

Legislative Council Study Committee on Shared Services

Request for Additional Information – Lance Bagstad

1. Identify any barriers to the successful implementation of shared services by your school districts (*examples could include – statutory barriers, financial uncertainty, community relationships*)?
 - a. One of the biggest barriers for some services is the community relationships, especially in small schools. Small school communities sometimes feel they will lose their identities if they combine or share services. Also, the current laws and guidelines regarding open enrollment dollars de-incentivize districts from sharing services for kids because open enrollment has dollars following a student and therefore creating a competitive environment, rather than a cooperative one. I would also add, that sharing some positions can create issues with district's school boards because they may want to know the percentages of time a person will be in each district and then pay expenses accordingly.
2. In your experience, have you tried to share services that proved not to be beneficial, if so please explain?
 - a. We are trying to share students across four districts so we are able to offer more opportunities for students. The barriers that we have faced is students not wanting to travel to another district for a course and questions from parents as to why their student has to travel for a course rather than taking it in their home district. The other issue that we have faced is trying to ask teachers to travel to teach in another district. Often, teachers want to work in the district in which they were hired and not have to travel.
3. Can you identify any solutions that could address barriers to or incentivize greater use of shared services?
 - a. The first thing that needs to be looked at is how the state funding will incentivize the services. One of the things our four-district co-op is trying to do is have teachers travel to another district or teach remotely to another district. In order to do that we have looked at financial incentives for those teachers who we are asking to do the traveling or remote teaching. There should be a funding mechanism for districts to recoup those incentive costs when they are successful in having teachers travel or teach remotely.
 - b. There needs to be a way to look at open enrollment concerns if that is creating a competitive situation rather than a cooperative situation.

4. Provide examples of barriers that currently prevent school districts from moving forward with consolidation?

- a. There is little or no financial incentive to do so.
- b. Small, rural communities feeling a loss of identity. Small, rural schools are often centered around their community schools and if their school is no longer there, they often lose that community pride.
- c. It is not as easy as simply consolidating two or more school districts. There are so many factors that play into this – tax levy, mill rates, equalized property values, moth-balled buildings, additional busing costs, amount of time students would be on a bus, potential participation in extra curriculars because of distance from the school, family connections to the schools.

5. In what ways could the state incentivize school district consolidation:

- a. I do not feel that providing incentives for the consolidation of schools is the answer. I believe creating incentives for school districts to share services is the better answer. These incentives cannot come with a large number of contingencies tied to the dollars. These need to be real, spendable dollars and the incentives need to be ongoing and not sunset after a period time.