

Legislative Council Study Committee on Shared Services

Request for Additional Information – Steve Kolden

1. Identify any barriers to the successful implementation of shared services by your school districts (examples could include – statutory barriers, financial uncertainty, community relationships)?

If the question is related to shared services, there are very few barriers. We adjust and work with one another in multiple ways, shared Alternative HS, multiple 66.0301 agreements, technology services, our students may attend classes in either District, we coop 5 sports, we share a SRO, etc.

We FIND a way to make things work.

If this question is more related to school consolidation, this is much larger question and involves two school boards, two communities, fiscal impacts, etc.

The REAL question would be “why” should school districts consider consolidation?

We are both fiscally stable. Our enrollment is either steady or growing. Both schools have positive achievement on school report cards, we both have supportive communities. Without a significant fiscal incentive (that lasts more than 5 years), there is not really a reason for us to consider consolidation at this time.

Aside from a geographical split; we’re both doing great independently.

2. In your experience, have you tried to share services that proved not to be beneficial, if so please explain?

Shared Services have only been terminated when they ceased to be beneficial for everyone involved. Colby and Abbotsford once provided a “capstone” experience in cooperation with NTC for our senior students. This ended when student interest (course requests) for these dropped to a level that was no longer sustainable. We do this for HS courses internally each year. We need enough student interest to make sure courses are fiscally appropriate to dedicate staff time.

3. Can you identify any solutions that could address barriers to or incentivize greater use of shared services?

In order to answer this question, I’d need to know if this is related to shared services OR school district consolidation.

Shared Services are the “norm” for Colby and Abbotsford. While we do have spirited “competition” between our two schools, we do not let the needs of our children prevent shared services. We find a way to make things work if it benefits our students.

IF your question is related to school district consolidation; the answer is much longer and requires greater detail. The barriers extend beyond administrative structures and cooperative agreements.

- *Fiscal Rationale/Reason*
- *Facilities*
- *School Attendance Areas*
- *Location of the high school*
- *Athletics*
- *Staffing (two separate employee Handbooks)*
- *Mill Rates*

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

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

For BOTH questions 5 and 6; the real question is related to purpose.

What is the goal or rationale for school district consolidation?

What is the goal of the State / Legislature in encouraging consolidation?

Personally, I have LONG been fascinated by the process of school consolidation. I reflect back on Wisconsin History into the 1950's and legislation related to "providing every child in Wisconsin with a K-12 education".

I believe, in certain circumstances, school district consolidation simply makes sense based on the unique characteristics of individual districts. Conversely, sometimes it doesn't make sense.

EVERYTHING depends on the individual dynamics of local districts.

As I mentioned, I'm fascinated by this concept. If you wish to speak more or would like more information, please feel free to reach out to me.

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