students to earn credits toward graduation in their home school districts.
- b. *Create a Best Practices Clearinghouse:* This recommendation would entail creation of a new “best practice” clearinghouse or think tank located at York College. The purpose of this clearinghouse is to establish a permanent presence in the county for researching and promoting public school reforms, for sharing best practices and success stories among districts, and for helping advise districts on how to better align curricula.
- c. *Expand Preschool:* While the need to expand preschool programs was consistently reported as a very high priority, many districts report long waiting lists for access to current preschool programs. Most districts also report having a lack of classroom space to provide preschool and a lack of funds to pay for preschool teachers. Recommendations to address this issue include exploring new sources of funding and space for preschool programs.
- d. *Address New School Building Construction Issues:* Because of continuing population growth across the county, many York County districts are now conducting feasibility studies regarding the construction of new school buildings. Recommendations to address this issue include working with contractors to design common school building prototypes, working with municipalities to streamline building permitting processes, and exploring the possibility of assessing impact fees to help fund new school construction.
- e. *Expand Efforts to Attract and Retain Quality Teachers and Leaders:* Feedback received by APA indicates that teacher turnover is a concern among districts and that differences in teacher pay have also contributed to the most experienced, sought-after teachers being drawn to the highest paying York County districts. Recommendations to address this issue include: conducting collective bargaining negotiations on a county-wide basis, expanding county-level teacher recruiting efforts, expanding existing mentoring and induction programs, and exploring the creation of special incentives to bring teachers and administrators to York County.

The need to expand preschool programs was consistently reported as a very high priority.

- f. *Improve District Calendar Alignment:* Creating a more unified calendar among York County’s school districts would allow staff from all districts to collaborate more during common staff development days and could help provide more consistency in delivering education services to students that migrate between districts. Even just establishing 2-3 common staff development days across districts could improve opportunities for collaboration.

Some of the key concerns now facing York County districts clearly require action at the state level. In particular, such action is needed to ensure that all districts in the Commonwealth have access to the resources, programs, and staffing they need to be successful. Regardless of the need for such state action, however, each of the ideas presented in the list above can be accomplished at the local level through concerted action by York County education and civic leaders working together towards the common goal of improving all schools.

District Resource Use Analysis Findings

APA’s analysis was designed to identify an appropriate group of districts from across the Commonwealth whose resource use could be compared effectively to individual York County school districts. To make a fair comparison and to control for differences among districts that could affect how and where resources were used, APA identified several key criteria:

1. District enrollment size.
2. The level of student need among enrolled students.
3. Geographic proximity.
4. Cost of living differences.

The large majority of York County districts (11 of 16 or 69 percent) use fewer resources than their comparison peer districts.

APA’s experience has shown that each of these criteria can significantly impact the costs districts face in educating their students. All were therefore integrated into our analysis and were used as screens to identify those districts from around the Commonwealth whose resource usage could be most accurately compared with York County districts. In addition, in order to take student performance into consideration, APA attempted to select only those comparison districts whose students performed at or above the statewide average on state reading and math exams.

Once the comparison districts were identified, APA examined how resources were used in seven categories, including: 1) teachers; 2) teacher aides; 3) school and district administrative staff; 4) school and district support staff; 5) instructional spending; 6) salaries and benefits of teachers; and 7) maintenance and operation expenditures. For our purposes, therefore, district “efficiency” is defined by the resource usage in these seven categories. Several important findings can be drawn from APA’s analysis:

- The large majority of York County districts (11 of 16 or 69 percent) use fewer resources than their comparison peer districts.

The vast majority of York County districts that use fewer resources are also performing below the statewide average on math and reading tests.

- Most of the districts (3 out of 5) that use more resources when compared to their peers are those that are also the highest performing districts in York County.
- The vast majority of districts (10 out of 11) that use fewer resources in relation to their comparison districts are also performing below the statewide average on math and reading tests.
- The four districts in York County whose students score above the statewide average in reading and math are the same four that have the highest starting teacher pay in the county and the highest average pay for district administrators. Three of these four also rank tops in the county in terms of the highest teacher salaries offered, and all rank at or near the top in terms of average school administrator pay.

These findings suggest a number of policy issues for York County. Firstly, while efficiency is to be lauded, it should be viewed in proper perspective with regard to student performance. In this case, the fact that most York County districts use overall fewer resources than their peers but are below the state average in reading and math scores may indicate that York County schools are simply having to make do with less available resources than others in the Commonwealth. And since the comparison group in most cases was comprised only of districts that are at or above the state average in performance, it also may indicate that York County districts are under funded to meet their student needs. This conclusion is supported by the findings in a statewide costing out study which APA completed in December 2007 for the Pennsylvania State Board of Education.¹ This statewide study found that no district in York County is currently funded at an adequate level to meet state performance expectations.

Second, it is worth exploring the importance of a district's ability to compensate teachers and administrators in relation to other districts in the county. As the data show, the top performing districts also appear at the top in the county in terms of their ability to compensate such key employees. As part of the work discussed in this report, APA interviewed numerous district and community leaders from across York County to discuss the key needs of schools and districts. It should be noted that one of the concerns which surfaced frequently from these interviews was the need to compete with surrounding districts for the most qualified teachers and administrators possible.

Finally, while the analysis provides a comprehensive look at seven important factors related to district resource use, it cannot address all factors which might impact a district's spending and staff allocation practices. More exploration of districts on either end of the spectrum may therefore be useful.

¹ *Costing Out the Resources Needed to Meet Pennsylvania's Public Education Goals*, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc (2007).
http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=130714&stateboard_edNav=|10857|&stateboard_edNav=|10766|

I. INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted by Augenblick Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA), a Denver, Colorado-based education consulting firm with over 20 years of experience in education policy and school finance. In February 2007, APA was contacted by the Center for Community Engagement at York College of Pennsylvania (the Center) regarding the Center's interest in studying and developing recommendations that could help elevate the performance of the 16 public school districts in York County. In particular, the Center was interested in identifying strategies – either among groups of school districts or across the entire county – that might enhance the ability of York County schools to meet the needs of their students. In response to the Center's request, APA designed a scope of work which, as described in the following sections, focused on gathering a variety of data and information, including direct interviews with education and community leaders.

In April 2007, APA convened a kick-off meeting designed to meet with representatives of the Center in York County to obtain background information, and to clarify understanding of the work plan. Based on input received by APA at this meeting, the work plan was modified to include an analysis of school district resource use that could be used to compare York County districts with others in Pennsylvania in terms of their staffing or spending in key areas such as instruction, administration, and support services.

Also at the April meeting, it was decided that APA would draw upon information and data generated through its statewide costing out study to inform the York County work. The statewide study, conducted by APA throughout 2007 under a contract with the Pennsylvania State Board of Education, utilized several methodologies to determine the level of resources Pennsylvania students need to meet state performance requirements.² Of particular interest to the York study was the fact that the statewide study yielded specific cost weights associated with serving students with special needs, including those who are at-risk, gifted, in special education, or who are English language learners. These weights, which became available when the statewide study was released in November 2007, are integrated into APA's York County work.

The next section of this report provides background data and information on the 16 school districts in York County. This includes data on enrollment and demographics, revenue, wealth and tax effort, salaries, and student performance. This is followed by two sections touching on the main areas of interest identified by the Center for this study:

1. A comparison of York County district resource use with other, similarly situated districts in Pennsylvania; and
2. An analysis of areas where York County districts can increase cooperation to improve performance.

² *Costing Out the Resources Needed to Meet Pennsylvania's Public Education Goals*, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc (2007).
http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=130714&stateboard_edNav=|10857|&stateboard_edNav=|10766|

II. BACKGROUND DATA ON YORK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

This section contains a variety of background data on the 16 school districts in York County. APA gathered this data to gain a better overall understanding of the differences and similarities between districts and to better inform the design of district surveys and the format for conducting interviews with superintendents and other community leaders which were used to drive the work discussed in Section IV of this report. Data was gathered from several sources, including directly from districts as well as from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

As shown in Table 1 below, the first set of data addresses student demographics. In particular, it is useful to compare the York County districts with each other and with the state average in terms of percentages of enrolled students with “special needs.” Such students include those who are economically disadvantaged or who are English language learners (ELL), special education students, or gifted students. These same categories of special need students were used by APA in conducting its statewide Pennsylvania costing out study and are an important indicator of the overall challenges which different districts face in educating their students. In particular, as was found in the statewide costing out study, districts with higher percentages of special need students require additional staffing and resource support in order to meet state performance expectations.

“Special need students” include those who are economically disadvantaged or who are English language learners (ELL), special education students, or gifted students.

Table 1 shows not only the percentages of special need students in each York County school district, but also a “relative student need” index. This index draws on the costing out study results and incorporates the added costs required for districts to educate their students to meet state performance requirements. By multiplying this index by each district’s current enrollment number, a “weighted student enrollment” figure is generated. This figure helps demonstrate the impact of special need student populations on each district. For instance, the York City School District has a regular enrollment of roughly 7,500 students. However, York City’s weighted student enrollment effectively doubles when student need is taken into account which indicates that it costs about twice as much to serve the district’s students as it would if there were no students with special needs in the district. This reflects the significant student challenges that district faces.

Several items of interest surface when reviewing the data in Table 1. First, York City faces, by far, the most significant challenges in the county in terms of student need. In fact, while York City has more than double the statewide average of economically disadvantaged students, all other districts in the county are below the state average. Similarly, York City serves almost eight times the percentage of ELL students as the average district in Pennsylvania. Among the other districts in York County, only Hanover (which serves twice the state average of ELL students) is above the Pennsylvania average.

The costs of effectively serving such special need students should not be underestimated. As demonstrated through APA's Pennsylvania costing out study, such special need students require significant interventions, resources, and added support from teachers, counselors, and other specialists in order to reach proficiency in key academic subjects and to meet statewide performance goals.

**TABLE 1:
Special Need Student Enrollment and Relative Need
2005-06**

School District	Total Students	Economically Disadvantaged Students (students receiving free/reduced price lunch)	English Language Learners	Special Education Students	Gifted	Relative Student Need	Weighted student enrollment
CENTRAL YORK	5,365	18.2%	1.3%	15.5%	4.2%	1.30	6,975
DALLASTOWN	6,054	12.9%	1.5%	15.3%	3.2%	1.28	7,749
DOVER AREA	3,759	20.3%	0.5%	17.5%	1.7%	1.33	4,999
EASTERN YORK	2,856	21.0%	0.3%	19.5%	2.6%	1.35	3,856
HANOVER	1,770	28.1%	5.1%	19.0%	1.6%	1.47	2,602
NORTHEASTERN	3,547	29.4%	1.1%	18.2%	1.9%	1.39	4,930
NORTHERN	3,235	10.7%	0.2%	17.9%	5.4%	1.28	4,141
RED LION AREA	6,117	15.2%	0.5%	16.8%	1.9%	1.29	7,891
SOUTH EASTERN	3,431	12.4%	0.3%	17.3%	2.7%	1.28	4,392
SOUTH WESTERN	4,210	12.8%	0.8%	13.7%	1.8%	1.25	5,263
SOUTHERN YORK	3,388	8.6%	1.4%	19.4%	3.5%	1.32	4,472
SPRING GROVE	4,043	18.4%	0.7%	18.2%	3.3%	1.33	5,377
WEST SHORE	8,365	15.9%	1.8%	20.3%	3.4%	1.37	11,460
WEST YORK	3,402	20.5%	0.9%	16.3%	3.1%	1.32	4,491
YORK CITY	7,573	79.3%	19.6%	24.3%	1.5%	2.03	15,373
YORK SUBURBAN	2,821	14.4%	2.8%	20.0%	8.3%	1.38	3,893
<i>State Averages</i>	--	34.8%	2.5%	14.8%	3.9%	--	--

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education (2007).

Table 2 displays local, state, and federal revenue data collected for each district in York County. The table also shows revenues on a per-weighted student basis in order to give a better idea of the resources that are available to districts in relation to the actual needs of their students.

School District	Total Local, State, Federal Revenue	% Local Revenues	% State Revenues	% Federal Revenues	Total Revenue per ADM	Total Revenue per Weighted ADM
CENTRAL YORK	\$56,555,218	81%	18%	1%	\$10,542	\$8,108
DALLASTOWN AREA	\$68,187,040	78%	21%	1%	\$11,263	\$8,799
DOVER AREA	\$37,479,124	64%	35%	1%	\$9,971	\$7,497
EASTERN YORK	\$30,676,720	64%	35%	1%	\$10,741	\$7,956
HANOVER PUBLIC	\$21,478,720	79%	19%	3%	\$12,135	\$8,255
NORTHEASTERN	\$36,297,460	65%	34%	1%	\$10,233	\$7,363
NORTHERN	\$32,342,480	66%	32%	1%	\$9,998	\$7,810
RED LION AREA	\$55,790,378	63%	35%	1%	\$9,121	\$7,070
SOUTH EASTERN	\$36,018,868	64%	36%	1%	\$10,498	\$8,201
SOUTH WESTERN	\$40,695,306	64%	35%	1%	\$9,666	\$7,732
SOUTHERN YORK	\$36,630,958	66%	31%	3%	\$10,812	\$8,191
SPRING GROVE AREA	\$40,815,791	63%	36%	1%	\$10,095	\$7,591
WEST SHORE	\$79,973,927	73%	25%	1%	\$9,561	\$6,979
WEST YORK AREA	\$36,517,346	78%	21%	1%	\$10,734	\$8,131
YORK CITY	\$85,870,561	36%	52%	11%	\$11,339	\$5,586
YORK SUBURBAN	\$34,191,090	87%	13%	1%	\$12,120	\$8,783
<i>STATE AVERAGES</i>	\$20,658,313,673	60.0%	35.9%	4.1%	--	--

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education (2007).

Table 3 examines the wealth and tax effort of York County's school districts. In Pennsylvania, as in most states, school districts receive the vast bulk of their resources from state and local revenues. In fact, Pennsylvania schools receive, on average, only about 4% of their revenues from the federal government.³ The remaining 96% is split between local and state revenue sources.

³ The Pennsylvania Economy League, *An Analysis of Demographic, Socio-Economic, Financial and Related Data of the Allentown School District and Surrounding Lehigh County School Districts*, (2005).

On the local level, Pennsylvania district revenues are dominated by two main sources: 1) Property tax collections, which account for the vast majority (between 75-85%) of local revenues; and 2) Act 511 tax collections, which are a distant second (around 15%) in terms of producing revenues for school districts.⁴

Accounting for the lion's share of local school district revenues, property tax revenues are directly tied with two key factors: 1) the value of property in each district; and 2) the rate that such property is taxed. The higher the property values within a district, the more revenues that can be brought in. And, importantly, districts with higher property values can bring in more revenues per student than a neighboring district even though the wealthier district might establish significantly lower tax rates. Such lower tax rates can help attract more development, thereby raising property values and ultimately increasing local school district revenues.

After property taxes, the second most important local revenue source for Pennsylvania districts is known as Act 511 taxes. Act 511, which is derived from Pennsylvania's Local Tax Enabling Act of 1965, allows public school districts to levy certain taxes in order to obtain additional funding from local sources. Such taxes can include, among others, an earned income tax, amusement tax, business privilege tax, real estate transfer tax, occupation tax, per capita tax, and a real estate transfer tax. Among these various taxes, however, the earned income tax accounts for, by far, the largest amount of Act 511 funds available to school districts. In fact, data shows that the earned income tax generates close to 70% of all Act 511 taxes.⁵ Since the earned income tax is the crucial indicator for determining a district's wealth vis-à-vis Act 511, it is instructive to gather data on personal income levels within a school district. The higher the personal income levels, the more dollars a district can bring in with the earned income tax.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education uses property value and personal income levels to calculate a district-by-district "wealth factor."

Table 3 shows both property market values and personal income per student for each district. The table also provides data on district property tax effort, as expressed in equalized mills, and compares this effort to the statewide average for districts. In addition, the table includes columns that display recently released data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education that uses property value and personal income levels to calculate a district-by-district "wealth factor." The Department uses this factor to rank districts across the state in terms of their wealth. As the table shows, York City School District is ranked the 6th poorest district in the state in terms of its property and personal income wealth.

Also shown in Table 3 is district tax effort as expressed in equalized mill rates. Only four districts are below the state average rate of 21.7. York City, in particular, appears to be far above the state average in tax effort.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Pennsylvania Department of Education, *Act 511 Tax Report*, (2004).

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12_finances/lib/k12_finances/2001-02_Act511PubTotal.pdf

**TABLE 3:
District Wealth and Tax Effort**

School District	Property Market Value Per Student* 05-06	Personal Income Per Student* 05-06	Tax Effort (in equalized mills) 05-06	Equalized Mill Rank in State 05-06	District Wealth Factor** 2006-07 (Based on Market Value and Personal Income)	District Need Ranking Using Wealth Factor** 2006-07
Central York	\$325,026	\$128,343	21.5	232	0.3755	419
Dallastown	\$280,961	\$145,070	26.3	100	0.4072	401
Dover Area	\$201,954	\$102,836	25.5	113	0.5795	263
Eastern York	\$234,121	\$117,900	23.3	172	0.5418	296
Hanover	\$339,633	\$125,732	24.1	144	0.3886	411
Northeastern	\$211,706	\$101,621	25.9	108	0.5891	250
Northern	\$252,005	\$121,519	22.1	207	0.5041	340
Red Lion Area	\$202,993	\$96,536	24.1	144	0.5950	241
South Eastern	\$267,864	\$96,401	20.8	264	0.5174	324
South Western	\$259,022	\$112,913	19.8	309	0.5201	321
Southern York	\$273,893	\$114,415	22.1	207	0.4960	345
Spring Grove	\$226,611	\$114,960	22.5	201	0.5409	299
West Shore	\$308,525	\$161,992	18.5	360	0.3886	411
West York	\$297,762	\$107,306	22.7	198	0.4537	374
York City	\$87,125	\$47,657	39.1	3	0.8124	6
York Suburban	\$372,561	\$204,671	23.6	160	0.2479	468
<i>State Average 05-06</i>	\$284,958	\$152,235	21.7	--	--	--

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, (2007).

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12_finances/cwp/view.asp?a=11&Q=108503

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12_finances/lib/k12_finances/SelectedData_0506_Web.xls

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12_finances/lib/k12_finances/AidRatios_0708_Web.xls

* The Pennsylvania Department of Education provides data by “Weighted Average Daily Membership” (WADM) of students. According to the department, “Average daily membership (ADM) is the term used for all resident pupils of the school district for whom the school district is financially responsible. It is calculated by dividing the aggregate membership days for all children on active rolls by the number of days the school is in session. WADM is used to assign weight by grade level to ADM. The current weighting is half-time kindergarten at 0.5, full-time kindergarten and elementary at 1.0, and secondary (grades 7-12) at 1.36.”

** The Pennsylvania Department of Education uses 2004-05 property value (“Market Value”) and personal income data when calculating its 2006-07 Aid factor and ranking system, which is a proxy for district wealth. Various state subsidies use the aid ratios in their calculations. Market Value is the sales value of taxable real estate as certified by the State Tax Equalization Board.

Table 4 below examines each York County district's student performance on the 2005-06 Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) in reading and math. The percentages shown represent those students who scored at proficient or above on the PSSA examinations. Districts listed in bold are those that are above the statewide average in both reading and math. According to the data, only four districts had higher percentages than the state average in both reading and math: Central York, Dallastown, Southern York, and York Suburban.

As shown in Table 5, with the exception of the York City School District, all York County districts are meeting the state's PSSA performance targets for 2007. However, without an increase in the numbers of students reaching proficiency, only the York Suburban School District would meet the state's performance expectations for 2012 and beyond.

TABLE 4: District PSSA Performance (Percentage of students proficient or above)		
SCHOOL DISTRICT	READING 2005 – 2006	MATH 2005 – 2006
CENTRAL YORK	75%	72%
DALLASTOWN AREA	77%	70%
DOVER AREA	66%	61%
EASTERN YORK	61%	58%
HANOVER PUBLIC	64%	54%
NORTHEASTERN YORK	64%	61%
NORTHERN YORK	69%	65%
RED LION AREA	65%	66%
SOUTH EASTERN	64%	57%
SOUTH WESTERN	69%	58%
SOUTHERN YORK	80%	69%
SPRING GROVE AREA	64%	64%
WEST SHORE	70%	64%
WEST YORK AREA	62%	57%
YORK CITY	31%	35%
YORK SUBURBAN	81%	78%
<i>State Average 2006</i>	68%	69%
<i>Districts shown in bold are those whose percentages are above the statewide average in both reading and math.</i>		
<i>Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education (2006).</i>		

TABLE 5:
Pennsylvania Adequate Yearly Progress Requirements for Student Performance on Reading and Math PSSAs
 (Percentage of students reaching proficient or advanced)

Year	2002-04	2005-07	2008-10	2011	2012	2013	2014
Percent Proficient in Reading	45	54	63	72	81	91	100
Percent Proficient in Math	35	45	56	67	78	89	100

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education. Retrieved January 5, 2007 from the World Wide Web.

<http://www.pde.state.pa.us/pas/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=94580&pasNav=|6132|&pasNav=|6325|>

Tables 6-9 offer salary data for teachers, school administrators, and district administrators in each of York County’s school districts. The ability of districts to compete with each other for top teaching and administrative talent was raised as an issue by a number of superintendents APA spoke with over the course of this study. In particular, existing discrepancies in teacher pay was raised as a concern. The lack of ability to compete for top teaching talent was viewed as a significant and growing concern. In some cases, as with the Northern School District, teacher starting salaries are only 79 percent of the top paying district’s starting salaries.

Several district leaders stated that they often lose their best, most experienced teachers to the higher paying districts in the county.

Superintendents also indicated that teacher salary ceilings can play an important role in teacher retention (see Table 7) and offer important competitive advantages to districts that can afford to pay teachers the most. In fact, several district leaders stated that they often lose their best, most experienced teachers to the higher paying districts in the county. This can double the cost impact on districts who not only lose some of their best, most experienced teachers, but also lose the investment they made in training and cultivating those teachers. As Table 7 shows, differences in top salary earning potential can be significant across the county, with a district such as Northern again only offering 77 percent of that offered by the top paying district (Dallastown).

Similarly, differences in school and district-level administrator salaries can have a marked effect on the ability of districts to retain top school and district leaders. Such leaders have a direct impact on the ability of schools and districts to effectively guide instruction, to implement state and district level policy priorities, to make effective and efficient fiscal decisions, and to monitor and improve the overall level of instruction that students receive. Tables 8-9 offer data that shows the relative difference in average school and district administrator salaries across the county.

**TABLE 6
Teacher Starting Salary Data**

District	Starting Salary	Percentage of York Suburban's Starting Salary
York Suburban	\$41,636	--
Dallastown	\$40,800	98%
Southern	\$40,000	96%
Central York	\$39,137	94%
Hanover	\$38,495	92%
York City	\$38,384	92%
Southwestern	\$37,663	90%
Eastern	\$37,400	90%
Northeastern	\$37,400	90%
Red Lion	\$37,000	89%
West York	\$36,869	89%
Spring Grove	\$36,660	88%
Southeastern	\$36,351	87%
Dover	\$34,865	84%
Northern	\$33,097	79%

Source: All data obtained directly from school districts (2007).

**TABLE 7:
Teacher Top Salary Data**

District	Top Salary	Percentage of Dallastown Top Salary
Dallastown	\$81,962	--
York Suburban	\$79,620	97%
Red Lion	\$78,706	96%
Central York	\$76,924	94%
Southeastern	\$76,668	94%
Hanover	\$76,089	93%
Southern	\$76,000	93%
York City	\$75,987	93%
Northeastern	\$75,480	92%
Dover	\$72,362	88%
Southwestern	\$72,003	88%
Spring Grove	\$71,863	88%
West York	\$70,762	86%
Eastern	\$68,805	84%
Northern	\$62,963	77%

Source: All data obtained directly from school districts (2007).

TABLE 8	
Average District Administrator Salary	
District	Average Salary
York Suburban SD	\$119,791
Southern York County SD	\$111,187
Central York SD	\$104,322
Dallastown Area SD	\$98,274
South Western SD	\$97,925
Northeastern York SD	\$96,196
West Shore SD	\$95,417
York City SD	\$92,933
Red Lion Area SD	\$91,550
South Eastern SD	\$90,982
Dover Area SD	\$90,681
Spring Grove Area SD	\$89,394
Northern York SD	\$85,870
West York Area SD	\$76,155
Eastern York SD	\$75,749
Hanover Public SD	\$69,624
<i>Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education (2007).</i>	

TABLE 9	
Average School Administrator Salary	
District	Average Salary
York Suburban SD	\$91,994
Dallastown Area SD	\$84,105
York City SD	\$83,209
Red Lion Area SD	\$81,888
Southern York County SD	\$81,097
Central York SD	\$80,507
Northeastern York SD	\$80,310
Spring Grove Area SD	\$78,596
Dover Area SD	\$78,574
South Western SD	\$78,310
South Eastern SD	\$76,855
West York Area SD	\$76,849
Eastern York SD	\$71,805
West Shore SD	\$71,484
Northern York SD	\$70,718
Hanover Public SD	\$67,278
<i>Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education (2007).</i>	

The final table in this section provides data from APA’s 2007 statewide costing out study conducted for the Pennsylvania State Board of Education.⁶ This study employed a variety of research techniques to determine the costs which specific districts face in meeting the state’s performance expectations. In particular, those expectations include having 100 percent of students: 1) Master state standards in 12 academic areas; and 2) Score “proficient” or above on reading and math PSSA assessments by the year 2014. The 12 academic areas include: arts and humanities; career education; civics and government; economics; environment and ecology; family and consumer sciences; geography; health, safety and physical education; history; math; reading, writing, speaking and listening; and science and technology.

Special need students were found to require additional resources and supports in order to reach academic proficiency, and therefore increase district costing out results.

Table 10 provides the costing out data generated for each of York County’s school districts. The “Costing Out Estimate” column provides the per student cost each district faces to meet the Commonwealth’s performance goals. The costs are different for each district because it is directly affected by the number of students with special needs enrolled in each district. Such students were found to require additional resources and supports in order to reach academic proficiency, and therefore increase district costing out results. It is for this reason that York City has by far the highest per-student estimate. The final column displays the difference between the costing out estimate and each district’s current, per pupil spending. As shown in the table, every district in the county is currently spending less than the costing out estimate requires.

⁶ *Costing Out the Resources Needed to Meet Pennsylvania’s Public Education Goals*, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc (2007).
http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=130714&stateboard_edNav=|10857|&stateboard_edNav=|10766|

**TABLE 10:
The Cost of Meeting Pennsylvania's Student Performance Goals**

School District	2005-06 ADM	Current Spending Per Pupil	Costing Out Estimate Per Pupil	Total Difference Per Pupil
Central York SD	5,366	\$7,766	\$10,234	-\$2,468
Dallastown Area SD	6,054	\$9,290	\$10,045	-\$754
Dover Area SD	3,759	\$8,457	\$10,947	-\$2,491
Eastern York SD	2,858	\$8,874	\$11,298	-\$2,424
Hanover Public SD	1,770	\$10,001	\$12,553	-\$2,552
Northeastern York SD	3,547	\$7,965	\$11,278	-\$3,313
Northern York County SD	3,234	\$7,933	\$10,534	-\$2,601
Red Lion Area SD	6,117	\$7,609	\$10,457	-\$2,848
South Eastern SD	3,431	\$8,014	\$10,676	-\$2,663
South Western SD	4,210	\$7,922	\$10,312	-\$2,390
Southern York County SD	3,387	\$8,542	\$10,898	-\$2,356
Spring Grove Area SD	4,041	\$8,059	\$10,961	-\$2,902
West Shore SD	8,365	\$7,722	\$10,856	-\$3,134
West York Area SD	3,402	\$7,833	\$10,775	-\$2,941
York City SD	7,574	\$9,273	\$15,526	-\$6,253
York Suburban SD	2,821	\$10,543	\$11,070	-\$528

Source: Costing Out the Resources Needed to Meet Pennsylvania's Public Education Goals, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc (2007). <http://www.apaconsulting.net/uploads/reports/6.pdf>

III. YORK COUNTY DISTRICT RESOURCE USE ANALYSIS

As outlined in the introduction to this report, APA was asked by the Center for Community Engagement at York College of Pennsylvania (the Center) to conduct a comparison of York County school district resource use with other, similarly situated school districts in Pennsylvania. The purpose of this work is to help analyze whether York County districts appear to devote fewer or greater resources in key areas relative to their peers across the state.

The key pieces of this analysis included:

- A. Identifying appropriate comparison districts**
- B. Identifying and comparing appropriate resource use categories**
- C. Presenting findings and conclusions.**

These pieces of APA's work are discussed in greater detail below.

A. Identifying Appropriate Comparison Districts

One of the key pieces of APA's work was to identify an appropriate group of districts from across the Commonwealth whose resource use could be effectively compared to individual York County school districts. To make a fair comparison and to control for differences among districts that could affect how and where resources are used, APA identified several key criteria to consider:

1. District enrollment size.
2. The level of student need among enrolled students.
3. Geographic proximity.
4. Cost of living differences.
5. Student performance.

One of the key pieces of APA's work was to identify an appropriate group of districts from across the Commonwealth whose resource use could be effectively compared to individual York districts.

APA's experience has shown that each of these five can significantly impact the costs districts face in educating their students. They were therefore integrated into our analysis and were used as screens to identify those districts from around the Commonwealth whose resource usage could be most accurately compared with York County districts.

To incorporate size into the analysis, APA broke all Pennsylvania districts into groups based on the size of their student enrollment. For this purpose, APA used the same size categories developed during our 2007 statewide costing out study conducted for the Pennsylvania State Board of Education. For that study, all districts were broken out into five groups:

- Very small (less than 1,000 students);
- Small (1,000-2,499 students);
- Moderate (2,500-4,999 students);
- Large (5,000-9,999 students); and
- Very large (10,000 or more students).

Once the districts were broken out into appropriate size groupings, APA gathered student demographic data in order to compare all districts in terms of student need. As discussed in the previous section and demonstrated in Table 1, APA examined need by looking at the percentages of enrolled students with “special needs.” Such students include those who are economically disadvantaged or who are English language learners (ELL), special education students, or gifted students. These need categories were used by APA in conducting its statewide costing out study and are an established indicator of the overall challenges districts face in educating their students. In particular, as was found in the statewide study, districts with higher percentages of special need students require additional staffing and resource support in order to meet state performance expectations.

Within each district size group, need was analyzed, and those that were relatively close in terms of overall student needs were identified and grouped.

As was accomplished in Table 1, APA created a relative student need index for districts across the Commonwealth. Within each size group, district need was analyzed, and those that were relatively close in terms of overall student needs were identified and grouped. In addition to the overall need index, APA also looked more specifically at the at-risk student populations of target districts. The proxy for identifying this population was the percentage of enrolled students that qualify for free or reduced price lunches. In each size group of districts, APA took the standard deviation of the free and reduced price lunch enrollment percentages. This standard deviation was then applied to the group and any districts that were beyond one standard deviation above or below the average enrollment percentage for the group were dropped from the analysis.

The effect of this analysis was to eliminate districts with at-risk populations that looked markedly different from the average district in the group. This helped reduce the chance that such districts might skew the resource use comparison. Because there is typically less variation in special education populations across the Commonwealth, and because the at-risk population is a primary driver of district need both in York County and across the state, APA believes this added focus on at-risk students was an appropriate screen to apply to our analysis.

Within York County, these size and need analyses placed districts into the categories shown in Table 11. As the table shows, because of the unique scope of needs that exists in the York City School District – which has far higher levels of student need than any other district in the county – APA placed York City into a separate “large, high need” category. This allowed York City’s resource use to be more accurately compared with the Commonwealth’s other high need districts.

TABLE 11
York County District Size Categories

Small Size (1,000-2,499 students)	Moderate Size, (2,500-4,999 students)	Large, Average Need (5,000-9,999 students)	Large, High Need (5,000-9,999 students)
Hanover	Dover Area	Central York	York City
	Eastern York	Dallastown Area	
	Northeastern York	Red Lion Area	
	Northern York	West Shore	
	South Eastern		
	Southern York		
	South Western		
	Spring Grove Area		
	West York Area		
	York Suburban		

Once size and student need were taken into account, roughly 100 comparison districts remained from across the Commonwealth. To further refine the scope of comparison, APA next examined the geographic proximity and cost of living differences of these 100 districts to York County. This examination was designed to reduce the possibility that differing characteristics among regions of the Commonwealth would impact the resource use comparison between districts.

With regard to geographic proximity, APA identified those of the potential comparison districts that were located in roughly the same Southeast quadrant of the Commonwealth, and discarded districts that were outside of this quadrant. With regard to cost of living differences, APA utilized a cost of living analysis known as a “Location Cost Metric” (LCM). The LCM analyzes the cost of living differences between the York County districts and the identified comparison districts in each size group. The key purpose of this analysis is to identify if there are cost of living differences between districts that might impact the cost of delivering education services.

The rationale for conducting such an analysis is well established. In fact, it is now widely recognized that cost of living differences can have a significant impact on the ability of districts to provide equivalent education services. This is especially true with regard to labor. To retain teachers and other employees, school districts must be able to offer compensation that is competitive with local non-educational employers, and employee compensation must be sufficient to purchase goods at local prices.

APA also examined the geographic proximity and cost of living differences between districts.

The LCM used by APA examines cost of living differences on a county level, and focuses specifically on objective measures of the cost of living and of market prices of labor. We do not, therefore, seek to address any differences between districts or regions that might affect their “attractiveness” to potential employees. Such an attractiveness

analysis would need to address myriad subjective factors (for example, recreational opportunities and overall quality of life) that are not easily quantified.

Instead, the LCM focuses jointly on the costs of acquiring and retaining labor. This is because, as in most states, labor in Pennsylvania represents the large majority of all school district operating costs and is the most important driver of district cost differences. With this focus on labor costs in mind, the LCM focuses on the primary costs employees face. For this work, three sets of data were used: 1) The 2006 Council for Community and Economic Research (ACCRA) cost of living data for metropolitan areas in Pennsylvania; 2) U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates of the market cost of two and three bedroom apartments in each county; and 3) National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data by William Fowler and Lori Taylor on the Comparable Wage Index (CWI) for each school district for 2004 (which is the most recent available year). Using this data, APA generated an LCM for each county that contained a comparison district as well as for York County. This factor was then used to modify district spending to appropriately account for cost of living differences. Specifically, the LCM was applied to district data pertaining to instructional spending, average salaries and benefits, and maintenance and operations spending.

The final screen APA applied in determining districts to compare with York County was student performance. Including student performance as a way to compare districts is important because public policymakers, and the public at large, are typically less interested in knowing who the lower spending school districts might be if those districts are not able to demonstrate the ability to also produce student success.

There can, of course, be many definitions of what constitutes such student “success,” and how this term is defined greatly impacts the types of districts identified for any resource use comparison. For the current study, APA’s student performance criteria required comparison districts to meet or exceed the statewide average for the percentages of their students who were proficient or above on the 2005-06 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment in *both* reading and math. As shown in Table 4, the 2006 state PSSA average proficiency rate was about 68 percent in reading and 69 percent in math. Districts whose overall student percentages did not meet or exceed these levels were dropped from APA’s resource use comparison. In the case of the small district group, this student performance analysis eliminated all but one comparison district. To maintain an adequate size comparison group in this instance APA was therefore required to alter the student performance criteria. For small districts, APA lowered the performance standard to include those districts that had similar PSSA reading and math test results to the small sized York County district (Hanover).

APA required comparison districts to meet or exceed the statewide average for students who were proficient or above on the 2005-06 PSSAs in both reading and math.

After applying the five criteria discussed above (district size, student need, geographic proximity, cost of living differences, and student performance) there remained a comparison group of 15 small size districts, 16 moderate size districts, 13 large, average need districts, and two large, high-need districts. These groups of districts were the final ones used to conduct APA’s resource use comparison, and are shown in Table 12 below.

Table 12 also shows each district's enrollment, county, and "need index" which reflects the overall level of student need in that district.

TABLE 12
List of Pennsylvania School Districts Selected for Comparison to York County School Districts

District Group	York County School Districts			Comparison Districts				
	District	Enrollment	Need Index	District	County	Enrollment	Need Index	
<i>Large, High Need</i>	York City	7,573	2.03	Harrisburg City	Dauphin	8,294	1.73	
				Lancaster	Lancaster	11,528	2.03	
<i>Large, Average Need</i>	Central York	5,365	1.30	Abington	Montgomery	7,572	1.31	
	Dallastown Area	6,054	1.28	Avon Grove	Chester	5,824	1.36	
	Red Lion Area	6,117	1.29	Boyertown Area	Berks	7,082	1.30	
	West Shore	8,365	1.37	Cumberland Valley	Cumberland	7,781	1.31	
				East Penn	Lehigh	7,921	1.30	
				Manheim Twp.	Lancaster	5,620	1.37	
				Parkland	Lehigh	9,086	1.34	
				Pennridge	Bucks	7,340	1.32	
				Perkiomen Valley	Montgomery	5,388	1.26	
				Quakertown Comm.	Bucks	5,558	1.28	
				Souderton Area	Montgomery	6,924	1.34	
				Spring-Ford Area	Montgomery	7,244	1.29	
				Wilson	Berks	5,609	1.33	
	<i>Moderate Size, Average Need</i>	Dover Area	3,759	1.33	Blue Mountain	Schuylkill	2,996	1.33
Eastern York		2,856	1.35	Cocalico	Lancaster	3,669	1.32	
Northeastern York		3,547	1.39	Colonial	Montgomery	4,684	1.34	
Northern York County		3,235	1.28	Cornwall-Lebanon	Lebanon	4,895	1.30	
South Eastern		3,431	1.28	Dallas	Luzerne	2,763	1.32	
Southern York County		3,388	1.32	Eastern Lancaster County	Lancaster	3,508	1.34	
South Western		4,210	1.25	Elizabethtown Area	Lancaster	4,020	1.32	
Spring Grove Area		4,043	1.33	Exeter Twp.	Berks	4,332	1.33	
West York Area		3,402	1.32	Lampeter-Strasburg	Lancaster	3,343	1.31	
York Suburban		2,821	1.38	Lower Dauphin	Dauphin	4,104	1.33	
				Mechanicsburg Area	Cumberland	3,634	1.34	
				Phoenixville Area	Chester	3,820	1.34	
				Solanco	Lancaster	4,048	1.29	
				Twin Valley	Berks	3,384	1.31	
				Upper Moreland Twp.	Montgomery	3,202	1.31	
				Warwick	Lancaster	4,744	1.35	
<i>Small, Average Need</i>		Hanover Public	1,770	1.47	Antietam	Berks	1,112	1.43
					Jim Thorpe Area	Carbon	2,119	1.44
					Line Mountain	Northumberland	1,292	1.37
				Midd-West	Snyder	2,430	1.37	
				Milton Area	Northumberland	2,319	1.41	
				Minersville Area	Schuylkill	1,207	1.39	
				Mount Union Area	Huntingdon	1,570	1.45	
				Muncy	Lycoming	1,064	1.38	
				Newport	Perry	1,234	1.40	
				North Schuylkill	Schuylkill	1,985	1.38	
				Northwest Area	Luzerne	1,481	1.37	
				Schuylkill Haven Area	Schuylkill	1,456	1.37	
				Southern Huntingdon County	Huntingdon	1,370	1.41	
				Spring Cove	Blair	1,991	1.43	
				Williams Valley	Schuylkill	1,188	1.38	

B. Identifying and Comparing Appropriate Resource Use Categories

Once the districts listed in Table 12 were identified, APA felt comfortable identifying resource use categories with which to make comparisons to York County school districts. Based on APA's experience conducting similar analyses, three broad resource categories were targeted for study: 1) instruction; 2) administration; and 3) school district and maintenance and operations.

Within these three areas, and based on the availability of reliable district-level data, APA selected seven factors to analyze. For our purposes, district "efficiency" is defined by the resource usage in these seven categories:

1. Number of teachers per 1,000 weighted students
2. Number of full-time-equivalent teacher aides per 1,000 weighted students
3. Number of school and district administrative staff per 1,000 weighted students
4. Number of full-time-equivalent school and district support staff per 1,000 weighted students
5. Regular and special instructional spending per weighted student adjusted for cost of living differences
6. Average salaries and benefits of teachers adjusted for cost of living differences
7. Maintenance and operation expenditures per student adjusted for cost of living differences.

The first five of these factors were analyzed using "weighted" student enrollments as was explained in Table 1. This was accomplished in order to enable the study to more accurately take into account the differing numbers of special need students in every district and to ensure that resource use data properly reflected this level of need. As explained earlier, the costs of effectively serving such special need students should not be underestimated and can have a significant impact on a district's ability to meet student performance expectations. It should be noted that the weighted student count was not used for the seventh factor because maintenance and operations spending levels are not generally considered to be impacted by student need.

Tables 13A and 13B show the raw values for each of the seven factors in both the comparison school districts and York County's districts. Table 13A shows data for the large, high need districts and the large, average need districts. Table 13B shows data for the moderate and small size districts. The raw values shown reflect actual data provided to APA by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Also shown are the averages and standard deviation under each factor for the comparison districts. For example, the average number of teachers per 1,000 weighted students for all the large, average need comparison districts is 45.01. The standard deviation among the comparison districts for this factor is 3.57.

TABLE 13A
Raw Efficiency Values for Large Districts

		Efficiency Factor*						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
School Districts by Size/Need Group								
<u>Large, High Need Districts</u>								
York County								
	York City	26.03	3.77	1.50	3.09	\$2,700	\$79,803	\$877
Comparison Districts								
	Harrisburg City	29.51	6.86	1.83	2.20	\$2,718	\$69,912	\$755
	Lancaster	47.15	7.46	3.00	3.98	\$3,863	\$68,304	\$1,231
	<i>Average</i>	38.33	7.16	2.42	3.09	\$3,291	\$69,108	\$993
	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	12.48	0.42	0.82	1.26	\$809	\$1,137	\$337
<u>Large, Average Need Districts</u>								
York County								
	Central York	43.00	13.00	2.43	3.86	\$3,797	\$69,567	\$704
	Dallastown Area	47.41	4.38	2.83	4.19	\$4,626	\$84,584	\$815
	Red Lion Area	42.20	7.01	2.78	7.83	\$3,565	\$72,241	\$764
	West Shore	45.48	7.91	2.54	6.78	\$3,495	\$65,612	\$727
Comparison Districts								
	Abington	46.24	13.22	4.83	9.85	\$4,808	\$82,942	\$1,252
	Avon Grove	36.53	8.88	1.89	4.98	\$3,314	\$58,856	\$639
	Boyertown Area	44.88	17.82	2.28	5.27	\$3,963	\$72,343	\$826
	Cumberland Valley	47.38	16.48	3.34	5.20	\$3,693	\$63,607	\$805
	East Penn	43.84	16.95	2.63	12.18	\$3,692	\$71,914	\$958
	Manheim Twp.	44.52	6.60	2.59	6.15	\$3,767	\$70,878	\$942
	Parkland	41.50	12.89	2.29	4.71	\$4,036	\$74,178	\$1,027
	Pennridge	43.74	6.00	3.10	6.88	\$3,978	\$80,906	\$811
	Perkiomen Valley	51.30	14.85	2.94	6.98	\$4,337	\$71,605	\$1,032
	Quakertown Comm.	45.17	11.05	2.95	4.92	\$4,431	\$83,719	\$819
	Souderton Area	48.00	10.87	2.58	6.13	\$4,205	\$72,413	\$949
	Spring-Ford Area	47.99	11.84	2.56	8.16	\$4,182	\$65,347	\$1,075
	Wilson	44.09	12.36	2.54	8.28	\$3,691	\$67,473	\$812
	<i>Average</i>	45.01	12.29	2.81	6.90	\$4,007	\$72,014	\$919
	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	3.57	3.71	0.71	2.22	\$391	\$7,364	\$157

**Efficiency Factors*

- 1 Number of teachers per 1,000 weighted students
- 2 Number of full-time-equivalent teacher aides per 1,000 weighted students
- 3 Number of school and district administrative staff per 1,000 weighted students
- 4 Number of full-time-equivalent school and district support staff per 1,000 weighted students
- 5 Regular and special instructional spending per weighted student adjusted by the regional cost factor
- 6 Average salaries and benefits of teachers adjusted by the regional cost factor
- 7 Maintenance and operation expenditures per student adjusted by the regional cost factor

TABLE 13B
Raw Efficiency Values for Moderate and Small Districts

School Districts by Size/Need Group	Efficiency Factor*						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Moderate Size, Average Need Districts</i>							
York County							
Dover Area	43.16	8.03	3.01	7.13	\$3,649	\$65,561	\$874
Eastern York	51.65	14.79	2.85	4.80	\$3,985	\$66,031	\$856
Northeastern York	42.95	7.43	3.46	4.88	\$3,186	\$68,763	\$731
Northern York County	47.47	13.25	3.37	5.90	\$3,934	\$68,025	\$955
South Eastern	47.89	4.54	2.50	4.77	\$3,815	\$68,972	\$737
Southern York County	44.85	10.43	2.92	6.73	\$4,086	\$76,466	\$923
South Western	47.21	5.24	3.05	5.04	\$3,753	\$69,415	\$849
Spring Grove Area	46.54	2.42	3.16	4.37	\$3,714	\$66,780	\$789
West York Area	44.13	9.58	3.34	5.80	\$3,440	\$65,859	\$726
York Suburban	46.62	1.93	2.83	5.80	\$5,113	\$85,885	\$1,061
Comparison Districts							
Blue Mountain	47.91	6.02	3.51	2.76	\$3,771	\$74,006	\$1,061
Cocalico	45.13	9.27	3.30	6.70	\$3,812	\$69,085	\$668
Colonial	53.02	9.90	3.83	9.58	\$5,500	\$78,727	\$1,374
Cornwall-Lebanon	47.15	11.04	2.19	4.23	\$3,713	\$73,344	\$902
Dallas	41.79	11.00	2.47	4.54	\$3,790	\$76,492	\$1,001
Eastern Lancaster Cty.	44.92	6.28	2.55	5.64	\$3,584	\$67,344	\$900
Elizabethtown Area	43.11	9.08	3.40	5.39	\$3,407	\$66,156	\$773
Exeter Twp	46.39	11.12	3.13	5.82	\$3,850	\$75,397	\$744
Lampeter-Strasburg	45.15	10.15	3.42	6.38	\$3,848	\$71,443	\$800
Lower Dauphin	47.98	11.54	2.93	5.86	\$3,839	\$67,270	\$783
Mechanicsburg Area	50.56	9.87	3.49	7.40	\$4,042	\$64,258	\$853
Phoenixville Area	47.28	6.84	3.52	7.23	\$5,475	\$73,222	\$1,082
Solanco	41.61	9.68	2.68	6.42	\$3,087	\$67,084	\$651
Twin Valley	50.29	10.49	2.71	4.51	\$3,896	\$70,702	\$723
Upper Moreland Twp.	44.90	14.97	3.33	14.85	\$4,530	\$77,879	\$1,065
Warwick	42.94	9.40	2.04	5.25	\$4,012	\$74,055	\$690
<i>Average</i>	46.26	9.79	3.03	6.41	\$4,010	\$71,654	\$879
<i>Std. Dev.</i>	3.23	2.18	0.53	2.73	\$651	\$4,427	\$195
<i>Small, Average Need Districts</i>							
York County							
Hanover Public	47.81	8.48	3.86	9.25	\$4,051	\$67,811	\$1,070
Comparison Districts							
Antietam	49.20	5.05	5.68	2.52	\$3,872	\$61,292	\$642
Jim Thorpe Area	41.93	11.79	1.64	5.57	\$3,211	\$57,647	\$1,189
Line Mountain	51.49	17.54	3.39	6.22	\$3,931	\$66,696	\$956
Midd-West	48.54	13.48	3.00	4.79	\$3,450	\$64,162	\$730
Milton Area	52.91	7.03	3.06	4.59	\$3,903	\$69,055	\$981
Minersville Area	42.36	0.60	1.79	7.76	\$4,215	\$70,779	\$1,080
Mount Union Area	55.18	9.85	3.07	6.79	\$3,671	\$62,323	\$775
Muncy	51.11	7.50	4.77	6.81	\$4,355	\$68,986	\$1,044
Newport	57.15	11.55	3.46	8.08	\$3,683	\$64,523	\$731
North Schuylkill	47.08	6.75	2.55	5.84	\$4,311	\$76,192	\$831
Northwest Area	44.78	5.90	1.97	6.64	\$4,370	\$79,091	\$694
Schuylkill Haven Area	41.55	1.25	2.50	4.51	\$3,433	\$68,573	\$1,011
South. Huntingdon Cty.	49.75	8.03	3.11	8.03	\$3,502	\$58,484	\$1,016
Spring Cove	45.65	9.31	3.86	7.02	\$3,443	\$69,335	\$901
Williams Valley	48.20	0.00	2.44	7.32	\$3,936	\$64,935	\$845
<i>Average</i>	45.01	12.29	2.81	6.90	\$3,819	\$66,805	\$895
<i>Std. Dev.</i>	3.57	3.71	0.71	2.22	\$374	\$5,937	\$161

**Efficiency Factors*

- 1 Number of teachers per 1,000 weighted students
- 2 Number of full-time-equivalent teacher aides per 1,000 weighted students
- 3 Number of school and district administrative staff per 1,000 weighted students
- 4 Number of full-time-equivalent school and district support staff per 1,000 weighted students
- 5 Regular and special instructional spending per weighted student adjusted by the regional cost factor
- 6 Average salaries and benefits of teachers adjusted by the regional cost factor
- 7 Maintenance and operation expenditures per student adjusted by the regional cost factor

To convert the raw data shown in Tables 13A and 13B into a useful tool for comparing York County districts, APA developed a “scoring” system which could be used for each of the seven factors. To make this possible, APA calculated the “z-scores” for each York County district. The z-score indicates the number of standard deviations an individual district's score is above or below the comparison district group average for each efficiency factor. It is used to provide a standardized method for calculating and illustrating how the York County districts compare in each category. A negative z-score indicates that the York County district was below the comparison group average for the particular factor.

The York County district z-scores for every factor are shown in Table 14 below. For example, Table 14 shows that the York City School District is almost one full standard deviation (-.986) below the average of its comparison districts in terms of the number of teachers it employs per 1,000 weighted students. Also included in Table 14 is a “Total Score” column. This reflects a scoring system constructed by APA to reflect how the York County districts compare with their peer districts when looking across all seven factors simultaneously. Under this system, APA awarded points when York County district resource use for a particular factor was below the average (as reflected by the z-score). Conversely, APA subtracted points if the York County district was above the average.

As shown in the key at the bottom of the table, the following specific rules were applied in scoring the York County districts:

- z-scores between 0 and .499 count as -1
- z-scores greater than .500 count as -2
- z-scores between 0 and -.499 count as +1
- z-scores less than -.500 count as +2
- z-scores within .010 of 0 count as 0.

The further above zero a district's Total Score is, the more “efficient” they appear to be in relation to their comparison group, and vice versa.

The result of this system was to produce the “Total Score” column in Table 14. Since districts were awarded points for having below average resource use when compared to their peers, the further above 0 a district's Total Score is, the more “efficient” they appear to be in relation to their comparison group, and vice versa.

Table 14 also includes information on whether each York County district met APA's student performance criteria (which included meeting or exceeding the statewide average for the percentage of enrolled students that scored proficient or better on the 2006 PSSAs). As noted earlier, except for the small district group, all comparison districts met this performance standard. In the small district group, there were an insufficient number of comparison districts available with which to compare so APA lowered the performance standard to include districts with similar PSSA results as the small York County district.

TABLE 14

York School District Efficiency Scores

York County District Size- Need Group	Efficiency Factors (Showing z-Scores) and Total Score (Weighted and Combined z-Scores)							Total Score*	Is this district at or above the state proficiency average in PSSA Reading and Math?
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<u>Large, High Need</u>									
York City	-0.986	-8.010	-1.116	0.004	-0.730	9.407	-0.345	7	No
<u>Large, Average Need</u>									
Central York	-0.565	0.190	-0.533	-1.370	-0.537	-0.332	-1.369	10	Yes
Dallastown Area	0.672	-2.134	0.035	-1.221	1.581	1.707	-0.666	-1	Yes
Red Lion Area	-0.788	-1.424	-0.041	0.421	-1.131	0.031	-0.988	7	No
West Shore	0.130	-1.180	-0.382	-0.055	-1.310	-0.869	-1.225	9	No
<u>Moderate Size, Average Need</u>									
Dover Area	-0.957	-0.806	-0.038	0.263	-0.555	-1.376	-0.025	9	No
Eastern York	1.666	2.292	-0.333	-0.589	-0.039	-1.270	-0.119	3	No
Northeastern York	-1.024	-1.082	0.805	-0.559	-1.265	-0.653	-0.759	10	No
Northern York County	0.376	1.587	0.643	-0.185	-0.116	-0.820	0.386	-2	No
South Eastern	0.506	-2.406	-1.006	-0.602	-0.299	-0.606	-0.731	9	No
Southern York County	-0.434	0.293	-0.219	0.117	0.116	1.087	0.223	-4	Yes
South Western	0.295	-2.087	0.026	-0.500	-0.395	-0.506	-0.156	6	No
Spring Grove Area	0.088	-3.377	0.250	-0.745	-0.455	-1.101	-0.462	6	No
West York Area	-0.657	-0.094	0.586	-0.225	-0.874	-1.309	-0.787	8	No
York Suburban	0.114	-3.600	-0.373	-0.225	1.695	3.215	0.931	-3	Yes
<u>Small, Average Need</u>									
Hanover Public	-0.137	0.159	0.710	1.991	0.618	0.169	1.087	-9	No

Efficiency Factors

Note: z-scores indicate the number of standard deviations an individual district's score is above or below (-) the comparison group average for each efficiency factor

- 1 Number of teachers per 1,000 weighted students
- 2 Number of full-time-equivalent teacher aides per 1,000 weighted students
- 3 Number of school and district administrative staff per 1,000 weighted students
- 4 Number of full-time-equivalent school and district support staff per 1,000 weighted students
- 5 Regular and special instructional spending per weighted student adjusted by the regional cost factor
- 6 Average salaries and benefits of teachers adjusted by the regional cost factor
- 7 Maintenance and operation expenditures per student adjusted by the regional cost factor

* Total Score is calculated as follows:

z-scores between 0 and .499 count as -1; z-scores greater than .500 count as -2.
z-scores between 0 and -.499 count as +1; z-scores less than -.500 count as +2.
a z-score within .010 of 0 counts as 0.

Several important findings can be drawn from Picture A:

- The large majority of York County districts (11 of 16 or 69 percent) use fewer resources than their comparison peer districts.
- Most of the districts (3 out of 5) that use more resources when compared to their peers are those that are also the highest performing districts in York County.
- The vast majority of districts (10 out of 11) that use fewer resources in relation to their comparison districts are also performing below the statewide average on math and reading tests.
- The four districts in York County whose students score above the statewide average in reading and math are the same four that have the highest starting teacher pay in the county and the highest average pay for district administrators. Three of these four also rank tops in the county in terms of the highest teacher salaries offered, and all rank at or near the top in terms of average school administrator pay.

The large majority of York County districts (11 of 16 or 69 percent) use fewer resources than their comparison peer districts.

These findings implicate a number of policy issues for York County's education and civic leaders. Firstly, while efficiency is to be lauded, it should be viewed in proper perspective with regard to student performance. In this case, the fact that most York County districts use overall fewer resources than their peers but are below the state average in reading and math scores may indicate that they are simply having to make do with less available resources than other districts in the Commonwealth. And since the comparison group for most York County districts was comprised only of those districts that are at or above the state average in performance, it also may indicate that York County districts are in general under funded to meet their student needs. This conclusion is supported by the findings in Table 10 which reveal that not a single district in the county is currently funded at an adequate level to meet statewide performance expectations.

Second, it is worth exploring the importance of a district's ability to compensate teachers and administrators in relation to other districts in the county. As the data show, the top performing districts also appear at the top in the county in terms of their ability to compensate such key employees. As part of the work discussed in the next section of this report, APA interviewed numerous district and community leaders from across York County to discuss the key needs of schools and districts. It should be noted that one of the concerns which surfaced frequently from these interviews was the need to compete with surrounding districts for the most qualified teachers and administrators possible.

Third, while the analysis described in this section provides a comprehensive look at seven important factors related to district resource use, it cannot address all factors which might impact a district's spending and staff allocation practices. More exploration of districts on either end of the spectrum may therefore be useful. For instance the Hanover School

The vast majority of York County districts that use fewer resources are also performing below the statewide average on math and reading tests.

District, which appears at the relatively inefficient end of the spectrum, also is the smallest district in the county and has the second highest level of relative student need (as shown in Table 1). In addition, as was mentioned previously, there were almost no districts in the Hanover comparison group that were achieving above the state average on the PSSAs, which may indicate a larger problem with how smaller districts in the state are funded. Indeed, APA's statewide costing out results shown in Table 10 indicate that Hanover is significantly under funded and lies at about the middle in York County in terms of the per-student resources needed to reach state performance goals.

IV. AREAS FOR INCREASED DISTRICT COOPERATION

In addition to conducting the resource use analysis described in the previous section, APA was also asked by the Center to conduct an analysis of areas where York County school districts might work together to improve student performance and to share resources more effectively.

This section of the report describes:

- A. The process APA used to identify areas for increasing district cooperation**
- B. Identified strengths and challenges in York County**
- C. Recommendations for improving efficiency and cooperation among districts.**

These pieces of APA's work are discussed in greater detail below.

A. The Process APA Used

In order to identify potential areas for cooperation among York County school districts, APA designed a multiple-level process for gathering input and data from school districts and other community leaders from around the county. This included three main steps:

1. District surveys
2. Interviews with district and county leaders
3. A culminating meeting in York County with superintendents.

During the summer of 2007 APA designed a survey instrument with input from the Center for Community Engagement at York College. The purpose of this instrument (which is included in Appendix A of this report) was to gauge district leaders' opinions on a variety of issues and to provide a general understanding of the types of services and programs that are offered in York County school districts.

The survey's design was drawn from several sources including:

1. Research regarding the types of resources and programs that have been shown to impact school and district performance;
2. Input from panel discussions with educators across the Commonwealth conducted as a part of APA's statewide costing out study for Pennsylvania; and
3. APA's experience and the input of educators and other experts that has accumulated over the past decade through numerous resource evaluation studies across the country.

To identify potential areas for enhanced district cooperation APA used surveys, interviews with district and county leaders, and a culminating meeting with superintendents.

To incorporate the findings of education research into the survey's design, APA drew from an extensive literature review conducted as part of its statewide costing out study. This review included hundreds of studies, reports, and other sources on effective educational practices. The research process first sought to identify educational strategies for which there was direct evidence of improvement in academic performance. Researchers also reviewed strategies that may have indirect impacts on performance but can still contribute to student learning.

Since these recommendations are targeted primarily at the district level, superintendent understanding of, and support for such recommendations is crucial for moving these ideas into action.

The surveys were sent out in early July 2007 and were completed by districts in mid-August. The findings were compiled by APA and were used to help inform the construction of an interview protocol to be used with district and county leaders identified by the Center (a list of those interviewed is included in Appendix B). These interviews were conducted by phone through September and October of 2007.

Results from both the surveys and phone interviews were compiled and presented to a meeting open to all superintendents in York County. This meeting, which was held in York County on December 14, 2007, provided superintendents with a valuable opportunity to discuss the findings and to offer their input and additional recommendations. Attendees at the December 14 meeting are included in Appendix C.

The input of these superintendents is critical for several reasons. First, as the education leaders of their districts they are in the best position to understand the unique needs of their teachers, students, parents, community, and administrators. Second, since these recommendations are targeted primarily at the district level, superintendent support is crucial for moving these ideas into action.

B. Identified strengths and challenges in York County

This section synthesizes key findings which emerged from the school district surveys, phone interviews with selected individuals, and superintendents' meeting discussed above. The material is broken into two sections:

1. A list of some of the top identified concerns across the county.
2. A list of the positive activities already taking place in York County's school systems.

1. Top Concerns Identified Across the County

District surveys and interviews generated a list of consistent top concerns about the future course of education in York County. Five of the top concerns included:

1. Almost every district noted a lack of adequate funding to meet the needs of their students and the performance expectations of the Commonwealth. Leaders consistently point to a lack of state funding as well as to disparities among districts in terms of their ability to raise funds locally.
2. Most districts (79%) indicated student population growth and increasingly diverse student bodies (including growing numbers of at-risk, English language learners, or special education students) present one of the most serious challenges to the county's school systems. Districts indicated that significant additional staff and resources are needed to properly meet the needs of these students.
3. Most districts noted that the ability to use data to drive instruction was critical to their success and that there was a need for a county-level or inter-district system to help collect and organize data or share best practices among districts. Most districts indicated a need for faster delivery of test data so teachers can integrate the findings into their lesson plans.
4. The ability to attract and retain high quality teachers and administrators was a consistent concern. Much of this concern revolved around the challenge of competing with higher paying districts within York County.
5. The ability to expand existing preschool offerings across the county is a serious concern. Preschool is viewed as a critical tool for reaching students early to ensure they are on track to succeed in school. This is especially important for students from disadvantaged or troubled homes. Currently only two districts (Southeastern and West York) are able to offer preschool programs, even though almost all districts believe such a program would benefit their students.

Most districts indicated student population growth and increasingly diverse student bodies present one of the most serious challenges to the county's school systems.

Other concerns identified through APA's survey and interviews included:

- Many schools across the county are above the research-recommended ratio of 250:1 ratio of students to counselors. Many of the elementary schools are at double this recommended ratio. Increased counselor staffing can enhance the ability of schools to better recognize and address student behavior, emotional, and performance problems.
- Most districts indicated that student migration both between districts and from outside the county (especially from Maryland) poses a key challenge. Better sharing of student data might help in allowing districts and teachers to better plan to meet the needs of incoming children.

- About half the districts either do not use instructional coaches or indicated a need for more of these personnel. Research studies indicate that use of such coaches, who are typically experienced educators that can work directly with teachers, can improve implementation of professional development, improve instruction, reduce teacher turnover, and improve communication between teachers.
- Most districts would like to expand their summer school programs by either: 1) reducing class sizes; 2) providing transportation services to and from school; or 3) making summer school mandatory for failing students. Research indicates that such programs can have a positive impact on student performance, and can prevent many students from failing or dropping out of school.
- About half the districts in the county do not offer a before or after school program, or the program offered is not academically focused. Research indicates that such programs can have a positive effect on student performance, especially for at-risk kids who may need extra help with homework and academics that they do not get at home. Providing transportation for these programs was seen as an issue in a few districts.

2. Positive Things Already Happening in York County Schools

Drawing upon the input generated throughout the course of this study, APA identified a series of positive activities that are currently taking place in York County. These activities enhance both education service delivery and student performance. Some involve district-specific achievements, while others involve inter-district efforts, often coordinated through the Lincoln Intermediate Unit (IU).

Joint purchasing through the Intermediate Unit is viewed as very effective and as helping most districts to combine purchasing power and cut costs.

- While more work remains to be done, districts have nevertheless made great improvements in the use of assessment data to drive instruction. Districts now use formative assessments on a continual basis to improve service delivery to students. The IU has done an effective job acting as a clearinghouse for strategies on how to develop data teams and use data in schools.
- Districts have devoted significant effort and staff resources to emphasize their capacity to deliver more differentiated instruction to address specific needs of individual students.
- There has been a strong push to use research-based strategies to improve performance. This has evolved over time and greater scrutiny of programs has been applied. Curriculum directors and assistant superintendents meet routinely through the IU to discuss research-based efforts and strategies.
- Most districts indicate having strong relationships with their local school boards.

- Almost all districts indicated that schools are staffed with full time nurses. Some research indicates a link between nurse staffing, enhanced student health and performance, and overall safety of school environments.
- Most districts in the county offer some form of full day K program. Some research has shown these programs can have a positive impact on school performance, especially for at risk students or those who are behind academically. Many of the programs in York County districts are specifically targeted for at-risk kids. Program participation varies from nearly 100 percent of students in several districts, to 10-15% in others. Most of those with lower participation percentages indicate a desire to expand the program but that space and cost are major concerns.
- The IU is viewed as doing a strong job of addressing special education needs, including the provision of special education preschool services.
- The IU-organized summer academy for gifted students and a literacy coaching program are viewed as successful.
- The existing dual enrollment program in the county is a strength, but could be grown more. Districts enter into agreements with local colleges like Penn State York under which participating high school students can earn college credits. The application process for this program is very unwieldy, however, largely due to state application requirements.
- Focus on the Future has been a positive force in improving and expanding preschool offerings in the county. Currently there are 24 preschool centers in York County that are nationally accredited. This ranks third among all counties in the Commonwealth. Almost all of these centers, however, are at full capacity.
- Joint purchasing through the IU is viewed as very effective and as helping most districts to combine purchasing power and cut costs.

Most districts in the county offer some form of full day K program. Many indicate a desire to expand their programs but that space and cost are major concerns.

The York County School of Technology is viewed as a great asset to the county.

- Joint meetings of superintendents and other district leaders through the IU are effective ways to improve communication and should be expanded.
- The York County School of Technology (grades 9-12) is viewed as a great asset. Students from all over the county can attend this school and are assessed a tuition fee that districts pay. Districts provide busing.
- The overall reputation of public school systems in York County is viewed as a draw for recruiting employees with school-age children.

Some businesses are able to attract employees to the county by the fact that many of the public schools enjoy strong reputations.

- The York County Teacher Induction Consortium is viewed as a very successful program. Meetings take place at several locations around the county, either at the IU or at facilities in other school districts, or the York School of Technology. The benefit of this consortium is that it can reach new teachers across the county on specific topics and can address issues by specific grade or subject area. The consortium can also draw on experienced, veteran teachers from across the county to share their expertise with new teachers.
- The Lincoln Benefit Trust is viewed as an efficient and effective way for districts to combine their negotiating power to negotiate staff benefits.
- The Safe and Drug free schools consortium has been a positive influence on students across districts.

C. Recommendations for Improving Efficiency and Cooperation Among Districts

Several of the concerns listed above are resource-driven issues that might be addressed were districts to receive an influx of new resources from the state. For instance, summer school, before and after school, and full day kindergarten are precisely the types of programs which can be expanded were the state to implement the recommendations of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education's 2007 costing out study. The costing out recommendations would also help York County districts address identified concerns regarding the need to hire and train more instructional coaches, counselors, and parent outreach personnel to support the needs of their students.

Regardless of the level of state action in response to the costing out study, an extensive list of ideas for improving how districts in York County work together surfaced during the course of APA's study. Several of these can be identified as high priority recommendations that should be implemented as soon as possible by district and county education leaders. These include:

- a. **Create an Interdistrict Cyber Charter School**
- b. **Create a Best Practices Clearinghouse**
- c. **Expand Preschool**
- d. **Address New School Building Construction Issues**
- e. **Expand Efforts to Attract and Retain Quality Teachers and Leaders**
- f. **Improve District Calendar Alignment**

More detail on these recommendations is provided below.

a. Create an inter-district K-12, cyber charter school housed at the Lincoln Intermediate Unit (IU)

This recommendation entails the creation of a new K-12 cyber school housed at the Lincoln IU. The new school should be staffed with fully certified teachers housed at the IU. The online courses offered through the school would need to adhere to a common curriculum while allowing students to earn credits toward graduation in their home school districts. Students could take all or just a portion of their classes through the cyber school.

Advantages:

- Creating a cyber school can increase efficiency by allowing districts to offer courses where there is some student demand but not enough to warrant hiring a full time teacher.
- There are sometimes specific subjects (AP courses, certain math courses, world languages) that are hard to fill because teachers of these subjects are scarce and end up at the highest paying districts. These gaps in course offerings could be picked up by the cyber school.
- Online courses and a cyber school could help districts deal with the overall population growth taking place across the county and the fact that some districts are not able to hire or compete for the teachers they need to address this growth.
- A cyber school can draw on existing cyber course materials to reduce costs of implementation.
- The cyber school can also be used to expand district ability to provide summer school options to more students. There are several rationales for using the school in this fashion:
 - District leaders and education researchers agree that well run summer school programs can be very effective in helping students who fall behind to reach grade level proficiency before the start of the next school year.
 - District leaders also report concern with lost learning time over the summer and the need for expanded summer school offerings to address this issue.
 - Delivering summer school coursework online can minimize transportation cost issues, which is a barrier frequently cited by York County districts for expanding summer school options.
 - Online summer school program costs could be at least partially offset by parent fees.
 - Some York County districts report not having enough students that need summer school to justify offering their own programs. By using the cyber school in this fashion, these districts would be able to provide more options for their students at a relatively low cost.

Creating a cyber school can increase efficiency by allowing districts to offer courses where there is some student demand but not enough to warrant hiring a full time teacher.

Required Actions:

- Participating districts must agree on a common curriculum for cyber classes.
- Districts would need to negotiate how cyber school teachers are paid, including salaries and benefits. Teachers could either be paid using a designated district pay scale, or through a unified salary contracted through the IU.
- A cyber school director would need to be selected to manage the school's operation, to act as a liaison with districts, and to market the program to prospective parents and students.
- Districts would need to work out with the IU how other costs for operating the cyber school will be paid for.

Potential Costs

- While there would be some initial start up costs to hire personnel, district leaders believe the cost savings generated by operating a cyber school would allow the program to easily pay for itself over time.
- Districts might need to help subsidize families that need assistance purchasing computer equipment or paying for Internet access.

b. Create an inter-district “best practice” clearinghouse at York College

This recommendation would entail creation of a new “best practice” clearinghouse or think tank located at York College. The purpose of this clearinghouse is to establish a permanent presence in the county for researching and promoting public school reforms, for sharing best practices and success stories among districts, and for helping to advise districts on how to better align curricula.

A best practices clearinghouse can establish a permanent presence for researching and promoting public school reforms, and for sharing best practices and success stories among districts.

This recommendation also comports with a recommendation of the YorkCounts' Metro-York Project which was tasked with the challenge of identifying and addressing regional solutions to key problems facing York County. In November 2007 the Metro-York project released a series of recommendations addressing education and other issues. The group's first recommendation for improving education was to establish “a permanent and well-funded Metro-York Schools Consortium to research, develop and implement new public school models...”⁷

In addition to reviewing the latest available research and providing reports and recommendations for districts on the most promising practices for improving education, another important role for this best practice center is to create and maintain a best practices database for all educators to access across the county. This would involve creation of a database describing both: 1) the most effective *current* education practices and programs; and 2) the most promising *new* innovations being utilized in

⁷ *A Guide to the Metro-York Recommendations*, YorkCounts (November 2007) page 7.

schools across the county. Staff at the center should also play an important role in helping districts better align curricula and more consistently implement education reforms. Currently, feedback APA received indicates that such reforms often happen only on a piecemeal, district-by-district basis.

Advantages to such a clearinghouse are that it:

- Will help districts learn more from each other and from the latest findings of education research. It can thereby improve both performance and efficiency.
- Can provide information to teachers and administrators to help them prepare for work in a variety of environments, including teaching in an urban setting.
- Can provide information to teachers on how best to use data at the individual student level and can help districts in creating an effective process for constructing and using assessments and other data sources in the classroom.
- Will promote a greater atmosphere of cooperation across the county. Feedback APA received during the course of this study indicated that districts currently feel more in competition with each other, and that new avenues to promote cooperation are needed.
- Will provide the public with a clear view of public education success stories and demonstrate how the education system is working together in a positive way to improve performance and efficiency. The need for more communication about such success stories was expressed from the very outset of APA's work.
- Will help districts learn from each other new ideas for how they might shift funds, classroom space, staffing, and other resources to provide new programs in high priority areas (such as expanded full-day Kindergarten and preschool).
- Can help disseminate kindergarten readiness expectations to preschool providers across the county to help ensure more children start kindergarten with the skills they need to be successful.
- Will share detailed information on curricular offerings across districts so education leaders will be able to:
 - Create a more common curriculum across districts which could help address the growing issue of student migration throughout the county by making it easier for students to transition in and out of different districts or schools.
 - Help teachers to network more easily and to identify the strongest curricular elements offered in each district by both subject and grade.
 - Allow the IU to better target trainings delivered to teachers.
 - Help districts to learn from each other and select the best available curricula to meet their particular student needs.

A clearinghouse can help teachers to network more easily and to identify the strongest curricular elements offered in each district by both subject and grade.

Required Actions:

- Participating districts should meet with York College representatives to discuss the parameters required to establish the best practice center.
- A director would need to be selected to manage the center's operation, to act as a liaison with districts, to continually update the database, and to publish appropriate reports and recommendations. Additional staff may be required depending on the needs of the districts.

Potential Costs

- There would be some initial start up costs to hire personnel, and to organize and create the online database. Ongoing costs would depend on the number of staff desired to maintain the database and to reach out to educators across the county.
- Districts could pay a fee to employ personnel that work directly with all districts to implement curriculum reform, to maintain the best practice database, to share new research findings, and to communicate district successes to both the public and other districts.

c. Expand preschool offerings

The feedback APA received throughout this project emphasized the importance that almost all education and civic leaders across the county attach to preschool education programs. A growing body of national research on the positive impact of quality preschool programs supports this priority as well. In fact, it was reported that preliminary data of a study funded by the Heinz Foundation show that children coming out of accredited preschool programs in York County are performing better all the way through 3rd grade.

The need to expand preschool programs was consistently reported as a very high priority.

While the need to expand preschool programs was consistently reported as a very high priority, many districts report long waiting lists for access to preschool programs. Most districts also report having a lack of classroom space to provide preschool, and a lack of funds to pay for preschool teachers. Items to consider in addressing this issue include:

- A county-level sales tax is one way in which funds could be provided to establish an expanded preschool program. Such a targeted tax has been successfully passed by voters in other counties around the country for just this purpose.
- A county-level tax can provide a much more stable source of funding with which districts can develop and implement a long-term plan for expanding preschool. Such stability is typically not as possible when programs are funded through grants, which can be less reliable from year to year.

- Quality preschool programs are often an attractive draw to businesses which see them as a way of helping recruit and retain top notch employees. An expanded preschool program can therefore also be part of an effective county-wide economic development strategy.
- Focus on the Future could be used as a building block to promote any expanded preschool funding initiative.
- In the absence of additional funding to expand preschool offerings, districts could explore renting space in churches or other community facilities to address current preschool classroom space issues. This would entail ensuring that all such facilities meet current building codes and regulations.
- Districts should increase efforts to access the Governor’s Pre-K Counts initiative which pays for all start-up costs associated with opening programs for 3-4 yr olds. Grants through this program became available in Summer 2007. Grants allow considerable flexibility so that districts might use the funds to provide funding and teachers while private providers provide the classroom space.
- Districts should work together with the Pre-K Counts program to create an active list/database of participating providers and their star rating under the Keystone Stars preschool rating program.
- Districts need to expand coordination and communication between preschool providers and kindergarten programs. Such communication can help ensure that preschool providers are familiar with kindergarten readiness expectations. The best practices center and database proposed in recommendation “b” above could play a role in disseminating common kindergarten expectations to preschool providers across the county.
- Districts that either have space or are building new buildings would be well served to designate classrooms for pre-K programs. This is an especially important consideration since several of those interviewed by APA indicated that at least half the districts in York County are now considering new building projects. (For additional recommendations on addressing classroom space and construction issues, see recommendation “d” below).

A county-level tax can provide a much more stable source of funding with which districts can develop and implement a long-term plan for expanding preschool.

d. Address Building Construction Issues

Because of continuing population growth across the county, many York County districts are now conducting feasibility studies regarding the construction of new school buildings. Those interviewed indicated that at least half of the districts right now are considering new projects, and many are using different construction and architectural firms. The prevalence of such new construction offers both challenges and potential benefits to York County school districts. Recommendations to address this issue include:

- Districts could save funds by joining together to negotiate and share construction services or by working together with contractors to design and utilize common school building prototypes. Such prototypes can help provide cost predictability to both districts and the public at large. Use of a common prototype can also reduce costs in overall building design.
- Districts planning new buildings should consider specifically designating space for pre-K programs and for additional classrooms to expand full-day kindergarten offerings.
- To help support district efforts to meet population growth, pre-K, and other student performance demands, county and district leaders should begin a conversation to address two issues identified by district leaders as an impediment to efficient and effective construction of new school buildings and facilities, including:
 - The issue of how best to streamline the approval process for new construction projects. Currently the decision-making power for such projects resides primarily at the municipal level. Establishing a streamlined process for districts to work together with municipalities, or piloting the expansion of school district authority are two possible ways of addressing this issue.
 - Exploring the issue of whether and how impact fees might be assessed on housing developers to help offset the cost of new school or classroom construction. Such fees have the potential to raise additional funds to support public education as more families move into the county and send their children to public schools. This could help alleviate some of the cost pressures which inevitably arise with student population growth.

Districts planning new buildings should consider specifically designating space for pre-K programs and for additional classrooms to expand full-day kindergarten offerings.

e. **Expand Efforts to Attract and Retain Quality Teachers and Leaders**

Feedback received by APA indicates that differences in teacher pay have contributed to the most experienced, sought-after teachers being drawn to the highest paying York County districts. Districts in the county do not have the same capacity to raise tax dollars and sometimes cannot compete in terms of salary with the highest paying districts. When such labor migration occurs, districts effectively lose their investment of the time and resources spent training teachers and, equally damaging, students lose out on the opportunity to learn from more seasoned, experienced professionals.

In addition to issues created by disparities in teacher pay, some districts report an increase in overall teacher turnover attributed to a variety of other factors that have placed more pressure on teachers than ever before. These include accountability expectations that force less autonomy in teaching, and escalating community demands for more differentiated student instruction.

For some of these same reasons, districts are also experiencing difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified school and district administrators. In fact benefits, pay, and current working conditions for school and district leaders are viewed as inadequate to consistently retain them in what are typically high stress, time-intensive positions.

There are several suggested strategies to help address these issues:

- Conduct collective bargaining negotiations on a county-wide basis. Input received indicated that Baltimore conducts such negotiations on a county-wide basis, and could serve as a model for York County to study. Such a revised process could help create a common benefit package among all York County districts that would:
 - Reduce the level of difference in teacher compensation among districts; and
 - Reduce district cost by leveraging all employees under a single benefit package.
- Expand existing mentoring and induction programs including potentially the York County Teacher Induction Consortium. Expand training components to specifically address teachers who will be working in urban settings so they know what to expect and are prepared with the strategies and tools they will need to be successful.
- Explore the creation of special incentives to bring teachers and administrators to York County, including offering housing incentives to encourage teachers to move into the county.

Differences in teacher pay have contributed to the most experienced, sought-after teachers being drawn to the highest paying York districts.

- Explore allowing districts to offer new teachers and administrators an advance on their salaries to help meet the initial costs of moving and settling in York County.
- Strengthen the pool of qualified applicants by increasing recruiting at the county level especially in targeted areas of high need, including teachers of advanced sciences and math. This could be accomplished through a variety of means, including an increase in district participation in recruiting fairs and county-level hiring consortia.

f. Improve District Calendar Alignment

Creating a more unified calendar among York County’s school districts would allow staff from all districts to collaborate more during common staff development days and could help provide more consistency in delivering education services to students that migrate between districts. Even just establishing 2-3 common staff development days across districts could improve opportunities for collaboration. Such increased collaboration could:

- Aid with curriculum alignment and improve how districts learn from each other and share information.
- Help address some challenges associated with student migration between districts, which was a common concern among education and community leaders.
- Make it more efficient for the IU to delivered targeted trainings and professional development simultaneously to more teachers across the county.
- Build a more common understanding of the challenges different districts face across the county and a greater sense of community among the county’s educators.
- Provide more opportunities for teachers and administrators across districts to interact with each other and share ideas for improving education.

APPENDIX A
Instrument Used to Survey York County School Districts

Survey of York County School District Leaders

The following survey, commissioned by the Center for Community Engagement at York College of Pennsylvania, is being administered as part of a study of the public education systems in York County conducted by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA), a Denver-based education policy consulting firm. This survey is designed to gauge district leaders' opinions on a variety of issues and to provide a general understanding of the types of services and programs that are offered in the 16 school districts in York County. It is **not designed to operate as a statistically precise data tool, and individual responses will not be published.** Instead, survey results will be aggregated to identify common areas of concern, generate ideas for improving student performance within and across districts, and to suggest potential opportunities for collaboration county-wide, intra-county, or through Intermediate Units. Please feel free to enter your responses directly into this electronic file and to elaborate on any issue where you feel more explanation is required.

Overview

- 1) **Overall, what are the three greatest challenges facing York County's school systems?**

- 2) **What are the three greatest challenges your district faces in meeting student performance goals?**

- 3) **What are the most significant factors that enhance or support your district's ability to meet performance goals?**

- 4) **What are the top three or four ways your district collaborates today with other districts in the county? What is effective or ineffective about these collaborations?**

- 5) **What additional collaboration opportunities would you like to see initiated to bring York county school districts together to increase efficiency or to improve student performance (either county-wide, intra-county, or through an Intermediate Unit)?**

- 6) **Are there any programs or services which you believe need to be offered or expanded within your district to improve student performance? What are the barriers to expanding them?**

Students and Staffing

[**Note:** *To support this staffing analysis, please provide under separate cover an electronic copy of your district's 2006-07 school year teacher workforce "scattergram" displaying the numbers of teachers in your district by education and years of experience].*

- 7) **Has your district experienced difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers with the qualifications needed for students to succeed?**
- A. **If YES, please discuss how significant this problem is and the main factors that contribute to it.**
 - B. **If NO, please discuss some of the factors (including district policies, hiring practices, demographics, etc) which play an important role in minimizing such difficulties.**
- 8) **What can be done to improve your district's ability to attract high quality teachers?**
- 9) **What can be done to improve your district's ability to retain the high quality teachers you already have?**
- 10) **Has your district experienced difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified school principals? If yes, please discuss how significant this problem is and the main factors that contribute to it.**
- 11) **Is the level of professional development provided to teachers and administrators sufficient to reach your district's performance goals? If not, describe what could be done to enhance the effectiveness of the professional development opportunities offered to your staff?**
- 12) **What, on average, is the ratio of students to counselors in your schools?**
- i. Elementary: _____students/_____counselors
 - ii. Middle _____students/_____counselors
 - iii. High School _____students/_____counselors

13) Does student migration into or out of your district pose an important education challenge? If yes, where does most of the migration take place (within York County or from students coming into or out of the county)?

14) Do schools in your district typically employ a full time nurse?

- i. Elementary:*
- ii. Middle:*
- iii. High School:*

15) What, on average, is the ratio of English Language Learners to ELL teachers in your schools?

- i. Elementary _____students/_____ELL teachers*
- ii. Middle _____students/_____ELL teachers*
- iii. High School _____students/_____ELL teachers*

16) Approximately what percentage of total special education services is currently provided to your special education students by an Intermediate Unit? What percentage is provided by your school district?

- i. Elementary _____% intermediate unit/_____% school district*
- ii. Middle _____% intermediate unit/_____% school district*
- iii. High School _____% intermediate unit/_____% school district*

17) Does your district use teacher tutors to work directly with students who are performing below proficiency? (Yes) If yes, the student-tutor ratio is: _____students per tutor; and _____% of students (district-wide) participate in such tutoring.

18) Do schools in your district use instructional coaches to provide professional support to teachers? (If yes, are they full time in all schools? Are they staffed differently at elementary, middle, and high school levels? Do they address particular subject areas? Please describe how they are utilized).

19) Are schools in your district staffed with a parent outreach coordinator or a school social worker? (If yes, are they full time in all schools? Are they staffed differently at elementary, middle, and high school levels? Please describe the staffing pattern and how these individuals are used.)

Programs and Services

20) Data Collection and Use

- A. Which of the following are true of your district's student testing program? (Mark all that apply):
- Provides individual student results
 - Tests students in every grade
 - Tests students in every elementary grade
 - Tests students in most elementary grades
 - Encourages frequent interim assessment to provide a picture of student growth
 - Tests students in all 12 curricular areas designated by the state.
 - Tests in core subjects of reading, math, and science.
 - Other: (please explain)
- B. What could be done to improve the acquisition and use of student testing and performance data in the schools in your district? (Mark all that apply):
- Faster results
 - More teacher-friendly results
 - Ability to track individual student progress
 - More grades tested
 - More subjects tested
 - The ability to conduct tests whenever needed during the school year
 - More staff time and support to study and integrate results into teaching
 - Other: (please explain)
- C. Would creation of a multi-district or county-level data collection and analysis system be a useful tool to tailor instruction in your district and to share data on students that may migrate between districts? Please comment on the pros and cons of such a system.

21) Summer School Programs

- A. Do schools in your district typically offer summer school programs?
- i. If YES, to which students are the programs targeted? Explain.
 - ii. If NO, do you believe your district could benefit from such a program?
- B. What would you do to make the program more efficient and effective?

22) Before and After School Programs

- A. Do schools in your district offer before and after school programs?

- i. If YES, are your programs academically-focused or extended day (child-care) focused?
 - ii. If NO, do you believe your district could benefit from such programs?
- B. What would you do to make the program more efficient and effective?

23) Full Day Kindergarten

- A. Do schools in your district offer full day kindergarten programs?
 - i. If YES, to which students is the program targeted? Explain.
 - ii. If NO, do you believe your district could benefit from such a program?
- B. What percentage of kids participate in the full versus the part-day Kindergarten? ____% full time; ____% part time.
- C. What would you do to make the program more efficient and effective?

24) Preschool Program

- A. Do schools in your district offer preschool programs?
 - i. If YES, what percentage of in-coming kindergarten students participate in such a program? ____%
 - ii. If NO, do you believe your district could benefit from such a program?
- B. Who is eligible to attend your preschool programs? (3yr olds, 4yr olds, at-risk children, all children etc.)
- C. What would you do to make the program more efficient and effective?

25) Are there services or programs that you believe should be offered in a collaborative fashion in York County? Which of these should be offered through the Intermediate Unit?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY!

APPENDIX B
List of Telephone Interviewees

Name	Title	Organization
Robert Batory	Vice President, Human Resources	WellSpan Health
Peter Brubaker	Board Chair	Focus on our Future
Joe Crosswhite	Regional President	M&T Bank
Dr. Tresa Diggs	Superintendent	York City School District
Dr. Frank Herron	Superintendent	Red Lion Area School District
Bob Jensenius	Executive Vice President	York County Chamber of Commerce
Dr. Darla Pianowski	Superintendent	Eastern York School District
Christy Renjilian	Director	Focus On Our Future
Dr. Tracy Shank	Superintendent	South Eastern School District
Steven Snell	Executive Director	Realtors Association of York and Adams County
Dr. David Stricker	Superintendent	Spring Grove Area School District
Jim Testerman	Vice President	Pennsylvania State Education Association
Dr. Michael Thew	Executive Director	Lincoln Intermediate Unit
Jean Treuthart	Executive Director, York Center	Harrisburg Area Community College
Dr. Stewart Weinberg	Superintendent	Dallastown School District

APPENDIX C

List of Attendees at December 14, 2007 Superintendent Meeting in York County

Name	Title	Organization
Dale DeCesare	Senior Associate	Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc.
Tresa Diggs	Superintendent	York City School District
Tom Hensley	Superintendent	Southern York County School District
Robert Krantz	Superintendent	Dover Area School District
John Myers	Vice President	Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc.
Kathryn Orban	Superintendent	York Suburban School District
Darla Pianowski	Superintendent	Eastern York School District
David Stricker	Superintendent	Spring Grove Area School District
Michael Thew	Executive Director	Lincoln Intermediate Unit
Stewart Weinberg	Superintendent	Dallastown School District