

Bergen LEADS Class of 2011 Class Project Public Forum on the Future of Education

Home rule, shared services and high property taxes are themes that resonate throughout every topic highlighted in Bergen LEADS seminars. Today's economic realities have brought the issue to the forefront, as municipalities, the County and the State all struggle to provide more service with fewer resources.

Given that Bergen County has some of the highest property taxes in the nation, and that 60% of an individual homeowner's tax bill goes to education, then it follows that reducing the costs associated with education would result in an attendant decrease in property taxes.

The only thing that generates a greater outcry than proposing that municipalities share municipal services is proposing that the current "system" of 73 local school districts be changed. The prospect of changing the status quo causes great anxiety and people let their emotions – instead of facts – prevent them from exploring creative solutions, which precludes any meaningful changes to the system.

In January, the Class of 2011 was divided into four teams and asked to research the following issue:

If you could redesign the way that schools in Bergen County do BUSINESS, what changes would you make to decrease the cost/student?

Class members researched the current system, then made recommendations on how to decrease the cost/student by restructuring the way that schools conduct BUSINESS. This included, but was not be limited to, line items like building and grounds maintenance, energy use, human resource management (payroll and other back office procedures), purchasing (textbooks, supplies, equipment), food service and technology. Administrative and staff support salaries (but not teacher salaries) were also be considered.

Each team researched:

- Current method of school funding in Bergen County and New Jersey
- How money is spent (on items above, NOT on teacher salaries)
- How other school districts in the country are organized and funded

Then, each team developed a strategy for restructuring the County education system with the ultimate goal of decreasing cost/student and increasing efficiency.

On Tuesday, June 14, the teams presented their positions and recommendations at the **Public Forum on the Future Education**. The Forum was held at Bergen Community College and moderated by Vaughn McKoy, President, PSEG Foundation. More than 200 people attended the event, which was sponsored by PSE&G, TD Bank and the law firm of Cole, Schotz, Meisel, Forman & Leonard.

[Click here to see the summary of the presentations.](#)

Click to see the Powerpoint presentation prepared by each team.

[Operational Efficiencies](#)

[Technological Efficiencies](#)

[Special Education](#)

[Administrative Consolidation](#)

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