

**A RESPONSE TO THE CAPE MAY STUDY
TO RECONFIGURE THE LOWER CAPE
MAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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INTRODUCTION

In June 2013, the Cape May City Council received and accepted a report to reconfigure the Lower Cape May Regional School District (Regional). The report was authorized to address a concern by the City of Cape May that their share of the local tax levy to support the Regional was disproportionate to the number of students from Cape May who attend the Regional. Therefore, the tax was unfair to the residents. The New Jersey Department of Education acknowledged that the method used to apportion the tax levy among the constituent members of the Regional was in keeping with the proscribed method.

The Township of Lower took a position to file a response to the Cape May study. They believed that any reconfiguration of the Regional would result not only in a onerous increase in the tax levy support to the remaining constituent members but, more importantly, there would be significant negative impact upon the educational program offered to the students of the Regional.

The Township took action to commission an in depth review and analysis of the Cape May Study and file this with the Executive County Superintendents of School for Cape May County by the proscribed date.

The proposal for this response was submitted to the Township. It indicated that an entirely new feasibility study not be conducted but rather that each area within the Cape May Study would be reviewed to determine if the requirements were met, identify any areas lacking, provide additional information to ensure that all data was considered, and offer an opinion regarding the impacts, if any, to the racial, financial, and educational programs of the Regional.

The process included reviewing a variety of data, meeting with representatives of all affected districts, and reviewing applicable Statutes and Codes relative to changes in the organizational structure of Regional school district.

Upon the completion of all of the research, a final report would be forwarded to Lower Township for their review and filing with the Executive County Superintendent of Schools for Cape May County

The Cape May Report does include the necessary data required for this type of Feasibility Report however, after review, the conclusions regarding the impact of any of the reconfigurations offered, is not supported by the data offered or the additional data gained through the research.

MUNICIPAL PROFILES

A regional school district is comprised of two or more municipalities who have joined together to provide an educational program to the students residing in those municipalities through a referendum presented to the registered voters of the municipalities. These municipalities are termed the Constituent Members of the regional school district. The seats on the Board of Education are apportioned based upon the residents as measured by the most recent Federal Census.

Within the Lower Cape May Regional School district, there are three constituent municipalities, Cape May City, West Cape May, and Lower Township. Cape May Point, which is not a constituent member, sends its secondary students, grades 7-12, on a tuition basis to the Regional district.

The information contained in the Cape May Study was reviewed and verified where possible. Any areas, which could not be verified or needed to be corrected, are noted in the individual Profiles.

Additional research was conducted to present a complete picture of all of the aspects of each municipality which included the 2000 and 2010 Censuses and various local sources.

In general, each of the municipalities has experienced an increase in housing units and a decrease in population over the ten-year period from 2000 to 2010 (Appendix A). The decrease in population for all of the Constituent municipalities was 577 people or .2% while the increase in housing was 713 units or 3.8%.

Cape May City

The City of Cape May is located at the Southern end of New Jersey in the County of Cape May. It is predominantly a seasonal resort whose population swells in the summer months as vacationers and non-resident property owners occupy the homes. It is also the location of a United States Coast Guard Base. The base is home to several missions of the Coast Guard including five cutters, the uniform distribution center, the training base, and several other units.

On the base, there are a total of 174 housing units including 2, 3, and 4 bedrooms of which currently, 150 are occupied. The other 24 are undergoing renovations as of October 2013. In these units there are 489 residents. Stationed at the base are 915 uniformed personnel and 285 civilian employees for a total of 1200 employees. The average tour of duty for the uniformed personnel is 3-4 years(CWO Jeffrey Pilkington, Chief of Personnel, Station Cape May).

According to the 2010 United States Census, there was a population of 3,607 residents of the City. The racial breakdown was 3,212 whites and 395 classified as minority, or 11% of the population. The average age of the residents was 42.2 years. The percentage of the population under 18 was 12.8%

The 2000 census lists 4034 residents with a median age of 47.7 years. Of the residents, 3,684 (91.3%) were white and 350(8.7%) were minority. The population under 18 years of age was 16.3%.

The city's population decreased by 427 residents or 10.5% in the ten-year period between the two censuses.

The median family income for 2000 was \$46,250 with 7% of the population under 18 in poverty. In 2010, the median income was \$51,458 with 16.9% under 18 in poverty. The income level increased by \$5,208 while the poverty increased 9.9 percentage points.

In 2000, there were 4,064 housing units in the city. Of these 1,821(44.8%) were occupied and 2,243(55.2%) were vacant. Of the vacant units, 2,089(51.45) were designated as seasonal, recreational, or occasional uses. The occupied units consisted of 787 rentals(45.7%) and 1034 owner-occupied.

The 2010 Census reported 4,155 housing units. The number of units occupied as 1,457(35.1%) and the vacant units were 2,698(64.9%), with 2,320(55.8%) for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Owners occupied 791 units(54.3%) and renters were in 666 of the units(45.7%).

In the ten-year census period, there was an increase of 91 units with a decrease in occupied units of 366.

As of September 2013, 70.1% of the tax bills for the city were mailed to a non Cape May zip code address according to the Local Tax Office.

In 2012 there were 10 Certificates of occupancy issued.

The population of the city during the period from 2000 to 2010 has declined by 10.5 %, yet the housing units have increased by 2.2 %. Th median age has decreased and the income level increased while poverty level of those under 18 has increased by 18%. Because of the resort nature of the city, these changes are not atypical when compared to similarly located resort communities in the County. As housing prices increased during the decade, many individuals decided to sell their properties, whether residential or seasonal. Toward the end of the decade, this practice slowed considerably due to the economy.

The tables listed in the Cape May Report (1,2,3,5, and 11) with respect to the Cape May Data have all been reviewed and verified as to their accuracy. It is noted that Table 4 lists a date of "2040" while the other similar Tables list "2030".

West Cape May

The borough of West Cape May is located in southern New Jersey in Cape May County. It is primarily a residential community, which hosts a large number of seasonal residents.

In the 2000 United States Census, there were a total of 1,095 residents. Of these residents, minorities were listed at 15.9 % and whites were 84.1%. The average age of the residents was 46.3 years of age.

Ten years later, in the 2010 Census, there were 1,024 residents. Minorities comprised 14.2% of the population and 85.8% were white. The median age of the population was 55. Residents under 18 were 12.8%.

Total housing units in the 2000 Census were 1004 with 507 listed as occupied. Owners occupied 391 units and 116 were rented. There were 497 vacant units and 451 of these were identified as being used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

In 2010, the number of units increased to 1043. Of these, 493 were occupied and 550 were vacant. Owners occupied 390 units and renters were in 103 units. Of the vacant units, 474 were listed as used for seasonal, recreational or occasional usage. In 2012, a total of 9 Certificates of Occupancy were issued.

As of September 2013, 57% of the tax bills were mailed to an out of town address.

Over the ten-year period between the censuses, there was an 8% decrease in overall population with a decline of 16% in the minority residents. Total housing units increased by 3.8%. Occupied units decreased by 2.7%.

The changes in population and housings are typical in this type of community.

With respect to the tables listed in the Cape May Study, the some comments made in the Cape May City Profile apply.

Lower Township

Lower Township is located in the southern part of Cape May County. It consists of several areas including Erma, North Cape May, Villas and Diamond Beach along with several other areas. It has the largest population in the County and is primarily residential but there are several commercial and business areas. These service the commercial fishing industry as well as the seasonal resort areas along the coastline. It is also the terminus for the Cape May Lewes Ferry as well as the home to the Cape May County Airport.

The population, as measured in the 2000 Census was 22,945 residents. The racial make-up was 3.7% minority and 96.3% white. The median age of the residents was 41.8 years of age.

Ten years later, in the 2010 Census, the population was 22,866 with 94.3% recorded as white and 5.7% as minority. The median age was 48 years.

Housing units in the 2000 Census were 13,924. Of these, 7,576 were occupied by owners and 1,749 by renters for a total of 9,328. Vacant homes were 4,596 of which 4,115 were listed as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

The 2010 Census listed a total of 14,507 housing units. Occupied units were 9,579 with owners residing in 7,579 and renters in 2,000 units. Vacant units totaled 4,928 with 4,221 of these identified as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

As of September 2013, 43.7% of the tax bills were mailed to addresses outside on the Township.

In 2012, there were 30 Certificates of Occupancy issued. It should be noted that the Cape May Study did not include Certificates issued 2010(90) and 2008(75) as part of their totals. These were issued to two age restricted developments.

Lower Township experienced a decrease in population between the two Censuses along with an increase in housing units. This is typical of the County. However, the increase in housing units was only 4% while the population decrease was 79 residents or .3%. Both of these changes are below other areas. Overall, the Township has been relatively stable based on this data.

The comments made in the previous Municipal Profiles apply to Lower Township with one additional area. The income levels for both 2000 and 2010 Censuses could not be verified. It is questionable because of the extreme increase in household income of 38%, which is not typical of any other municipality in the area. Upon further research, The Census for 2010 lists the median household income at \$51,101. This represents an increase of 13.4%. This correction is important because income is used as a factor in calculating State Aid.

Cape May Point

The borough of Cape May Point is located in Cape May County in southwestern New Jersey. It is known primarily as a residential resort area.

There were 241 residents in the Borough as contained in the 2000 Census with 95% listed as white. The median age of the residents was 64.2 years of age.

In the 2010 Census, 291 residents were identified. The white population was 94.5%.

Total housing units, as contained in the 2000 Census were 501 with owners occupying 129 units and renters in 4 units for a total of 133 units. There were 368 vacant units with 356 units identified as seasonal, recreational, or occasional usage. In 2010, the Census reported 619 housing units, 164 units were occupied, 153 by owners and 11 by renters. Vacant units were 455 with 372 identified as seasonal, recreational, or occasional useage.

In 2012, there were 2 Certificates of Occupancy issued by the Construction Office.

In September 2013, 79.9% of the tax bills were mailed to addresses not in Cape May Point.

From 2000 to 2010, the total population increased by 20% or 50 residents. Housing units grew by 118 or 23.5% with occupied units gaining 31 homes or 23.3%. The number of vacant units increased 23.6% or 87 units.

All of the changes of increased housing units and residents are atypical of the surrounding communities. It should be noted that there was a 30% decline in the number of school age children. In addition, it should also be noted that the population in total remains relatively small.

All of the remarks about the tables in the Cape May City Profile apply to Cape May Point.

DISTRICT PROFILES

The Cape May Study included the districts of Cape May City, West Cape May, Lower Township, Lower Cape May Regional and, Middle Township. It should be noted that this report also includes Cape May Point which is a non-operating district that sends its students to either Cape May City or Lower Cape May Regional on a tuition basis.

Each of the school districts identified in the Cape May Study were researched to verify the data presented and to expand upon the characteristics of the district where necessary. Included in this review were the charts and tables regarding enrollment, student performance and projections.

For the sake of comparison, the enrollment data for each of the districts was researched using the same years as the Censuses, 2000 and 2010, to identify any changes that could affect the overall area. These comparisons are identified in Appendix B. In summary, the schools, including the municipal and regional districts saw a decline of 481 students or 11.6%. Middle Township also experienced a decline of 156 student or 5.3%.

It must be noted that the enrollment tables in the Cape May Report assign all students to a specific grade level. When verifying these tables, there was no indication of any classified or special education students. After an extensive review, it was assumed that this is what happened even though not notation of this was made in the report.

Other characteristics of the districts were also included where it was felt they would add to the overall understanding of a particular district.

CAPE MAY CITY

The Cape May City School District is a PK-6 Type II school district. It has an elected nine-member board of education and operates one school building. The enrollment for the 2013-2014 school year was 153 students. As noted in the Municipal profile previously in this report, the district serves, along with the resident school children, the dependents of the personnel assigned to the United State Coast Guard base in the City. According to the 2011-2012 Consolidated Annual Financial Report (CAFR), approximately 66% of the school's students are Coast Guard affiliated. This percentage is relatively constant according to District officials. Therefore of the 153 students, 101 of them are Coast Guard dependents.

The Federal Government, through the United States Department of Education, provides to the district funding for these military children. This is called Impact Aid. The eligibility for a district to receive this aid is that either 400 students or 3% of the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) be military dependents.

In the 2012-2013 school year, the District received \$1,110,283.28 in Impact Aid.

The total budget for 2013-2014 was \$3,554,191, with a tax levy of \$1,513,599. The difference was in various state and Federal aids.

The data contained in the Cape May Report regarding curriculum and indicators of student progress has been reviewed and verified using data from the district and the New Jersey Department of Education. This includes Tables 12 through 35.

WEST CAPE MAY

The West Cape May School District serves students in grade PK-6. It is a type II district with a five member elected Board Of Education. It operates one building.

In the 2013-2014 school year a total of 75 students were enrolled in the District. Dependant upon enrollment at any particular grade level, grades may be combined in a single classroom with a teacher. In the 2013-2014 school year, grades that are combined are:

- PreK-K
- Three and Four
- Five and Six.

The budget for the 2013-2014 school years was \$1,428,699 with a tax levy of \$896,909.

With respect to curriculum and student performance, the tables 12 through 35 have been reviewed and verified using information from the District and the New Jersey Department of Education.

LOWER TOWNSHIP

The Lower Township Board of Education serves students from pre-kindergarten through sixth grades. It is a Type II district with a nine member elected board.

It operates four school buildings and an administration building. The schools are designed to serve specific grades levels:

David C. Douglas Veterans Memorial School	PK and K
Carl T. Mitnick	One and Two
Maud Abrams	Three and Four
Charles w. Sandman	Five and Six

In the 2013-2014 school year, it served 1,807 students in the above listed grades.

The 2013-2014 budget was \$27,316,346 with local support through a tax levy of \$15,251,564. The balance of the budget was from State and Federal aids.

The curriculum and student performance charts contained in the Cape May study has been verified through data from the New Jersey Department of Education.

CAPE MAY POINT

Cape May Point is a non-operating school district. It is a Type II district with an elected three member Board of Education. It sends its students to Cape May City in grades PK-6 or Lower Cape May Regional grades 7-12, on a tuition basis.

Enrollment varies on a yearly basis from 0 to 5 students.

The budget for the 2013-2014 school year was \$65,240 with a local tax levy of \$37,740.

Curriculum and student performance are include in the respective school districts.

MIDDLE TOWNSHIP

Middle Township is a PK-12 district. It is a Type II district with a ten member Board of Education, Nine of its members are elected by the residents of Middle Township and the tenth is appointed by a sending district Board of Education, Dennis Township. In addition to Dennis Township, it has sending-receiving relationships with the Boards of Education of Avalon and Stone Harbor. Neither of these Districts has a sufficient amount of sent students to qualify for a seat on the Middle Township Board of Education. All of these relationships are for grades 9-12. It must be noted that for the 2013-2014 school years, a sending-receiving relationship has been initiated with the Woodbine Board of Education for grades 9-12. These students previously attended Millville High School. This new relationship will be phased in over a four year period. The tuition rate for enrollment has remained relatively consistent at about \$10,500 over the past several years.

In the 2013-2014 school year the enrollment was 2,723, including resident and tuition students.

The Board operates four buildings along with an Administration building. The schools are organized by grade level:

Elementary #1	PK to 2
Elementary #2	Three to Five
Middle School	Six to 8
High School	Nine to Twelve

The curriculum and student performance indicators identified in the Cape May Report have been verified and accepted utilizing District and New Jersey Department of Education data.

LOWER CAPE MAY REGIONAL

The Lower Cape May Regional School District (Regional) is classified as a Limited Purpose district. That is, it does not provide a PK-12 education to its students. The municipalities that comprise a regional school district are called constituent members. The constituent members of the Regional are Cape May City, West Cape May, and Lower Township. It is a Type II district and apportions the Board of Education seat based upon the most recent United States Census. It has nine seats on the Board and they are apportioned as follows:

Cape May City	1
West Cape May	1
Lower Township	7

The regional also has a sending-receiving relationship with the Cape May Point Board of Education to accept students in grades 7-12. In most years there are between 0 and 5 students attending.

The Board operates two buildings, a high school of grades 9-12, Lower Cape May Regional High School and a middle school, Richard M. Teitelman Middle School, grades 7-8, along with an administration building.

In 2013-2014, the total enrollment in grade 7-12 was 1489 students.

The curriculum and the student performance information contained in the Cape May Report has been analyzed and verified using district information along with data from the New Jersey Department of Education.

Since the impact of the suggested "reconfiguration" of the Regional falls squarely on this district, a more in-depth review of the budget and the offered curriculum is necessary to identify the impact of the "proposals" on the educational program.

BUDGET RECAP

The yearly budget is developed and approved by the Board of Education. It reflects the goals and policy decisions regarding the educational program for its students. In effect, it provides monetary resources that provide the underpinning for student success. The budget is based upon two equal elements; the expenditures made to implement the educational program and the resources available to support the student program.

The expenditures include such things as contractual obligations including salaries and benefits, supplies and materials, co-curricular activities, transportation, food service, maintenance and operation of the schools and grounds.

The resources needed to support the educational program come from State and Federal aids and local tax levies. The governmental aids include the educational needs for regular and classified students as well as transportation, security and other related items. This area must reflect the goals of the district but equally important the resources available within the municipalities served by the district.

Generally, while developing a budget the district initially identifies the needs of the students and then reviews the revenues available. If these two areas, revenues and expenditures do not meet each other, then one side or the other must be recalculated to make the two sides of the budget balance.

The local tax levy is "capped" at a 2% increase year to year. In general State and Federal aids are decreasing due to enrollment decline, while expenditures are increasing due to contractual increases and the general increase in equipment, materials, and supplies. Therefore, any decrease in revenue must be offset by a decrease in expenditures. This can be accomplished through a variety of methods but since the biggest cost in the budget is personnel, the only way to enact significant reductions is by reducing personnel. A reduction in personnel impacts the program, both educational and operational, thereby reducing the amount of services to students. Among these are a reduction of courses offered, an increase in class sizes or some combination of both, a reduction in the co-curricular activities provided, a system of deferred maintenance and other scaled back operation programs.

The 2013-2114 budget for the Regional indicated a total tax levy of \$19,199,200. Of this total, \$18,499,082 was for current expenses and \$1,376,713 was for debt service of previously issued bonds. This is apportioned among the constituent municipalities based on a formula that is issued by the New Jersey Department of Education called the Allocation of Equalized Valuation.. The formula allocates a percentage of the local tax levy to each municipality based upon the equalized value of that municipality. Further it

assigns a percentage amount to support the Regional based upon the students in the two school configurations, elementary and regional.

The governmental aids are generally based upon the number of students on roll as of October 15 of the pre-budget year. This includes both regular, special education and at-risk students. Two of these aids are based upon prior year budgets. The largest of these, Adjustment Aid, was allocated to districts when the funding formula changed several years ago to prevent any affected district from suffering a substantial loss in aid due to that change. In this budget year, that aid was \$6,528,185. This amount generally decreases each year.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Teitelman Middle School

The Teitelman Middle School is organized on a modified block schedule. In addition to the traditional courses (math, language arts, science, social studies and physical education/health), a variety of other courses are offered:

- Foreign Languages-Spanish and French
- Art, Art Communication, Art Studio
- Music, Band, Chorus
- Pre-Engineering
- Science Exploration
- Television (RMT)
- Retail (RMS Store)
- Structured Study
- Support Programs

These extensive offerings are reflective of and in keeping with the Board Of Education's Goals (Appendix C). By offering a wide variety of options for students to explore, the Board is achieving their adopted goals.

As previously indicated, the Board of Education has supported these student opportunities through utilization of resources available in a responsible manner. The program allows the Middle School students the opportunity to explore in a structured environment, various career paths while at the same time providing the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed at the high school level.

Lower Cape May Regional High School

The Lower Cape May Regional High School has an extensive curriculum. Its offerings meet the State requirements. In order to graduate, students must complete 140 credits and should select a minimum of 40 credits in each school year. In addition to the basic subject offerings, students have a wide variety of electives from which to choose to complete the yearly and graduation requirements. Among these are:

- Art- 6
- Business/Information Technology- 21
- Family/Consumer Science- 12
- Industrial Arts- 12
- Music- 11
- Social Studies- 7
- Other- 3

Total- 72

Several different levels of study are included within certain areas to provide Advanced Placement opportunities as well as College Preparatory courses. In addition, within the Special Education area students may select from a variety of courses based upon their ability levels.

A unique program of "Academies" is offered to allow students, in addition to the core subjects, the option to explore particular career paths in a wide range of areas. The "Academies" are:

- Business
- Human Services
- Law Enforcement/Public Safety
- Engineering
- Culinary Arts.

Students in these areas, upon completion, can earn college credits or certification within the specific industry. The programs also offer potential employment.

The breadth and scope of the curriculum is impressive for a school this size and prepares students for post-secondary opportunities either in the work force or in a college setting. To maintain this level of offerings, the Board of Education has made policy decisions of both an economic and educational nature to its students and residents.

The Board, through the adopted goals, are providing the high school students with a comprehensive program. The students have the opportunity to not only meet the State and local requirement to achieve a diploma, but to explore career paths, gain certification in certain areas and receive a education that will position them to succeed in a college course of study.

CAPE MAY ALTERNATIVES

In the Cape May Study, four alternatives to reconfigure the Regional District are presented. In the Report, there is no preferred reconfiguration for the Regional District. It lists each of the Alternatives as simply options and then provides an analysis of each that includes the three elements of racial balance, educational program and financial impact. The constant among each of the Alternatives is that Cape May, and in some instances West Cape May, would realize a reduction in the local tax levy for their residents through substantial changes to the structure of the Regional.

Alternative One

The withdrawal of Cape May City from the Lower Cape May Regional whereby Cape May City could enter into a sending-receiving relationship with Lower Cape May Regional for the education of its students in grades 7-12.

Alternative Two

The withdrawal of Cape May City from the Lower Cape May Regional whereby Cape May City could enter into a sending-receiving relationship with another school district, such as Middle Township, for the education of its students in grades 7-12.

Alternative Three

The dissolution of Lower Cape May Regional, which would result, by operation of law, in the expansion of Lower Township into a K-12 school district. In this scenario, West Cape May and Cape May City could enter into a sending-receiving relationship with Lower Township for the education of their students in grades 7-12, such that their students would continue to be educated in the same schools at which they are currently educated.

Alternative Four

The dissolution of Lower Cape May Regional, which would result, by operation of law, in the expansion of Lower Township into a K-12 school district. In this scenario, Cape May City and/or West Cape May could enter into a sending-receiving relationship with another school district, such as Middle Township, for the education of their students in grades 7-12.

ANALYSIS

The Cape May Report's assessment of the Educational Program currently being offered in the Regional, clearly indicates that it is a comprehensive one in which the students are well prepared. The Report, on Page 43, states that "The district curriculum and co-curricular activities are both excellent. The co-curricular activities are some of the finest observed by the consultants throughout the state." Student performance data indicates that although the students are behind when compared to state schools, they are above their peer schools such as Vineland, Lakewood, and Bound Brook.

With respect to the impact on the racial balance of the respective schools identified in the Study, there would be no negative impact in any of them. In Alternative One and Three, the students remain in the Regional District or the newly expanded Lower Township School District, so no change is evidenced. In Alternatives Two and Four, students would attend Middle Township Schools which, because of the relatively small number of former Regional students, would not negatively impact the racial balance at Middle Township. However, if students attend some other district, no conclusion can be drawn since no district is identified in the Cape May Report.

The areas of finance and educational program are tied together. The Board of Education, through the development of the yearly budget, translates the educational program into practice. In a regional district, the apportionment of the local tax levy assesses each constituent member their fair share utilizing the equalized ratables of that municipality. A regional district only has one local tax levy regardless of the number of constituent municipalities. This is a fair and legal process pursuant to state legislation and it is the same process used in Cape May City, and in every other district in the state, to fund an elementary school district.

If the Regional went from three to two municipalities, as in Alternative One or Two, the same tax amount would be apportioned to the two remaining municipalities. In alternatives Three and Four, the Regional would no longer exist and the total local tax levy would fall upon Lower Township.

In each Alternative however, the resultant loss in revenue through the local tax levy ranges from a low of \$4,964,722 in Alternative One to a high of \$7,478,568 in Alternative Four (Wyns Report). In addition, the State Aid would follow the students to their resident district. For Cape May the aid would be \$325,839 and for West Cape May, \$230,593 (Wyns Report). In Alternative One and Three, this would be offset by tuition payments to the Regional or expanded Lower Township School District. This tuition revenue is estimated at \$845,000 for Cape May City Students and \$520,000 for West Cape May students. In Alternatives Two and Four, there would be both the loss of State aid and no tuition revenue since the Cape May and/or West Cape May students would be attending another school district, such as Middle Township. It is noted that the only school district identified by name is Middle Township. There are other districts in the County that operate secondary programs. These include Wildwood and Ocean City. Geographically, the closest district is Wildwood at 9 miles and Ocean City at 35 miles. Neither of these districts has been researched as to enrollment or curriculum.

A “dilemma” is a situation requiring a choice between equally undesirable alternatives. The Alternatives presented in the Cape May Report present a dilemma to the Board and municipalities of the Regional.

The Board of Education when faced with this dilemma of increasing the burden on the remaining constituent district or upon the enlarged Lower Township District would be forced to make a policy decision regarding the breadth and scope of the educational program. In any given year, the Board may be faced with the difficult decisions if the desired program cannot be implemented without significantly increasing the tax levy on its residents.

The potential increases are detailed in both the Cape May Report and the Wyns report although there is a difference in the amounts. In any event, the Board would have to review each offering in both the curricular and co-curricular programs to identify areas of reduction to decrease the astronomical tax burden that would be imposed on the residents, regardless if the Regional was dissolved or reconfigured.

In any school budget, the largest amount is for instruction and the vast majority of that is for personnel. In 2013-2014, the instructional costs comprised about 75% of the total expenditures. If the Board were faced with a reduction of revenues, and made a policy decision to keep taxes from exploding, the only area they could reasonably reduce would be personnel. The question is what would be a reasonable reduction. Even if the tax reduction was half of the amount of reallocated tax levy, that would still be in the area of 2.2 to 3.2 million dollars, dependent upon the Alternative approved, while still increasing the tax burden on the remaining Constituent districts or Lower Township by the same 2.2 to 3.2 million dollars.

The Board would be faced with reducing staff thereby reducing offerings and/or increasing class sizes to unacceptable level for the desired program. If the average employee makes a total of \$70,000 including salary and benefits, this would result in a reduction of 35 to 45 positions across all levels of employees dependant upon the Alternative selected. Even if half of these provide direct instruction, a reduction of that amount would result in a reduction of 106 to 138 class sections. If class sizes were increased to the maximum allowable under fire codes, it would still result in a significant reduction in the curricular offerings. In essence, the Regional, or the enlarged Lower Township District, could offer only a basic program and that still may not meet the requirements of the State. In addition, the residents would still see an increase in taxes that would be draconian in nature. This increase would certainly affect every aspect of the remaining Constituent municipalities of Lower Township and West Cape May or Lower Township dependent upon the Alternative.

In any of the Cape May Alternatives, the impact on the educational program, and more importantly, the students of the Regional would not only be negative, it would be the death knell of the "excellent" curricular and co-curricular offerings of the Regional that was commended in the Cape May Report.

Because of the extreme negative impact upon the educational program in each of the Alternatives offered in the Cape May Study, none of the Alternatives can be approved.

CONCLUSIONS

A regional district is designed to serve the common good of the students and residents of the region. By municipalities joining together, a comprehensive educational program can be offered that no relatively small community can provide to the students. It is interesting to note that the current policy of the State of New Jersey is to share services among various governmental entities to provide a more comprehensive and fiscally responsive government. A regional school district is the model to deliver the educational program to students, residents and taxpayers. The Lower Cape May Regional School District has done this for many years and quite successfully.

Each of the municipalities in the region have seen a decrease in the general population during the ten year period from 2000 to 2010 as detailed in Appendix A. When comparing this decline to the decline of students listed in Appendix B, it is clear that the number of students has declined significantly more than the residents. Taken together, the four school districts have a reduced enrollment of 481 students a decrease of 11.6%. Clearly this indicates that school costs in general are going to increase, if the Boards of Education continue to offer the programs that they believe benefit their students. The resultant tax increases are the costs that communities pay to ensure that the students can compete and succeed.

The Alternatives proposed in the Cape May Study are designed solely to decrease the tax liability of the residents of Cape May City. They believe they are paying too much for the number of students sent to the Lower Cape May Regional School District and wish to reduce their tax levy. The formula being utilized is in compliance with all Statutes and regulations. The Regional is in compliance with the requirements of the State regarding curriculum and the policy decisions of the Board of Education about meeting the needs of the students and preparing them for the society.

The negative financial impact from any "Re-configuration" results in a negative impact upon the educational program of the district through a reduction of funding needed to offer the "excellent" curricular and co-curricular program. If enacted, any of the Alternatives would result in an, at-best, sub-standard program that may not meet even the minimum requirements and result in a gross disservice to the students and the community at large. At worst, any of these Alternatives, if enacted, would cripple not only the educational system of the Regional, but also create a severe negative economic impact upon all constituent members of the Lower Cape May Regional School District. There are no reasons listed in the report that justify approving any of the Alternatives. In all good conscience, and for the good of the municipalities and students, no Alternative can be approved in any form whatsoever.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for the consideration of the Regional or any constituent member:

1. All Alternatives in the Cape May Study should be rejected outright. Each of the suggested Alternatives would negatively impact both the quality of the educational program as well as the quality of life in each constituent municipality.
2. The Constituent municipalities of the Regional should exercise the option within the Statutes to enlarge the regional from a limited purpose, 7-12 regional, to an all-purpose, PK-12 regional, and submit this to the voters of the region. There are many successful examples of all-purpose regionals in the state that could serve as a model. This concept would more efficiently provide an educational program to the students through a consistent curriculum under the direction of one Board of Education, while at the same time reducing administrative and other costs.

APPENDIX A
CONSTITUANT MUNICIPALITIES

	2000 Population	2010 Population	Change	% Change	2000 Housing	2010 Housing	Change	% Change
Cape May City	4,034	3,607	-427	-10.5	4,064	4,155	91	2.2
West Cape May	1,095	1,024	-71	-6.5	1,004	1,043	39	3.8
Lower Township	22,945	22,866	-79	-0.3	13,924	14,507	583	4.2
Regional Totals	28,074	27,497	-348	-0.2	18,992	19,705	713	3.8

APPENDIX B
ENROLLMENT

	2000	2010	Change	% Change
Cape May	213	154	59	-27.7
West Cape May	91	39	52	-57.1
Lower Township	1999	1826	173	-8.7
Lower Cape May Regional	1816	1619.5	197	-11
Total	4119	3638.5	481	-11.7

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Mission Statement & Goals

The basic mission of the Lower Cape May Regional School District is governed by a respect for the worth and dignity of every human being. The schools are committed to the academic, mental, emotional, physical, aesthetic and social development of all learners so they may realize the full measure of their educational potential and fulfill their roles purposefully in the world of work and leisure, and be prepared to lead challenging and productive lives.

The Board's function is to provide a positive school environment with sound, challenging, innovative educational programs that foster life skill development, investigate and celebrate change, but affirm tradition and promote excellence. An active partnership with the community, a comprehensive curriculum and a dedicated and knowledgeable staff are components to the fulfillment of this mission.

In order to insure that this mission is realized, the board has adopted the following goals for pupils of the Lower Cape May Regional School District.

The goals are divided into two categories. Outcome Goals represent those behaviors and feelings that should be achieved by people. Process Goals are statements that describe activities and organizational processes utilized by the school system with the expectation that they contribute to providing a complete educational program.

It is the expectation of this school district that all pupils achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at all grade levels.

Lower Cape May Regional School District Process Goals

1. Instruction which bears a meaningful relationship to the present and future needs and/or interests of pupils.
2. Significant opportunities, consistent with the age of the pupil, helping to determine the nature of the educational experiences of the pupil.
3. Specialized and individualized educational experiences to meet the needs of each pupil.
4. Opportunities for teaching and staff members and pupils to make recommendations concerning the operation of the schools.
5. Comprehensive guidance facilities and services for each pupil.
6. An environment in which any competition among pupils is positive.
7. Resources for education used with maximum efficiency.
8. Teaching staff members of high quality.
9. Diverse forms of constructive cooperation with parents and community groups.

Lower Cape May Regional School District Outcome Goal

1. Acquire basic skills in obtaining information, solving problems, thinking critically and communicating effectively.
2. Acquire a stock of basic information concerning the principles of the physical, biological and social sciences, the historical record of human achievements and failures, and current social issues.
3. Become an effective and responsible contributor to decision making processes of the political and other institutions of the community, state, country and world.
4. Acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding that permit him or her to play a satisfying and responsible role as both producer and consumer.
5. Acquire job entry level skills and also to acquire knowledge for further education.

6. Acquire the understanding of and the ability to form responsible relations with a wide range of other people including, but not limited to, those with social and cultural characteristics different from his or her own.
7. Acquire the capacities for playing satisfying and responsible roles in family life.
8. Acquire the knowledge, habits and attitudes that promote personal and public health, both physical and mental.
9. Acquire the ability and the desire to express himself or herself creatively in one or more of the arts and to appreciate the aesthetic expressions of other people.
10. Acquire an understanding of ethical principles and values and the ability to apply them to his or her own life.
11. Develop an understanding of his or her own worth, abilities, potentialities and limitations.
12. Learn to enjoy the process of learning and to acquire the skills necessary for a lifetime of continuous learning and adaption to change.



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RESOURCES

Cape May City Board of Education

- Financial
- Curriculum
- Enrollment

Cape May County Board of Taxation (www.capemaycountygov.net)

Cape May Point Board Of Education

- Financial
- Enrollment

Lower Cape May Regional Board of Education

- Financial
- Enrollment
- Curriculum
- Negotiated Agreements
- Goals (www.lcmrschooldistrict.com)

Lower Township Board of Education

- Financial
- Enrollment
- Curriculum

Lower Township

- Construction Code Office
- Tax Office

Middle Township Board of Education

- Curriculum
- Enrollment
- Tuition Rates

New Jersey Department of Education-Cape May County Office

New Jersey Department of Education (www.state.nj.us/nj/education/)

- Budget Data
- Enrollment Data
- Student Performance Data

New Jersey Statutes Annotated 18A:

New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:

United States Census (www.census.gov)

United State Coast Guard-Station Cape May: Chief of Staff, Public Information Offices
Housing information
Personnel Information

United States Department of Education (www2.ed.gov)

West Cape May Board of Education
Financial
Curriculum
Enrollment