Merger Feasibility Committee

Pennsbury School District and Morrisville School District

Academic Programs and Curriculum

PFM Group Consulting, LLC

November 14, 2022

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Agenda

- Overview and Academic Achievement

- Curriculum

- Academic Programs

- Earned Income Tax

- Discussion

- Public comment

Committee purpose

- The Pennsbury School District received a state grant for an independent review of a potential merger or tuition arrangement between Pennsbury and the Morrisville School District

- PFM Group Consulting LLC (PFM) was selected by Pennsbury to conduct the study

- PFM's work will provide the Boards of the two school districts with information to help determine if a merger or tuition relationship is in the best interest of both districts, including but not limited to whether instructional opportunities would be enhanced for all students at a similar or reduced cost to taxpayers

- Pennsbury's scope for the study included the formation of a Feasibility Committee comprised of stakeholders (parents, staff members, and others) who will meet four times to discuss topics including curriculum and academics, school buildings and other facilities, workforce, and finances

  - Today is the fourth meeting, which will focus on curriculum and academics

- The Committee is a non-partisan advisory body and will not be voting or providing a recommendation to either Board

Ground rules

- Feasibility Committee will provide input and guidance to the PFM study team to ensure that the focus areas provide analysis that will be helpful for both School Boards in making future decisions

- As noted, the Feasibility Committee is an advisory body, and it will not be voting on whether or not to proceed with a merger or tuition arrangement

- At each meeting, Committee members will be asked to provide comments, thoughts, and suggestions after a presentation by the study team

- Speakers from the public will be invited to make comments at the end of the meeting

  - A sign-up sheet is available

  - Speakers will be limited to five minutes in order to provide an opportunity for everyone who wants to speak

  - Time kept by the study team

- After each meeting, the presentations and a video of the meeting will be posted to a dedicated page on the Pennsbury School District's website

- In addition, the Pennsbury website will be used to collect comments and ideas outside of the scheduled meeting times

Overview and Academic Achievement

Overview of work to date

- As described at the September 19 meeting of the Feasibility Committee, PFM has been completing reviews of various areas affected by the merger or tuition scenarios

- Our team has examined academic, financial, and operational information from both school districts to frame our review

- Our team has also visited both school districts multiple times to conduct interviews with staff in the finance, transportation, facilities, operations and academic areas to understand how programs and operations are currently structured, and how they would be impacted by a merger or tuition scenario

- Tonight, we will review preliminary observations from the site visits and data analysis for academics and curriculum

  - Accompanied by our subject matter expert, we have met with both districts and interviewed key staff

  - Our initial observations will be further informed by your comments and suggestions, as well as follow up work with the staff of the two districts

Enrollment by building: 2021-22

	Grade Configuration	2021-22 Enrollment
Pennsbury School District		
Afton Elementary School	K - 5	542
Edgewood Elementary School	K - 5	516
Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School	K - 5	555
Fallsington Elementary School	K - 5	268
Makefield Elementary School	K - 5	373
Manor Elementary School	K - 5	445
Oxford Valley Elementary School	K - 5	382
Penn Valley Elementary School	K - 5	411
Quarry Hill Elementary School	K - 5	472
Walt Disney Elementary School	K - 5	384
Elementary School Subtotal		**4,348**
Charles H Boehm Middle School	6 - 8	715
Pennwood Middle School	6 - 8	757
William Penn Middle School	6 - 8	928
Middle School Subtotal		**2,400**
Pennsbury High School (East, West, and Village Park Academy)	9 - 12	2,925
Total PSD		**9,673**

	Grade Configuration	2021-22 Enrollment
Morrisville School District		
Grandview Elementary School	K - 2	216
Morrisville Intermediate School	3 - 5	206
Morrisville Middle/High School	6 - 8	192
Morrisville Middle/High School	9 - 12	216
Total MSD		**830**

- ⬢ Pennsbury SD has three building types:
  - Elementary schools: K to 5
  - Middle schools: 6 to 8
  - High school: 9 to 12

- ⬢ Morrisville SD has two buildings with different grade bands:
  - Grandview ES: K to 2
  - Morrisville Middle/High School
    - Intermediate school: 3 to 5
    - Middle school: 6 to 8
    - High school: 9 to 12

- ⬢ Enrollment in Pennsbury SD's schools is over 11 times greater than enrollment in Morrisville SD's schools

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education, October 1 student counts for 2021-22

Academic achievement: 2021 PSSA results, Grade 4

- Students in Pennsylvania take standardized assessments annually

- The results from 2021 are the most recent available, but participation may have been affected by the pandemic

- The table below shows the results of the PSSA examination for students in Grade 4

	Number of Students Taking Test	ELA Percent Proficient or Advanced	Math Percent Proficient or Advanced	Science Percent Proficient or Advanced	ELA No. Students Prof. or Adv.	Math No. Students Prof. or Adv.	Science No. Students Prof. or Adv.
Pennsbury School District							
Afton Elementary School	97	84.4%	65.0%	96.9%	82	63	94
Edgewood Elementary School	78	87.2%	70.2%	96.1%	68	55	75
Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School	82	60.1%	42.7%	75.6%	49	35	62
Fallsington Elementary School	39	69.2%	38.5%	87.1%	27	15	34
Makefield Elementary School	49	79.2%	59.2%	87.8%	39	29	43
Manor Elementary School	44	61.3%	34.1%	79.5%	27	15	35
Oxford Valley Elementary School	52	55.8%	25.0%	82.7%	29	13	43
Penn Valley Elementary School	62	66.2%	22.5%	59.7%	51	14	37
Quarry Hill Elementary School	66	77.2%	66.2%	87.6%	51	44	58
Walt Disney Elementary School	42	78.1%	52.4%	82.9%	33	22	35
Morrisville School District							
Morrisville Intermediate School	48	22.9%	0.0%	50.0%	11	0	24
Statewide Average		**56.6%**	**35.5%**	**75.8%**			

Source: PSSA data reported by PDE, Grade 4

Academic achievement: 2021 PSSA results, Grade 8

Proficient or Advanced

	Number of Students Taking Test	ELA Percent Proficient or Advanced	Math Percent Proficient or Advanced	Science Percent Proficient or Advanced	ELA No. Students Prof. or Adv.	Math No. Students Prof. or Adv.	Science No. Students Prof. or Adv.
Pennsbury School District							
Charles H Boehm Middle School	164	73.2%	30.1%	60.7%	120	49	100
Pennwood Middle School	185	60.6%	22.7%	55.5%	112	42	103
William Penn Middle School	195	70.8%	26.7%	59.8%	138	52	117
Morrisville School District							
Morrisville Middle/High School	42	28.6%	0.0%	14.3%	12	0	6
Statewide Average		**52.6%**	**22.1%**	**50.8%**			

Basic or Below Basic

	Number of Students Taking Test	ELA Percent Basic or Below Basic	Math Percent Basic or Below Basic	Science Percent Basic or Below Basic	ELA No. Students Basic or Below Basic	Math No. Students Basic or Below Basic	Science No. Students Basic or Below Basic
Pennsbury School District							
Charles H Boehm Middle School	164	26.8%	69.9%	39.3%	44	115	64
Pennwood Middle School	185	39.4%	77.3%	44.5%	73	143	82
William Penn Middle School	195	29.2%	73.3%	40.2%	57	143	78
Morrisville School District							
Morrisville Middle/High School	42	71.4%	100.0%	85.7%	30	42	36

Academic achievement: 2021 Keystone results, Grade 11

● Students in 11th grade take the Keystone examination in three possible subject areas: Algebra 1, Biology, and Literature

	Number of Students Taking Test	Percent Proficient or Advanced	Percent Basic or Below Basic	No. Students Proficient or Advanced	No. Students Basic or Below Basic
Pennsbury School District					
Algebra 1	656	67.7%	32.3%	444	212
Biology	31	58.1%	41.9%	18	13
Literature	8	I/S	I/S	I/S	I/S
Morrisville School District					
Algebra 1	12	41.6%	58.4%	5	7
Biology	9	I/S	I/S	I/S	I/S
Literature	2	I/S	I/S	I/S	I/S
Statewide Average					
Algebra 1		**62.4%**	**37.6%**		
Biology		**67.6%**	**32.4%**		
Literature		**49.6%**	**50.5%**		

● Information is not reported by PDE if fewer than 11 students took the examination

Source: Keystone data reported by PDE, Grade 11

Academic achievement: Graduation Rates

- Both districts track the annual graduation rate of students by 4- and 5-year cohorts

- Based on data reported to PDE, the graduation rate for Pennsbury exceeded the state average for districts across the Commonwealth by almost 9 percentage points for the 4-year cohort and by 7 percentage points for the 5-year cohort

- Morrisville's scores were below the state average by approximately 5 percentage points for the 4-year cohort and by 2.5 percentage points for the 5-year cohort

District Graduation Rates, 2019-20

Pennsbury School District		
School Name	Graduation Rates (4-Year Cohort)	Graduation Rates (5-Year Cohort)
Pennsbury High School	96.2%	96.5%
Morrisville School District		
Morrisville High School	82.3%	87.0%
State Average	87.4%	89.5%

- An insufficient sample was counted for Village Park Academy so that school's graduation rate is not included in the table

Source: FutureReady Index, reported to PDE

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Bell times and class size comparison

Morrisville SD

- Morrisville has average class sizes of 25 or 26 in grades K-8 and of 23 or 24 in grades 9-12

- Morrisville has 180 student days per year

- Morrisville's school day is slightly shorter than Pennsbury's at all grade levels, with the exception of middle school

Pennsbury SD

- Pennsbury has a maximum class size of 30 students, with a goal of 28 students

  - Elementary level class size target is 24

  - Class sizes may be smaller for electives

- Pennsbury has 182 student days per year

Bell Time Comparison

Morrisville SD							
	K	1	2	3	4	5	Middle/High
Start Time	8:25	8:25	8:25	8:25	8:25	8:25	7:45
Dismissal	2:45	3:00	3:00	3:00	3:00	3:00	2:30
Length of Day	6:20	6:35	6:35	6:35	6:35	6:35	6:45

Pennsbury SD								
	K	1	2	3	4	5	Middle (6-8)	High (9-12)
Start Time	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	8:10	7:20
Dismissal	3:40	3:40	3:40	3:40	3:40	3:40	2:55	2:15
Length of Day	6:40	6:40	6:40	6:40	6:40	6:40	6:45	6:55

Curriculum

Morrisville SD curriculum

- MSD operates an 8-period day, with an average of three sections per grade level

- At the elementary and middle school level, MSD offers a standard core curriculum

- Students at the high school level take a sequence of courses in the core curriculum as well as electives

  - The Program of Studies identifies 65 possible elective courses, but not all courses may run based on schedule or teacher availability

- At the middle and high school level, students may be grouped by ability

  - Honors courses are offered and a section is offered at each grade level for a higher ability grouping

  - Morrisville reports that only one AP course is currently offered but is investigating other offerings, including expanding dual enrollment and industry certification options

- Graduation Requirements: 27 credits including 4 English, 4 Math, 4 Social Studies, 4 Science, 2 Wellness, 2 Arts and Humanities and 7 electives

- MSD is in the process of reviewing and rewriting its curriculum to establish a curriculum review cycle

  - MSD is also in the process of developing a replacement cycle for student technology

Pennsbury SD curriculum

- At the elementary school level, PSD students take courses in shared reading, shared math, social studies, science, writing, and phonics

- Students at the high school level take a sequence of courses in the core curriculum as well as electives

  - The Program of Studies identifies 131 possible elective courses. Almost all courses run, although some electives are offered every other year.

- At the elementary, middle and high school level, students may be grouped by ability

  - Honors courses are offered in a variety of subjects

  - PSD also offers a significant number of AP courses

- PSD operates a block schedule at the middle and high school levels

- Graduation Requirements: 27 credits including 4 English, 4 Math, 4 Social Studies, 4 Science, 2 Wellness, 2 Arts and Humanities and 7 electives

- PSD has a regular curriculum and technology replacement cycle

Curriculum comparison

- The core curriculum at the high school level is very similar between MSD and PSD , with some minor differences in the sequencing of courses. The biggest differences are in the number and variety of elective courses – PSD has almost double the number of electives offered by MSD

  - At PSD, student selection of electives drives the schedule and staffing, while at MSD the schedule drives the number of electives that can be offered based on staff availability

- Morrisville also offers fewer honors and AP courses than Pennsbury

- Pennsbury reviews all curriculum and replaces textbooks every five years. Morrisville has started a curriculum review cycle, which is currently in process, but there are no dedicated financial resources for curriculum, textbook, or student technology replacement in the budget

- The number of credits required to graduate is the same at both districts, with slight differences in the sequencing of courses and exact course requirements

- Pennsbury operates a block schedule at the middle school and high school level, while Morrisville operates a traditional 8-period schedule

Study considerations

- Although similarities exist between the MSD and PSD curricula (what is taught), functionally they are different across all levels (how the teaching is delivered)

  - In either a merger or tuitioning scenario, it would be preferable to align the curriculum between the two districts as much as possible in order to ease the transition from middle to high school and in order to meet PSD's graduation requirements

  - There may be an opportunity to do this as MSD is currently in the middle of a curriculum replacement review. However, PSD operates a block schedule at the middle and high school levels while MSD operates an 8-period schedule. There may be other options for adjustments, which could include aligning the bell schedules along with the curriculum

- PSD offers significantly more courses to students, including electives, honors, and AP courses. In a tuitioning scenario, in addition to the adjustments to the PSD schedule and number of classes, there would also likely be an impact would be on the current courses offered by MSD at the middle and high school level, as some teachers may teach both groups of students

  - In a merger or tuitioning scenario, it would be assumed that MSD students would be eligible to take all courses currently offered by PSD. Preliminary analysis shows there may be existing capacity for many subjects in existing PSD classrooms at the middle and high school levels

    - The final report will estimate how many teachers may be needed in the tuitioning or merger scenario, as well as consider the impact of physical space in PSD facilities

Academic Programs

Morrisville's academic programs

- Due to its relatively small size and co-location of the middle and high school students at MSD, Morrisville is able to provide some positive supports to all students:

  - Unofficial "looping" where students have the same teacher for several years

  - Opportunity for middle school students to take high school courses or electives, depending on scheduling

- Morrisville has built out some supports for its students where it can do so practicably, given its size and resources:

  - MSD has an advisory period at the middle school for grades 6 to 8

  - MSD has instituted a double block for English Language Arts at the middle school

  - For 2023-24, MSD is exploring other options, which could include a similar double block for Mathematics and/or a "what I need" (WIN, called the Bulldog Period in MSD) to address individual student needs and enhance/replace the Advisory period

  - MSD's grade 6 has fully implemented a team approach

  - MSD's grades 7 and 8 are majority team approach, with an emphasis on using this structure for core classes

Pennsbury's academic programs

- Due to its size, PSD is currently undertaking efforts to make its educational experience feel more intimate for all students:

  - Tower program: Students in grades 6-8 who are assigned to meet with a teacher regularly. The focus is social-emotional learning, positive behavioral supports, and building connections across grade levels

  - Team program: At the middle school level, students in the same grade level are assigned to a team, where they have the same teachers for all subjects

  - At the high school, PSD uses the Falcon (academic), Nest (advisory), and activity periods to perform similar functions

- As noted previously, PSD offers significantly more courses than MSD at the high school level for electives, honors, and AP courses

Special education

- Both districts have similar percentages of special education students and both districts also have similar proportions of students by identification

- During interviews, both districts outlined similar approaches to special education, including:

  - Expanding the continuum of supports to students in school

  - Integrating general and special education students in the classroom

  - Desire to increase the number of students at in-district placements

- Both districts also use the Bucks County Intermediate Unit as a provider of special education services

Special Education Enrollment and Identifications

	Pennsbury SD	Morrisville SD
Total Enrollment	10,025	877
Total Special Education Enrollment	2,278	175
Percent Special Education	**22.7%**	**20.0%**

Specific Learning Disability	37.7%	40.6%
Other Health Impairment	19.4%	17.7%
Autism	14.6%	13.1%
Speech or Language Impairment	13.8%	11.4%
Emotional Disturbance	8.9%	10.9%
Intellectual Disability	3.9%	N/A*
Multiple Disabilities	0.6%	N/A*

Source: Special Education Data Report, 2021-22, PDE
* PDE does not report if small numbers of students are identified

Study considerations

- While both districts have similar approaches to special education, including co-teaching, in either a merger or tuitioning scenario PSD would have to assess MSD students and determine how best to serve children with individualized education plans

  - This may require adding additional classrooms, staff, and resources; these costs may be offset by current spending on transportation and tuition if those students are served outside of MSD

  - In some cases, Pennsbury may be able to offer special education services to students at a lower cost than MSD due to its size and economies of scale

  - Based on data reported by the districts, PSD has 52 students in out of district placements, while MSD has 34 out of district students

  - Preliminary analysis shows there may be existing capacity in identified PSD special education classrooms, although further analysis will be required to fully assess the potential staffing impact

- In a merger or tuitioning scenario, the question of how best to integrate current MSD students into the PSD structures at the middle and high school levels (including Teams, Towers, block schedule) would need to be carefully considered

  - This includes considering how current PSD and MSD facilities would be used, and what degree of integration between students may be possible (i.e. in a merger scenario, how would MSD and PSD students utilize the MSD middle/high school building?)

Earned Income Tax

Earned Income Tax Question

- In order to balance its 2022 budget, earlier this year the Borough of Morrisville enacted a 1.0 percent Earned Income Tax (EIT) that is expected to generate $1.7 million on an annual basis. The tax was effective on July 1, 2022.

- A member of the Feasibility Committee has asked whether the Morrisville School District is receiving any of this revenue, and whether the District could enact its own EIT.

- Answer

  - The School District is not receiving any of the Borough's EIT revenue.

  - The School District could enact an EIT. To do so, it would have to take the following steps required by Pennsylvania Act 1 of 2006:
    - Form a tax commission to study the issue;
    - If the commission recommends an EIT, the matter would be subject to voter referendum;
    - If the referendum is successful, the District would take a share of the 1.0 percent already generated by the Borough; and
    - Any revenue generated would be required to be used to reduce the District's property tax revenue by the same amount

- Within the past two years the School District has discussed the possibility of implementing the EIT. According to the District, in each discussion it has, through its Board of Directors, specifically and unequivocally refused to participate in any action to implement, enact and/or collect an EIT.

Discussion

Discussion

- What questions do you have about the information presented today?

- What did you find significant about the information that was presented today?

- What additional information about academic performance, curriculum, or academic programs should the study team be aware of or focused on?

- How should the information presented today be taken into account in considering the feasibility of a merger of the two districts or tuitioning Morrisville students to Pennsbury?

Public comment