

Legislative Council Study Committee on Shared Services

Request for Additional Information – Traci Davis

1. Identify any barriers to the successful implementation of shared services by your school districts (*examples could include – statutory barriers, financial uncertainty, community relationships*)?
 - When we first started these discussions, our staff was very hesitant because they were afraid that they would be out of a job. We found the opposite was true. Now certain teachers could teach different classes and share more classes.
 - At first the communities thought we were trying to consolidate and that raised some concern
 - Leadership changes are difficult because the new person might not understand the value or the concept behind the shared services
 - Different salary schedules can be difficult. For example, I hire the speech pathologist, but she also works in Monticello. If that scale is higher, it doesn't seem fair. We have had to adjust certain staff salaries to be cognizant of that fact.
 - Title IX-difficult in district or sharing. We did share and make it work, but again, there is no compensation for this and it is so much more than a typical discipline investigation

2. In your experience, have you tried to share services that proved not to be beneficial, if so please explain?
 - We shared a director between three districts and that was too much. Two is doable and she make it work for a year but three was a lot.
 - Family and Consumer Ed teacher-we did try to share this position with a neighboring district but with the food labs, etc. it was a tough position to shared virtually. Tech ed might be another one of those positions.
 - I was shared as a special ed director in two districts as well as the superintendent in one of the districts. We did pretty well, but you have to be careful of what you ask of people. We are already in shortages and we can't burn people out.

3. Can you identify any solutions that could address barriers to or incentivize greater use of shared services?
 - I think there almost has to be a "go to" group or a resource for those that are wanting to do this. Sometimes it is overwhelming to think about or you might not think of something that could be done. Or having a "bank" of ideas for those wanting to do it.
 - I think the District needs incentives-for example getting FTE's for sharing different positions, but I also think that the person doing the position needs some type of individual incentive, even if their position is considered one full time position. They have to travel, work with different teachers, passwords, etc.
 - Right or wrong, we have never charged any district for allowing students take classes from another

- I also think that you need to hire as a shared position. It is difficult to have a current staff member be shared unless that is the difference between them having a job and being part time/non-renewed.

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

I can only speak for my area (southern WI with many prek-12, small schools, consolidation is a very difficult subject. We are often the largest or one of the largest employers in the town so if the school leaves, towns often struggle economically. There is a lot of pride, tradition and sense of community with a school. Some argue that if the community is willing to support the school (with taxes, referendums, etc.) then that is the epitome of local control.

I was a student when consolidation was discussed in Juda (yes, I also graduated from Juda) and I remember the board meetings, the public meetings, the awful comments, etc. I still have the SOS (Save Our School) button. This was before open enrollment. At that time people were talking about annexing land, some got “apartments” in the other towns to claim residency and it tore neighbors apart to this day.

Since open enrollment, the “c” word has not been something that has been talked about. It is interesting that there were some in the day that wanted to consolidate and now they praise the school. I know this isn’t fact or research based, but it is anecdotal and what I saw as a student, community member and now as the Superintendent of the school.

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

- The ONLY thing that might make some sense is for some small schools to combine for high school. There are several prek-8 districts in our area that feed into a larger high school. But, it would almost have to be a created highschool-not an existing one.
- Consolidation would mean building or remodeling to accommodate more students. You would have to almost mandate that it happen-waive a referendum or offset the costs somehow. Many of our small schools in the area would probably need some building modifications.
- In addition to building needs, transportation would also have to be considered.
- Honestly, I am not sure what kind of incentive any of our districts/communities would take to lose their schools.

Some other random thoughts:

Thanks again for the opportunity to tell our stories and share our successes and challenges. Another two cents of mine, there are often funds given to charter schools to be smaller, a different way of learning, etc. I would argue that our small, rural schools are unique places to learn and great places to learn.

Higher learning commission: The requirements to be certified to teach dual enrollment courses have increased. There was a grant to get teachers certified. Those types of grants/incentives are very helpful and important because many of our teachers do not have the qualifications that are required. I see there is another extension to get people certified. If that grant was open again that would be wonderful!

This is all I can think of for now.

Respectfully submitted on 8-12-2022 by Traci Davis, Superintendent, Director of Special Ed, Principal, etc. etc.

Thanks again!