



Small School Districts Are Successful

Produced at
the WASA
Small Schools
Consolidation
Mini-Summit
March 3, 2009

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

DESIREE GOULD
Chair, WASA Small
Schools Committee

ELISSA DYSON
Chair, WSSDA Task
Force on Small
Schools Issues

JIM KOWALKOWSKI
Director—Rural
Education Center

Additional
resources can be
found on the WASA
website at
www.wasa-oly.org
and on the Rural
Education Center
website at [http://
ruraledcenter.wsu.
edu/](http://ruraledcenter.wsu.edu/)

Washington's Small School Districts: Ensuring a Future For Our Kids And Our Communities

Small Schools are Successful

- Small schools are linked to high achievement and low drop-out rates¹
- Small school graduates are more likely to go to college and perform well¹
- Small schools are particularly effective for students from low-income families and for students of color, helping to reduce the achievement gap¹

Small Schools are Cost Effective

Savings through innovation:

- Educational Service Districts provide support to reduce administrative and program delivery costs
- Small schools reduce administrative costs through cooperative services and shared or part-time administrators
- When practical, student academic and activity programs are combined for added efficiency
- Distance learning opportunities supplement curriculum offered on site

Savings through local control:

- Operational cost per graduate is often less than that of larger districts²
- Potential savings of administrative costs in larger districts are offset by the costs of security, facilities maintenance, and operations²
- Neighborhood schools reduce transportation costs²

Opportunity for Participation: A Strength of Small Schools

- Student and parent participation in school activities is high in small community schools⁴
- Students who participate in activities at school have higher achievement, are less likely to drop out, have higher self-esteem, attend school more regularly, and have fewer behavior problems¹



Small School Districts Are Successful

Produced at
the WASA
Small Schools
Consolidation
Mini-Summit
March 3, 2009

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

DESIREE GOULD
Chair, WASA Small
Schools Committee

ELISSA DYSON
Chair, WSSDA Task
Force on Small
Schools Issues

JIM KOWALKOWSKI
Director—Rural
Education Center

Additional
resources can be
found on the WASA
website at
www.wasa-oly.org
and on the Rural
Education Center
website at [http://
ruraledcenter.wsu.
edu/](http://ruraledcenter.wsu.edu/)

Should Smaller School Districts Be Forced to Consolidate? No and Here's Why:

Yields Few Benefits to the State

- Approximately 1/3 of 1 percent of Washington State support to K–12 is earmarked for enhanced support of the 50 smallest schools³
- Total state funding for enhanced support of small districts amounts to less than one percent of the total K–12 budget³
- Studies indicate that savings through consolidation are limited at best due to increased transportation costs²

There are Costs

- Impact on communities losing their schools²
- Economic Vitality—loss of major employer, property values, community development²
- Community Cohesion—loss of a gathering place, a host to community activities²
- Civic Participation—reduced local involvement in governance, policy making, board elections²

There are Obstacles

- Adequacy of classroom space and facilities of receiving district
- Issues of ownership, maintenance, and bond debt of facilities potentially closed
- Resolution of contracts of employment, services, and other obligations of the dissolved district

References

1. Driscoll, L., "The Effectiveness, Value and Importance of Small School Districts," Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (M.A.S.S.), 2008.
2. Lawrence, B., "Dollars & Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools," KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2002, <www.kwfnf.org>.
3. "Small Schools Travel Time Report," Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (O.S.P.I.), 1995.
4. Jimerson, L., "The Hobbit* Effect: Why Small Works in Public Schools," The Rural School and Community Trust, 2006, <www.ruraledu.org>.