
Wisconsin Legislative Council

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE



STUDY COMMITTEE ON SHARED SCHOOL DISTRICT SERVICES

[2023 Assembly Bill 190 and 2023 Senate Bill 179;
2023 Assembly Bill 191 and 2023 Senate Bill 180;
2023 Assembly Bill 192 and 2023 Senate Bill 181;
2023 Assembly Bill 193 and 2023 Senate Bill 182;
2023 Assembly Bill 194 and 2023 Senate Bill 183;
2023 Assembly Bill 195 and 2023 Senate Bill 184; and
2023 Assembly Bill 196 and 2023 Senate Bill 185]

Prepared by Emily Hicks, Staff Attorney, and
Rachel Letzing, Deputy Director

April 26, 2023

RL-2023-04

The Wisconsin Legislative Council is a nonpartisan legislative service agency. Among other services provided to the Wisconsin Legislature, staff of the Wisconsin Legislative Council conduct study committees under the direction of the Joint Legislative Council.

Established in 1947, the Joint Legislative Council directs study committees to study and recommend legislation regarding major policy questions facing the state. Study committee members are selected by the Joint Legislative Council and include both legislators and citizen members who are knowledgeable about a study committee's topic.

This document summarizes committee activity and presents study committee recommendations to the Joint Legislative Council.

Contents

Part I Executive Summary	5
Background	5
Creation of Study Committee	5
Study Committee’s Meetings and Recommendations	5
Introduction by the Joint Legislative Council	6
Part II Committee Activity	7
Assignment	7
Summary of Meetings	7
Part III Recommendations	11
Bills Regarding Shared Services	11
2023 Assembly Bill 196 and 2023 Senate Bill 185, Relating to Aid to School Districts That Share Services for Costs Associated With Student Information Systems and Making an Appropriation	11
Background	11
Description	11
2023 Assembly Bill 192 and 2023 Senate Bill 181, Relating to Aid for Transporting Students Between School Districts That Share Services and Making an Appropriation	11
Background	11
Description	12
Bills Regarding School District Consolidation	12
2023 Assembly Bill 191 and 2023 Senate Bill 180, Relating to Reducing the Number of Members on the School Board of a Consolidated School District	12
Background	12
Description	12
2023 Assembly Bill 190 and 2023 Senate Bill 179, Relating to School and School District Accountability Report for a Consolidated School District	13
Background	13
Description	13
2023 Assembly Bill 193 and 2023 Senate Bill 182, Relating to Grants for Feasibility Studies of School District Consolidation or Whole Grade Sharing and Making an Appropriation	13
Background	13
Description	14
2023 Assembly Bill 194 and 2023 Senate Bill 183, Relating to State Aid for School District Consolidation	14
Background	14
Description	14

2023 Assembly Bill 195 and 2023 Senate Bill 184, Relating to Calculating a Consolidated School District’s Revenue Limit.....15

 Background15

 Description15

Part IV | Study Committee Votes 17

Appendix 1 | List of Committee Members 21

Appendix 2 | List of Committee Materials.....23

PART I | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

State law authorizes every school district in the state to contract to share services with other school districts, governmental entities, and cooperative educational service agencies (CESA). School district funding, which generally comes from property tax levies and state aid, is often an integral part of a school district's decision to share services. Under state law, a school district is limited in the revenue it may collect from its property tax levy and may only exceed this revenue limit by referendum or receive a revenue limit adjustment in certain circumstances. Labor shortages and difficulty with staff recruitment and retention also often contribute to a school district's decision to share services.

Through the process of school district consolidation, two or more school districts may combine to form a new school district. This process involves the affected school boards and, on occasion, the electors of the affected school districts. State law requires school boards to consider how a consolidation may affect the educational welfare of all of the children residing in all of the affected school districts. The full process by which school districts consolidate is prescribed in statute and lasts approximately two years. Though not required by law, in practice the process typically includes interested districts obtaining a feasibility study to determine whether the affected districts would benefit financially from consolidation. Though school districts may consolidate, consolidation rarely occurs: from 2000-2022, there were five school district consolidations.

CREATION OF STUDY COMMITTEE

The Joint Legislative Council directed the Study Committee on Shared School District Services to review current barriers to shared administrative or other services between school districts, explore statutory changes or creation of incentives to encourage efficiencies, and consider methods for sharing services. As part of its work, the Joint Legislative Council directed the committee to study school district structures employed in other states, particularly county-wide school district models.

STUDY COMMITTEE'S MEETINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study committee met five times throughout the summer and fall of 2022, and heard testimony from Wisconsin school district administrators, CESA administrators and staff, as well as a former Florida school district administrator, and staff from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS). The committee examined the practical and financial challenges school districts encounter when sharing services, and focused on ways to assist and encourage districts to share services in order to provide greater educational opportunities for students and support for staff who work in shared positions in multiple districts. Regarding consolidation, the committee considered the experiences of a recently consolidated district and focused on making the consolidation process more feasible for districts that may wish to pursue consolidation due to declining enrollment or financial considerations. In concluding its work, the committee recommended the following eight bill drafts for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council:

- **LRB-0558/1**, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district.
- **LRB-0559/1**, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district.

- **LRB-0560/1**, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation.
- **LRB-0561/1**, relating to state aid for school district consolidation.
- **LRB-0570/1**, relating to reimbursements to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies for the cost of writing federal and state grant applications and making an appropriation.
- **LRB-0571/1**, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems and making an appropriation.
- **LRB-0572/1**, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services and making an appropriation.
- **LRB-0590/1**, relating to calculating a consolidated school district's revenue limit.

INTRODUCTION BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

At its March 23, 2023 meeting, the Joint Legislative Council voted to approve seven of the committee's eight recommendations and introduce the following seven bills in the 2023-24 Legislative Session:¹

- 2023 Assembly Bill 190 and 2023 Senate Bill 179, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 191 and 2023 Senate Bill 180, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 192 and 2023 Senate Bill 181, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services and making an appropriation.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 193 and 2023 Senate Bill 182, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 194 and 2023 Senate Bill 183, relating to state aid for school district consolidation.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 195 and 2023 Senate Bill 184, relating to calculating a consolidated school district's revenue limit.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 196 and 2023 Senate Bill 185, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems and making an appropriation.

The remainder of this report includes the following parts:

Part II provides a summary of the testimony and committee discussion at each meeting, and outlines the seven bill drafts that were recommended for introduction by the Study Committee on Shared School District Services.

Part III provides background information on, and a detailed description of, the seven bills introduced by the Joint Legislative Council.

Part IV records the votes taken by the study committee to recommend the bills for introduction and the votes taken by the Joint Legislative Council to introduce the bills.

¹ The Joint Legislative Council did not consider LRB-0570/1 at its meeting.

PART II | COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

ASSIGNMENT

The Joint Legislative Council established the Study Committee on Shared School District Services and appointed the chairperson by a mail ballot dated April 8, 2022.

The committee was directed to review current barriers to shared administrative or other services between school districts, and explore statutory changes or creation of incentives to encourage efficiencies. Additionally, the Joint Legislative Council tasked the committee with considering methods for sharing or consolidating services such as district-level administration and personnel, purchasing, technology and data processing, transportation, food service, and building maintenance, and making recommendations for legislation. As part of its work, the committee was instructed to study school district structures employed in other states, particularly county-wide school district models.

To assist in completing this charge, the Joint Legislative Council appointed the study committee's membership by mail ballot dated May 31, 2022. The final committee membership consisted of two representatives, two senators, and six public members. **Appendix 1** lists the committee members.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS

The committee held five meetings on the following dates:

- July 20, 2022.
- August 22, 2022.
- October 26, 2022.
- November 30, 2022.
- December 13, 2022.

July 20, 2022

At its first meeting on July 20, 2022, the committee received an overview of background information by Legislative Council staff and invited testimony from several speakers regarding shared school district services and the role of CESAs.

Emily Hicks and **Raine Black**, Staff Attorneys, provided an overview of information included in the Legislative Council Staff Brief 2022-03, [Study Committee on Shared School District Services](#) (July 13, 2022).²

The committee heard presentations from school district administrators, **Traci Davis**, Superintendent, Juda School District, **Jeff Eide**, Executive Director, Wisconsin Rural School Alliance, **Nathaniel Burklund**, District Administrator, Niagara School District, and **Mike Beighley**, Superintendent, Whitehall School District, about how their districts share services with other districts and interact with their CESAs. The speakers discussed the benefits of sharing services, including financial savings, increased educational opportunities for students, and more efficient use of limited school resources. The speakers also discussed the challenges

² A copy of their PowerPoint presentation is available on the committee's [website](#).

they experienced with sharing services, including attraction and retention of shared staff due to frequent travel, workload demands, and learning different school data systems.

The committee also heard presentations from CESA staff, **David Honish**, Agency Administrator, CESA 8, **Mike Koltes**, Director of Business Services, CESA 5, and **Allen Betry**, Agency Administrator, CESA 9, about services CESAs provide and how CESAs facilitate shared services between school districts. The speakers explained that each CESA specializes in providing a different service to school districts, such as special education support, professional development, and business services. The speakers noted that in some cases, a school district may determine it is easier to receive assistance directly from a CESA rather than through a shared services agreement with another district.

Molly Gold and **Dan Thatcher** of NCSL provided a detailed overview of shared services models in other states; shared services laws in states similar to Wisconsin; different approaches to shared services in South Dakota and Pennsylvania; and recent legislation in selected states, as well as different states' financing models for funding shared services.

August 22, 2022

At the meeting on August 22, 2022, Legislative Council staff provided an overview of information included in Legislative Council Memo No. 1, [School District Consolidation](#) (August 15, 2022). The committee then received testimony from invited speakers regarding school district models in other states and school district consolidation in Wisconsin.

Deven Scott, Assistant Director of State Relations, **Matt Weyer**, Principal, and **Eric Syverson**, Policy Analyst, ECS, presented information on school district boundaries and reorganization in other states, highlighting Arizona, Indiana, Michigan, and Minnesota.

Dr. Michael Grego, Former Superintendent, Pinellas County School District, Florida, presented information on Florida State's constitutionally required county-wide school district organization model, how education consortia provide support to school districts in specific regions of that state, and generally described the benefits of the county-wide school district model.

Tara Villalobos, District Administrator, Holy Hill Area School District, **Dennis Kaczor**, District Administrator, Rosholt School District, **Ryan Bargender**, District Administrator, School District of Abbotsford, **Steven Kolden**, Superintendent, Colby School District, and **George Steffen**, Former Superintendent, Trevor-Wilmot School District, described their experiences as administrators in districts that have consolidated or have considered consolidation. The speakers discussed the benefits of consolidation, including potential financial savings, better educational and extracurricular opportunities for students, and more efficient use of limited resources. The speakers also explained the barriers and challenges to consolidation, including loss of community identity, differing financial and enrollment concerns, complexity of the prior consolidation aid formula, staff retention, serving communities with divergent needs, and communicating changes to the community. Ms. Villalobos explained how her school district, created by the most recent school district consolidation in the state, benefited both "parent" school districts in different ways and that financial savings is not a guaranteed benefit of consolidation.

Committee members then discussed the information received from the invited speakers regarding shared services and consolidation. The committee reviewed a recommendation to provide additional funding to school districts to pay for the costs of grant writing, and to ease the process of applying for grants. The committee discussed creating incentives for school districts to establish regional health care cooperatives, regional IT services, and student information systems, as well as possible models for regional or centralized cooperative food and

textbook purchasing. The committee also discussed creating virtual learning opportunities among school districts, and addressing student transportation between districts in a shared services agreement. Certain members also expressed interest in reexamining the legislation introduced in response to the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding in the 2017-18 session.

Regarding consolidation, the committee discussed the fiscal and operational challenges consolidating districts encounter and how state law could be changed to ease the consolidation process. The committee also discussed specific challenges to consolidation, including the cost of feasibility studies, school board composition in a newly consolidated district, and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) school district accountability reports (“report cards”) for newly consolidated districts.

October 26, 2022

At the committee’s meeting on October 26, 2022, Legislative Council staff provided an overview of information provided in Legislative Council Memo No. 2 , [Committee Options for Potential Legislation](#) (October 18, 2022). Chair Brooks and Legislative Council staff then facilitated a discussion of the options for legislation outlined in the memo, as organized by subject matter categories including: (1) sharing staff; (2) grant writing; (3) virtual classes; (4) transportation; (5) school district purchasing; (6) per-pupil consolidation aid; (7) number of school board members in consolidated districts; (8) school district report cards; (9) funding for feasibility studies; (10) operational referenda; (11) consolidation process, and; (12) regional student information systems.

During the committee’s discussion on legislative options related to shared services, members identified numerous ways to provide incentives for school districts to continue providing shared services, as well as to encourage districts to begin doing so. The committee requested bill drafts that would create a categorical aid for school districts that share certain staff positions, create a program to reimburse school districts for grant writing costs, and provide aid to districts that transport students between schools to take courses under a shared services agreement. Committee members also requested a bill draft that would create a pilot program to provide grants for two or more districts that share services to create a student information system.

During the committee’s discussion on legislative options related to school district consolidation, members expressed a general desire to remove certain barriers from the consolidation process. The committee requested bill drafts that would eliminate confusion over a newly consolidated school district’s DPI report card scores, allow districts to reduce the number of school board members by more than one member per year, and provide state aid to mitigate the cost of feasibility studies. Additionally, members requested a bill draft that would increase the amount of per-pupil state consolidation aid for consolidated districts.

November 30, 2022

At the committee’s meeting on November 30, 2022, the committee reviewed and discussed the following bill drafts:

- LRB-0558/P2, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district.
- LRB-0559/P3, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district.
- LRB-0560/P2, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation.

- LRB-0561/P2, relating to state aid for school district consolidation.
- LRB-0569/P2, relating to a shared services aid program for school districts, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0570/P2, relating to reimbursements to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies for the cost of writing federal and state grant applications and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0571/P2, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems.
- LRB-0572/P2, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services.
- LRB-0590/P2, relating to calculating a consolidated school district's revenue limit.

The committee engaged in a thorough discussion of LRB-0569/P2, relating to a shared services aid program for school districts. Committee discussion focused on the amount to provide for each shared staff position, which types or categories of staff should be eligible for aid, and how to ensure smaller and more rural districts would benefit from the aid. Although the committee expressed a general desire to provide state aid to encourage school districts to share certain staff positions, the committee could not reach a consensus on the specific provisions of a bill draft. Therefore, the committee chair ultimately decided to remove LRB-0569/P2 from consideration.

The committee discussed the other bill drafts and requested minor changes. The committee agreed to meet again to review the finalized bill drafts and vote.

December 13, 2022

At the committee's final meeting on December 13, 2022, the committee reviewed bill drafts and voted to recommend the following eight bill drafts, with certain modifications, to the Joint Legislative Council for introduction:

- LRB-0558/P4, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district. [This draft subsequently became LRB-0558/1.]
- LRB-0559/P4, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district. [This draft subsequently became LRB-0559/1.]
- LRB-0560/P3, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation. [This draft subsequently became LRB-0560/1.]
- LRB-0561/P3, relating to state aid for school district consolidation. [This draft subsequently became LRB-0561/1.]
- LRB-0570/P3, relating to reimbursements to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies for the cost of writing federal and state grant applications. [This draft subsequently became LRB-0570/1.]
- LRB-0571/P3, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems. [This draft, as amended by changes adopted by the committee, subsequently became LRB-0571/1.]
- LRB-0572/P4, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services. [This draft subsequently became LRB-0572/1.]
- LRB-0590/P2, relating to calculating a consolidated school district's revenue limit. [This draft subsequently became LRB-0590/1.]

PART III | RECOMMENDATIONS

This Part of the report provides background information on, and a description of, seven bills as recommended by the Study Committee on Shared School District Services and introduced by the Joint Legislative Council.

BILLS REGARDING SHARED SERVICES

2023 Assembly Bill 196 and 2023 Senate Bill 185, Relating to Aid to School Districts That Share Services for Costs Associated With Student Information Systems and Making an Appropriation

Background

Testimony before the committee emphasized that when school districts share services but have conflicting student information systems, it can be challenging for the districts to work effectively together. The committee discussed examples of these challenges, including expending additional resources to transfer or share data between schools, and training staff to use different systems. Certain members explained that a union high school district and its included elementary school districts may also experience difficulty when transferring or sharing student data between the schools. The committee agreed that providing even a small incentive to districts for this purpose could make it easier for districts to share services.

Description

The bill creates a categorical aid program, administered by DPI, for school districts that apply for reimbursement for costs associated with purchasing and implementing a new student information system. In order to be eligible for this aid, a school district must be either: (1) a union high school district or one of its included elementary school districts that purchases a new student information system to streamline communications between the districts; or (2) a school district that enters into a shared services agreement with one or more other school districts and purchases a new student information system in order to accommodate those shared services. Aid provided to a school district under this program may be used to purchase a new student information system, for data migration to a new student information system, and to train staff on the use of a new student information system. Under the bill, aid provided to a single school district may not exceed \$75,000 and a school district may apply for this aid only one time.

The bill appropriates \$450,000 in each year of the 2023-25 biennium for this purpose and provides that if the appropriation is insufficient to fully reimburse all eligible school districts, the reimbursement amounts must be prorated.

2023 Assembly Bill 192 and 2023 Senate Bill 181, Relating to Aid for Transporting Students Between School Districts That Share Services and Making an Appropriation

Background

Under current law, school districts receive state aid for transporting students between their residences and the schools they attend. The amount of state aid a school district receives per student depends on how far that student's residence is from the school the student attends. Under current law, if two or more school boards enter into a shared services agreement that requires transportation of students in one district to attend a course offered in another district participating in the agreement, the school board providing that transportation is not eligible to

receive state aid for the cost of transporting those students. The committee agreed that although this amount of aid may not necessarily be significant for all districts that transport students under a shared services agreement, it would provide meaningful assistance.

Description

Under the bill, a school board that has entered into a shared services agreement with one or more school boards to provide transportation to students enrolled in a participating school district for the purpose of students attending a course offered as a shared service under the agreement at a physical location in the school district must be paid state transportation aid. Specifically, under the bill, the district providing transportation receives the following amounts per student transported, per year, reduced proportionally based on the number of instructional days transportation was provided:

- If the distance between the school districts is at least two miles but no more than five miles, \$35.
- If the distance between the school districts is more than five miles but no more than eight miles, \$55.
- If the distance between the school districts is more than eight miles but no more than 12 miles, \$110.
- If the distance between the school districts is more than 12 miles, \$375.

The bill provides an additional \$150,000 to the pupil transportation aid fund in fiscal year 2024-25 for this purpose.

BILLS REGARDING SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION

2023 Assembly Bill 191 and 2023 Senate Bill 180, Relating to Reducing the Number of Members on the School Board of a Consolidated School District

Background

Under current law, when a school district with three or more school board members votes to reduce the number of school board members, it must annually reduce the number by only one member. School board membership is then reduced by the district electing one fewer board member annually until the board is reduced to the approved number of members. The committee discussed a situation a member experienced in her consolidated school district in which there was an agreement that the new school board would initially have seven members and would reduce that number to five. However, due to the requirement to reduce board membership by only one member per year, during one year there were six board members, which often resulted in tie votes that impeded the newly consolidated district's ability to move forward with several projects. The committee agreed that addressing this issue could increase the likelihood that a newly consolidated district could more efficiently achieve the goals in its reorganization order.

Description

The bill creates an exception to the requirement that school board membership must be reduced by one member at a time specifically for a consolidated school district during the first seven years after consolidation takes effect. Under the bill, if a consolidated school district with more than five school board members votes to reduce the number of board members during the first seven years following consolidation, two fewer school board members may be elected annually

until the board is reduced to the approved number of members, but at least one member must be elected annually.

2023 Assembly Bill 190 and 2023 Senate Bill 179, Relating to School and School District Accountability Report for a Consolidated School District

Background

Annually, DPI publishes accountability reports, or “report cards,” for individual schools and school districts. Report cards are issued for all public schools and school districts in Wisconsin. Current law requires DPI to consider certain measures of a school district’s performance and improvement when calculating the report cards. Additionally, the report cards must include an index system that creates five performance categories³ and assigns each district to one of the categories. Under DPI’s current accountability formula for the report cards, DPI requires at least two consecutive school years of performance data to calculate a school district’s improvement score and performance category.

Under current law, on the effective date of consolidation, the school districts that were consolidated cease to exist. Therefore, a newly consolidated school district does not have enough performance data for DPI to measure the district’s improvement. Under the current framework, a newly consolidated district is assigned a rating of “NA” on its report card until DPI has enough data to determine a district’s improvement and assign a performance category for the district.

A committee member explained that her newly consolidated school district had received an “NA” rating, which caused confusion in the community and concern among parents in the new district. The committee determined that addressing this issue for newly consolidated districts would eliminate any potential confusion about the new district’s report card rating.

Description

The bill specifies that DPI may not determine a consolidated school district’s improvement, identify the consolidated school district’s level of improvement, or assign the consolidated district a performance category for the school year in which the consolidation takes effect and the subsequent two school years. Instead, in the report cards published for the school year in which the consolidation takes effect and the subsequent two school years, DPI must include: (1) the following statement: “Due to recent consolidation, necessary data is not available for this school district.”; (2) the first school year for which a performance category will be assigned to the newly consolidated school district; and (3) the performance category assigned to each affected school district for the school year before the consolidation took effect.

2023 Assembly Bill 193 and 2023 Senate Bill 182, Relating to Grants for Feasibility Studies of School District Consolidation or Whole Grade Sharing and Making an Appropriation

Background

Testimony before the committee described the importance of obtaining a professional financial analysis, or feasibility study, when considering school district consolidation, and noted that

³ The five accountability report performance categories are:

- Five stars — Significantly Exceeds Expectations.
- Four stars — Exceeds Expectations.
- Three stars — Meets Expectations.
- Two stars — Meets Few Expectations.
- One star — Fails to Meet Expectations.

feasibility studies typically cost at least \$10,000. Currently, school districts considering consolidation must provide the funding for feasibility studies from their respective budgets. The committee discussed how this expense can be a barrier for a district that is considering whether to pursue consolidation.

Description

The bill creates a grant program to fund feasibility studies for school district consolidation and whole grade sharing.⁴ Under the bill draft, a consortia of two or more school boards may apply to DPI for a grant to fund a feasibility study for either consolidation or whole grade sharing. If the consortia is applying for a grant to fund a feasibility study for consolidation, it must demonstrate in its application that each school board that is part of the consortia has adopted a resolution under ss. 117.08 or 117.09, Stats., that it will consider consolidation. The bill provides grants up to \$25,000 per consortia and appropriates \$200,000 in fiscal year 2023-24 for this purpose.

2023 Assembly Bill 194 and 2023 Senate Bill 183, Relating to State Aid for School District Consolidation

Background

Under current law, when two or more school districts consolidate, or when a union high school district consolidates with its included elementary school districts, the newly consolidated school district is eligible for consolidation aid. A school district that is consolidated on or after July 1, 2019, receives \$150 per pupil in the first five years following consolidation. In the sixth year after consolidation, the newly consolidated school district receives consolidation aid in an amount equal to 50 percent of what it received in the fifth year, and in the seventh year it receives aid equal to 25 percent of what it received in the fifth year. Testimony before the committee emphasized that the current state consolidation aid amounts have been insufficient to either encourage districts to consider consolidation or to provide enough aid to make consolidation less costly than not consolidating.

Description

The bill replaces the current formula for school district consolidation aid. Specifically, under the bill, a consolidated school district receives nine percent of the statewide average base revenue limit under s. 121.91 (2m) (i) 1., Stats., per pupil in the first five years following consolidation. In the sixth year after consolidation, the consolidated school district receives aid in an amount equal to 50 percent of what it received in the fifth year, and in the seventh year it receives aid equal to 25 percent of what it received in the fifth year.

The bill appropriates \$1,500,000 in fiscal year 2024-25 for this aid and provides that aid will be prorated if the appropriation is insufficient to pay the full amount of aid for each school district. The bill also requires DPI to submit, in the 2030-31 school year, a report to each appropriate standing committee of the Legislature listing the school districts that received consolidation aid under the bill, and the amounts of aid each received.

⁴ Whole grade sharing is an agreement between two or more school districts that provides that all or a substantial portion of the students in one or more grades will attend school in one or more of the other school districts for all or a substantial portion of a school day. [s. 118.50, Stats.]

2023 Assembly Bill 195 and 2023 Senate Bill 184, Relating to Calculating a Consolidated School District's Revenue Limit

Background

Under current law, a school district may exceed its revenue limit with voter approval at a referendum. This approval may be on either a recurring (permanent) or nonrecurring (temporary) basis. An amount approved under a recurring referendum is included in a district's base for determining the revenue limit for the following school year.⁵ An amount approved under a nonrecurring referendum is added to the district's revenue limit only in the approved year or years and is not added to the district's base for determining the revenue limit for following years.⁶

Additionally, under current law, if two or more districts are consolidated, and one or more of those districts has approved an excess revenue for school years beginning on or after the effective date of the consolidation, the approval for those school years automatically expires on the effective date of the consolidation. [s. 121.91 (2m) (t) 2., Stats.]

Testimony before the committee explained that because recurring referenda are permanent while nonrecurring referenda specify the school years in which an increase to the revenue limit will apply, s. 121.91 (2m) (t) 2., Stats., affects only nonrecurring referenda. This means that a district that considers consolidation and has approved recurring referenda may carry that increased revenue limit into a newly consolidated district, while a district that has approved nonrecurring referenda may not do so.⁷ The committee agreed that enabling a district to bring an increased revenue limit to a consolidation discussion with another district could potentially make that district more amenable to considering consolidation.

Description

The bill repeals the requirement that if two or more districts are consolidated, and one or more of those districts has approved an excess revenue for school years beginning on or after the effective date of the consolidation, the approval for those school years expires on the effective date of the consolidation.

⁵ Example of a recurring referendum question: "Shall the school district be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in s. 121.91, Wis. Stats., by \$1 million beginning with the 2022-23 school year, for recurring purposes consisting of operational and maintenance expenses?"

⁶ Example of a nonrecurring referendum question: "Shall the school district be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in s. 121.91, Wis. Stats., by \$500,000 per year, for five years beginning with the 2021-22 school year and ending with the 2025-26 school year, for non-recurring purposes consisting of operational and maintenance expenses?"

⁷ For more information on revenue limits and referenda, see [Legislative Fiscal Bureau, School District Revenue Limits and Referenda, Informational Paper 27 \(Jan. 2023\)](#).

PART IV | STUDY COMMITTEE VOTES

COMMITTEE VOTES

On December 13, 2022, the study committee voted to recommend the following bill drafts to the Joint Legislative Council for introduction in the 2023-24 legislative session. The votes on the bill drafts were as follows:

- **LRB-0590/P2**, relating to calculating a consolidated school district’s revenue limit, passed by a vote of Ayes, 8 (Reps. Brooks and Considine; Sen. Bewley; and Public Members Bagstad, Dellutri, Guyette, Niehaus, and Villalobos); Noes, 0; and Absent, 2 (Sen. Feyen and Public Member Neitzke). [LRB-0590/P2 subsequently became LRB-0590/1.]
- **LRB-0559/P4**, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district, passed by a vote of Ayes, 8 (Reps. Brooks and Considine; Sen. Bewley; and Public Members Bagstad, Dellutri, Guyette, Niehaus, and Villalobos); Noes, 0; and Absent, 2 (Sen. Feyen and Public Member Neitzke). [LRB-0559/P4 subsequently became LRB-0559/1.]
- **LRB-0560/P3**, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation, passed on a vote of Ayes, 8 (Reps. Brooks and Considine; Sen. Bewley; and Public Members Bagstad, Dellutri, Guyette, Niehaus, and Villalobos); Noes, 0; and Absent, 2 (Sen. Feyen and Public Member Neitzke). [LRB-0560/P3 subsequently became LRB-0560/1.]
- **LRB-0561/P3**, relating to state aid for school district consolidation, passed by a vote of Ayes, 7 (Rep. Brooks; Sen. Bewley; and Public Members Bagstad, Dellutri, Guyette, Niehaus, and Villalobos); Noes, 1 (Rep. Considine); and Absent, 2 (Sen. Feyen and Public Member Neitzke). [LRB-0561/P3 subsequently became LRB-0561/1.]
- **LRB-0570/P3**, relating to reimbursements to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies for the cost of writing federal and state grant applications and making an appropriation, passed by a vote of Ayes, 7 (Rep. Brooks; Sen. Bewley; and Public Members Bagstad, Dellutri, Guyette, Niehaus, and Villalobos); Noes, 1 (Rep. Considine); and Absent, 2 (Sen. Feyen and Public Member Neitzke). [LRB-0570/P3 subsequently became LRB-0570/1.]
- **LRB-0571/P3**, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems, as modified by the changes adopted by the committee, passed on a vote of Ayes, 7 (Rep. Brooks; Sen. Bewley; and Public Members Bagstad, Dellutri, Guyette, Niehaus, and Villalobos); Noes, 1 (Rep. Considine); and Absent, 2 (Sen. Feyen and Public Member Neitzke). [LRB-0571/P3, as amended, subsequently became LRB-0571/1.]
- **LRB-0572/P4**, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services, passed by a vote of Ayes, 7 (Reps. Brooks and Considine; and Public Members Bagstad, Dellutri, Guyette, Niehaus, and Villalobos); Noes, 0; and Absent, 3 (Sens. Feyen and Bewley; and Public Member Neitzke). [LRB-0572/P4 subsequently became LRB-0572/1.]
- **LRB-0558/P4**, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district, passed by a vote of Ayes, 7 (Reps. Brooks and Considine; and Public Members Bagstad, Dellutri, Guyette, Niehaus, and Villalobos); Noes, 0; and Absent, 3 (Sens. Feyen and Bewley; and Public Member Neitzke). [LRB-0558/P4 subsequently became LRB-0558/1.]

JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VOTES

At its March 23, 2023 meeting, the Joint Legislative Council received seven recommendations of the study committee and voted to approve the study committee's seven recommendations and introduce the following bills:

- **LRB-0558/1**, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district, be approved for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed by a vote of Ayes, 21 (Sens. Kapenga, Agard, Felzkowski, Jagler, LeMahieu, Marklein, Quinn, Smith, Spreitzer, and Testin; and Reps. VanderMeer, August, Billings, Born, Duchow, Goyke, Haywood, Neubauer, Petersen, Plumer, and Vos); Noes, 0; and Excused, 1 (Sen. Johnson). **[LRB-0558/1 was introduced as 2023 Assembly Bill 191 and 2023 Senate Bill 180.]**
- **LRB-0559/1**, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district, be approved for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed by a vote of Ayes, 21 (Sens. Kapenga, Agard, Felzkowski, Jagler, LeMahieu, Marklein, Quinn, Smith, Spreitzer, and Testin; and Reps. VanderMeer, August, Billings, Born, Duchow, Goyke, Haywood, Neubauer, Petersen, Plumer, and Vos); Noes, 0; and Excused, 1 (Sen. Johnson). **[LRB-0559/1 was introduced as 2023 Assembly Bill 190 and 2023 Senate Bill 179.]**
- **LRB-0560/1**, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation, be approved for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed by a vote of Ayes, 21 (Sens. Kapenga, Agard, Felzkowski, Jagler, LeMahieu, Marklein, Quinn, Smith, Spreitzer, and Testin; and Reps. VanderMeer, August, Billings, Born, Duchow, Goyke, Haywood, Neubauer, Petersen, Plumer, and Vos); Noes, 0; and Excused, 1 (Sen. Johnson). **[LRB-0560/1 was introduced as 2023 Assembly Bill 193 and 2023 Senate Bill 182.]**
- **LRB-0561/1**, relating to state aid for school district consolidation, be approved for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed by a vote of Ayes, 16 (Sens. Kapenga, Agard, Felzkowski, Jagler, LeMahieu, Marklein, Quinn, Smith, and Testin; and Reps. VanderMeer, August, Born, Duchow, Petersen, Plumer, and Vos); Noes, 5 (Sen. Spreitzer; and Reps. Billings, Goyke, Haywood, and Neubauer); and Excused, 1 (Sen. Johnson). **[LRB-0561/1 was introduced as 2023 Assembly Bill 194 and 2023 Senate Bill 183.]**
- **LRB-0571/1**, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems and making an appropriation, be approved for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed by a vote of Ayes, 16 (Sens. Kapenga, Agard, Felzkowski, Jagler, LeMahieu, Marklein, Quinn, Smith, and Testin; and Reps. VanderMeer, August, Born, Duchow, Petersen, Plumer, and Vos); Noes, 5 (Sen. Spreitzer; and Reps. Billings, Goyke, Haywood, and Neubauer); and Excused, 1 (Sen. Johnson). **[LRB-0571/1 was introduced as 2023 Assembly Bill 196 and 2023 Senate Bill 185.]**
- **LRB-0572/1**, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services and making an appropriation, be approved for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed by a vote of Ayes, 21 (Sens. Kapenga, Agard, Felzkowski, Jagler, LeMahieu, Marklein, Quinn, Smith, Spreitzer, and Testin; and Reps. VanderMeer, August, Billings, Born, Duchow, Goyke, Haywood, Neubauer, Petersen, Plumer, and Vos); Noes, 0; and Excused, 1 (Sen. Johnson). **[LRB-0572/1 was introduced as 2023 Assembly Bill 192 and 2023 Senate Bill 181.]**
- **LRB-0590/1**, relating to calculating a consolidated school district's revenue limit, be approved for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed by a vote of

Ayes, 21 (Sens. Kapenga, Agard, Felzkowski, Jagler, LeMahieu, Marklein, Quinn, Smith, Spreitzer, and Testin; and Reps. VanderMeer, August, Billings, Born, Duchow, Goyke, Haywood, Neubauer, Petersen, Plumer, and Vos); Noes, 0; and Excused, 1 (Sen. Johnson).
[LRB-0590/1 was introduced as 2023 Assembly Bill 195 and 2023 Senate Bill 184.]

APPENDIX 1 | LIST OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Study Committee on Shared School District Services

Chair Robert Brooks , Representative Saukville, WI 53080	Vice Chair Dan Feyen , Senator Fond du Lac, WI 54936
Lance Bagstad , District Administrator School District of Arcadia Arcadia, WI 54612	Janet Bewley , Senator Mason, WI 54856
Dave Considine , Representative Baraboo, WI 53913	Jeffrey Dellutri , Superintendent Fox Point-Bayside School District Fox Point, WI 53217
Bobbie Guyette , Director of School Nutrition School District of New Richmond New Richmond, WI 54017	Ted Neitzke , CEO CESA 6 Port Washington, WI 53074
Ben Niehaus , Director of Member Services Wisconsin Association of School Boards Argonne, WI 54511	Tara Villalobos , District Administrator Holy Hill Area School District Hartford, WI 53027

STUDY ASSIGNMENT: The study committee is directed to review current barriers to shared administrative or other services between school districts, and explore statutory changes or creation of incentives to encourage efficiencies. The committee shall consider methods for sharing or consolidating services such as district-level administration and personnel, purchasing, technology and data processing, transportation, food service, and building maintenance and make recommendations for legislation. As part of its work, the committee shall study school district structures employed in other states, particularly county-wide school district models.

10 MEMBERS: 2 Senators; 2 Representatives; and 6 Public Members.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF: Emily Hicks and Raine Black, Staff Attorneys, Rachel Letzing, Deputy Director, and Julie Learned, Administrative Staff.

APPENDIX 2 | LIST OF COMMITTEE MATERIALS

July 20, 2022 Meeting

- Additional Information Requested from Public Members and Speakers
 - Lance Bagstad
 - Mike Beighley
 - Nate Burklund
 - Traci Davis
 - Jeff Dellutri
 - Dennis Kaczor
 - Steve Kolden
 - Ben Niehaus
 - Tara Villalobos
- Staff Brief 2022-03, Study Committee on Shared School District Services (July 13, 2022; Revised July 22, 2022).
- Presentation by Raine Black and Emily Hicks, Staff Attorneys, Legislative Council Staff.
- Handout, Trempealeau Valley Cooperative 2.0, Mike Beighley, Superintendent, Whitehall School District.
- Presentation by Molly Gold and Dan Thatcher, National Conference of State Legislatures.
- Testimony from Nathan Burklund, District Administrator, Niagara School District.
- Testimony from Traci Davis, Superintendent at Juda School District.
- Minutes of the July 20, 2022 meeting.

August 22, 2022 Meeting

- PowerPoint Presentation from the Education Commission of the States, “School District Boundaries and Reorganization Policies” (August 22, 2022).
- Handout, distributed at the request of Public Member Ted Neitzke.
- Presentation by Public Member Tara Villalobos, PhD., Holy Hill Area School District.
- Testimony of George Steffen, Trevor-Wilmot District, to the Legislative Council Study Committee on Shared School District Services (August 2, 2022).
- PowerPoint Presentation to the Study Committee on Shared School District Services, by Raine Black and Emily Hicks, Staff Attorneys, and Rachel Letzing, Deputy Director (August 22, 2022).
- Memo No. 1, “School District Consolidation” (August 15, 2022).
- Minutes of the August 22, 2022 meeting.

October 26, 2022 Meeting

- Memo No. 2, “Committee Options for Potential Legislation” (October 18, 2022).
- Memorandum from Richard Leoza, Legislative Analyst, Legislative Reference Bureau, “Origins of Cooperative Educational Service Agencies” (September 7, 2022).

- Memorandum from Ben Niehaus, Director of Member Services, Wisconsin Association of School Boards, “Incentives for Sharing Needed School District Positions” (October 14, 2022).
- Minutes of the October 26, 2022 meeting.

November 30, 2022 Meeting

- LRB-0558/P2, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district.
- LRB-0559/P3, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district.
- LRB-0560/P2, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0561/P2, relating to state aid for school district consolidation.
- LRB-0569/P2, relating to a shared services aid program for school districts, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0570/P2, relating to reimbursements to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies for the cost of writing federal and state grant applications and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0571/P2, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems.
- LRB-0572/P2, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services.
- LRB-0590/P2, relating to calculating a consolidated school district's revenue limit.
- Memo No. 3, “Data on Median and Average Salaries for Certain School Staff Positions” (November 29, 2022).
- Minutes of the November 30, 2022 meeting.

December 13, 2022 Meeting

- LRB-0558/P4, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district.
- LRB-0559/P4, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district.
- LRB-0560/P3, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0561/P3, relating to state aid for school district consolidation.
- LRB-0570/P3, relating to reimbursements to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies for the cost of writing federal and state grant applications and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0571/P3, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems.
- LRB-0572/P4, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services.
- LRB-0590/P2, relating to calculating a consolidated school district’s revenue limit.

- Correspondence from Representative Considine to Representative Brooks, Chair, Study Committee on Shared School District Services (December 7, 2022).
- Minutes of the December 13, 2022 meeting.

Recommendations to the Joint Legislative Council

- CR-2023-04, Study Committee on Shared School District Services (February 22, 2023).
- LRB-0558/1, relating to reducing the number of members on the school board of a consolidated school district.
- LRB-0559/1, relating to school and school district accountability report for a consolidated school district.
- LRB-0560/1, relating to grants for feasibility studies of school district consolidation or whole grade sharing and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0561/1, relating to state aid for school district consolidation.
- LRB-570/1, relating to reimbursements to school districts and cooperative educational service agencies for the cost of writing federal and state grant applications and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0571/1, relating to aid to school districts that share services for costs associated with student information systems and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0572/1, relating to aid for transporting pupils between school districts that share services and making an appropriation.
- LRB-0590/1, relating to calculating a consolidated school district's revenue limit.

Joint Legislative Council Recommendations to the 2023-24 Legislature

- RL-2023-04, Study Committee on Shared School District Services (April 26, 2023).
- 2023 Assembly Bill 190 and 2023 Senate Bill 179.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 191 and 2023 Senate Bill 180.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 192 and 2023 Senate Bill 181.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 193 and 2023 Senate Bill 182.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 194 and 2023 Senate Bill 183.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 195 and 2023 Senate Bill 184.
- 2023 Assembly Bill 196 and 2023 Senate Bill 185.

[Copies of documents are available at www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lc.]