



MERGER GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY SYSTEMS

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are intended for long-range planning by school library system coordinators/directors, school library system councils, system liaisons from member districts, school districts and BOCES administrators, District Superintendents and Boards of Education. Library systems must plan carefully in providing cost-effective delivery of programs and services. Economies of scale must be considered in this long-range planning for the merging of two or more school library systems.

EDUCATION LAW AND COMMISSIONER'S REGULATIONS

Education Law §282 which established school library systems, and Commissioner's Regulations (CR) 90.18 based on that law, provide for a school library system to serve a BOCES, Big 5 City or combination thereof. Education Law states that "...each system to be composed of school districts which are located within a board of cooperative educational services area, or a school district serving a city..., or combinations thereof... such school library systems shall be governed by either their respective boards"... (of education).

CR 90.18 "(b) Governance. (1) The board of cooperative educational services or the board of education of the city school district shall be the governing board of the school library system. In the case of a school library system serving a combination of BOCES and/or city school districts, one BOCES or city school district shall be designated as the official administrative agency."

FUNDING (State-aid)

Education Law §284 (f) provides for state aid for the merger of any school library system. Basic state aid levels include a base grant and formula aid factors (based on the total number of students, number of districts served, and square miles). When two systems merge there is a single base grant plus the combined formula aid factors, plus an annual \$50,000 merger funds (in perpetuity). Administrative personnel costs and fringe benefits are usually less in a merged system (depending on staffing arrangements), thereby providing more money for program and services to member public school districts and nonpublic school members.

STAFFING

Commissioner's Regulations 90.18 (d) addresses the minimum requirements for system staffing. "Each school library system shall employ a full time coordinator of the school library system... At least one full-time clerical staff member shall be assigned to each coordinator. Other professional and support staff members shall be employed as necessary to execute school library system functions. The adequacy of the staff in relation to the plan of service activities shall be determined by the commissioner."

TIMEFRAME

Recommendations for a merger should be directed to the program office at the New York State Education Department, New York State Library, Division of Library Development (NYSED/NYSL), Albany, NY 12230 prior to the funding year of the proposed merged system. At least a six-month notice is suggested.

The school library system state-aided program currently funds one school library system coordinator/director position per each of the school library systems (except New York City). CR 90.18 requires one full-time coordinator/director and one full-time support staff (except New York City). The salary and benefits of a coordinator/director and a support staff person typically account for approximately 80% of a school library system program budget.

When a school library system coordinator/director position becomes vacant, a merger study may be considered as part of a long-range planning process or cross-contracting for program services (see page 4) or hiring a temporary coordinator/director until the director's position is filled is considered a short-term solution and must be approved by NYSED/NYSL.

MERGER

Merging of the school library system program occurs when BOCES merge. (Erie #2 BOCES and Chautauqua BOCES; Genesee-Wyoming BOCES and Livingston-Steuben-Wyoming BOCES; Saratoga-Warren BOCES and Washington-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES; Suffolk 1 BOCES and Suffolk 2 BOCES; Onondaga BOCES and Cortland-Madison BOCES).

Merger may occur also when the school library system programs of two BOCES combine to provide library system service (Oneida-Madison and Herkimer) where the BOCES do not merge but the school library system programs merge. In this case, one educational agency would be designated as the local educational agency or sponsor of the school library system program.

Other options may also be proposed to NYSED/NYSL as long as they are consistent with Education Law and regulations of the commissioner.

Therefore the following arrangements for school library system operation are considered options for combining school library system programs and services:

- BOCES merger - school library systems merge because the educational agencies (BOCES) of which they are a part, and by which they are governed, merge into one educational agency.
- School library system merger - two or more school library systems merge program operations to become one system under the governance of one educational agency's board of education.
- Other- options approved by the commissioner not listed above.

PROCEDURE

- In the case of a mandated BOCES merger by the commissioner, a *request* for a merger study is not necessary.
- *Requests* for the initiation of a "merger study" should be sent to the NYSED/NYSL from one or more contiguous school library system(s) and/their educational agencies by the District Superintendent(s). *Requests* could be initiated at the time of a school library system director's position vacancy; during a BOCES merger study (vacancy of a District Superintendent); or as part of a long-range planning process by school library system councils.
- "A Task Force on Merger Study" will be formed by the submitting parties within 30 days after request for the study is approved by NYSED/NYSL or when a BOCES merger order is approved by the commissioner. This "Task Force" should include representatives from all constituencies (outlined in "Major Considerations" – Part V) and "ex-officio" NYSED/NYSL representatives. Representatives from school library systems councils of the respective school library systems being studied MUST be involved in the merger study process. A merger plan outlining how the major considerations of the merger and how a revised plan of service will be addressed must be submitted to the school library systems councils, the educational agencies and NYSED/NYSL.
- Technical assistance will be provided by the NYSED/NYSL consultants throughout the merger study.
- A new Plan of Service is developed and submitted to the NYSED/NYSL by April 30 for review and approval and implementation at the beginning of the funding year for the new merged system (July 1).



MERGER OF SCHOOL LIBRARY SYSTEM – MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS:

I. Desired outcomes of merged school library systems:

- Sustained or enhanced member *involvement* in system planning, development and evaluation
- Sustained and improved *access* to programs and services
- Improved *economies of scale* (efficiency and effectiveness) of programs and services
- Increased administrative level of responsibilities of the school library system coordinator/director in the educational organization
- Increased percentage of state funds for programs and services as a result of lower administrative costs

II. External factors to be considered:

- Client base size (# of pupils, teachers and administrators served)
- Number of member public school districts and participants (buildings)/nonpublic school members served
- Geographic size of school library system
- Topography of system
- Diversity of population served

III. “Task Force on Merger Study” formed- Major parties to be involved in process

- Representation from each school library system council
- District Superintendents or designees
- Representation from each school library system liaison group/committees
- Administrators of member districts/nonpublics
- School library system coordinators/director(s)
- State Education Department/New York State Library/Division of Library Development (ex-officio)

IV. Program/Service Considerations:

- Sustain resource sharing through mechanisms such as interlibrary loan, delivery, Union Catalog, Virtual Catalog
- Support technology services in school library media centers
- Provide access to expanded services and electronic databases
- Provide professional staff development/Continuing Education opportunities
- Sustain and enhance regional involvement/connections with other types of library systems and educational programs
- Provide programs and services outlined in the five-year long range Plan of Service

V. Governance Considerations:

- One designated governing educational agency
- Equitable representation on new merged Council from former systems' Councils and users and providers of library service
- A liaison from each public school district member and nonpublic representation in liaison group
- Merger of committees
- Submission of a new Plan of Service for approval by NYSED/NYSL



CROSS-CONTRACTING GUIDELINES

Cross-contracting - one or more school library system(s) may cross-contract with another school library system(s) for a defined period of time for all or specific program(s) and/or service(s) as indicated in the system's budget application and plan of service. A cross-contract would operate for a given funding year (July 1 to June 30 or part thereof) and is approved by respective District Superintendents and submitted to the NYSED/NYSL for approval. School library system program requirements are stated in CR 90.18. Goals to accomplish these program services are outlined in the system's Plan of Service approved by the Commissioner of Education. Accomplishments are reported annually in the system's Annual Report submitted to NYSED/NYSL for approval.

FUNDING

Full funding for both systems may be approved during the cross-contract. Cross-contracting is a **short-term solution** for providing services and programs to the members of a school library system. It will not be approved on a long-term (multiple funding year) basis. State aid is released to the educational agency once a cross-contract is approved by NYSED/NYSL. Cross-contracting considerations should be decided prior to the submission of the system's budget application for state aid for the following funding year (July 1).

PROCEDURES

Cross-contracting for specific services should be indicated in the normal budget application approval process. A formal contract must be approved by appropriate educational agencies (District Superintendents) and the NYSED/NYSL. If circumstances necessitate that a cross-contract be implemented subsequent to a budget application approval by NYSED/NYSL, the educational agency must contact NYSED/NYSL to discuss the cross-contract being considered.

Cross-contracts between systems must be reflected in the program budget in the appropriate budget category. Budget applications and plans of service revisions are due to the NYSED/NYSL on April 30 preceding the following July 1- June 30 school year. Cross-contracts must be approved by respective District Superintendents prior to submission to the NYSED/NYSL for approval.

Questions about the merger process or cross-contracting school library system services should be directed to the Division of Library Development, New York State Library – (518-474-7890) Attn: Joseph Mattie, School Library System Program Manager.