

MIDDLESEX REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION

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Response to Questions from the New Jersey State Board of Education

1. Who are the original founding member districts (with representation on the Representative Assembly) of the MRESC?

Upon unanimous approval by the New Jersey State Board of Education at its December 7, 1977 meeting, the MRESC Board of Directors was established, consisting of one representative from every Middlesex County Board of Education as follows: Carteret; Cranbury; Dunellen; East Brunswick; Edison; Highland Park; Jamesburg; Metuchen; Middlesex; Milltown; Monroe; New Brunswick; North Brunswick; Old Bridge; Perth Amboy; Piscataway; Sayreville; South Amboy; South Brunswick; South Plainfield; South River; Spotswood; Woodbridge, and the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools.

2. What member districts have joined the ESC (with representation on the Representative Assembly) since the founding of the MRESC?

There have been no additions to the founding member districts. However, having embraced the New Jersey Department of Education's recommendation to promote shared services to strengthen educational and support services for students, and limit the tax impact on homeowners, the MRESC has evolved to the point of serving 590 of the 611 school districts, representing every county in New Jersey. As a result of our growth, we regularly survey districts throughout the state. This practice has helped us gain input from districts outside of Middlesex County, and, for example, was a factor in our decision to establish an Administrative Search Service in 2014.

3. What process does the ESC use to expand its membership with representation to reflect the programmatic depth and geographic reach of the approved purpose of the ESC?

As indicated in the response to Question #2, surveys are used to guide the MRESC in its programming decisions. To gain additional feedback from districts outside of Middlesex County, our Board of Directors unanimously approved the following resolution in July 2015 to establish the MRESC Advisory Committee.

MRESC Advisory Committee Resolution

As the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission continues responding to an increasing number of shared services requests from school districts beyond Middlesex County, it is important to establish a formal mechanism to allow these districts to provide input for the MRESC Board of Directors to consider. To that end, creating a Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission Advisory Committee, consisting of three (3) representatives from each region of New Jersey (Northern, Central and Southern) for a total of nine (9) representatives, would provide districts outside of Middlesex County a means for providing input to the MRESC Board of Directors.

The MRESC Advisory Committee would have no voting policy or fiscal management role, as the MRESC Board of Directors would retain 100 percent control of voting and fiscal management responsibilities. The nine (9) member MRESC Advisory Committee representatives would consist of one (1) Superintendent, one (1) Business Administrator, and one (1) elected official from each of the three (3) regions. The MRESC Advisory Committee would meet on a quarterly basis to provide input regarding ongoing shared services relationships, and suggest new opportunities for continuing to honor the MRESC's Board of Director's mission statement to "provide educational excellence to students in partnership with New Jersey school districts, and coordinate cost efficient purchasing opportunities for educational institutions and municipalities to limit the tax burden on New Jersey residents."

4. What are the districts that make up the Board of Directors? Has it ever included members outside of Middlesex County?

Please see responses to Questions 1, 2 and 3.

5. Are districts that receive services from MRESC invited to become member districts and involved in the Representation Assembly?

Please see responses to Questions 2 and 3.

6. Why is it necessary for MRESC to change its name to accomplish its approved purpose?

The MRESC can continue accomplishing its approved purpose by maintaining the status quo; however, our Board of Directors strongly believes that changing our name to the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey is significant in order to accurately reflect the fact that we provide services to 591 of the 611 boards of education throughout New Jersey. The MRESC provides services in all 21 counties.

As noted in the response to Question #2, our efforts to promote shared services, as recommended by the NJDOE, has been successful to the point that our current name does not accurately reflect the scope of services we provide statewide. Our first attempt to more accurately reflect our expansion of services to districts throughout New Jersey was in 2005, when we asked the New Jersey State Board of Education to consider changing our name from the Middlesex Educational Services Commission to the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission. The request was unanimously approved by the New Jersey State Board of Education.

7. Other ESC's provide services throughout the state, if this name change were granted, will this:

a) place other ESC's at a competitive disadvantage:

We do not compete with the other nine ESC's, so granting the name change will not place them at a competitive disadvantage. Our motivation is not to increase market share, but rather is an attempt to have a name that is in alignment with our statewide growth.

Towards that end, our growth is due to our ability to meet the needs of many districts outside Middlesex County who are unable to identify an ESC geographically closer to them with the capacity and/or expertise to meet their needs. In fact, when requests are received from districts outside of Middlesex County, our protocol is to **a)** immediately contact the ESC in the geographic area to inform them of the request for our services, and **b)** confirm they do not have the capacity and/or expertise to successfully meet the requested service(s). Upon approval of our name change, we will continue using this protocol to maintain harmonious relations with the other ESC's.

b. interfere with the approved purpose of the ESC.

We only act within our statutory authority as expanded.

c. be confusing to consumers or taxpayers.

Our current name is confusing to consumers and taxpayers in districts outside of Middlesex County who use our services. For example, taxpayers residing in Mercer or Ocean counties who receive our services may reasonably be confused over why their district uses MRESC as opposed to the ESC that is geographically closer.

By changing our name to accurately reflect our statewide presence, the NJ State Board of Education will help clarify the scope of services we provide throughout New Jersey.

8. In the event that a name change serves as a catalyst for continuous growth of the ESC outside of Middlesex County, will this fundamentally alter the governance and accountability structure established in statute in that the majority of services will be provided in non-member districts?

Our governance is circumscribed by statute as is our accountability to the NJDOE. That is the reason our non-member council is advisory only.