



# 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 Small  
Schools Task Force

JIM KOWALKOWSKI  
Director—Rural  
Education Center

Additional  
resources can be  
found on the WASA  
website at  
[www.wasa-oly.org](http://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<sup>1</sup>

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

### Small Schools Are Cost Effective<sup>2</sup>

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

### Opportunity for Participation: A Strength of Small Schools<sup>1</sup>

- Student and parent participation in school activities is high in small community schools
- 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 problems



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## Consolidation Yields Few Benefits

- ~1/3 of 1% of Washington State support to K–12 is earmarked for enhanced support of the 50 smallest schools<sup>3</sup>
- Less than 1% of Washington State support to K–12 is earmarked for enhanced support of all small districts benefiting 130 of 295 districts<sup>3</sup>
- Studies indicate that savings through consolidation are limited at best due to increased transportation costs<sup>2</sup>

## Costs of Consolidation<sup>2</sup>

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

## Obstacles to Consolidation

- 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

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3. O.S.P.I. *Small Schools Travel Time Report—1995*
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