

Consolidation Feasibility Study Recommendation/Results

For the

Cornell School District

&

Gilman School District

By

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Community Approach:

In reviewing the demographics of the Cornell School District and the Gilman School District the following recommendation would be best for the communities in relation to their identity and sustainability.

1. Consolidate the School Districts.
2. Maintain the current buildings with the current students.
3. Maintain all academic and extra-curricular sports programs as is.
4. One Superintendent for the new district and one Principal in each community.
5. Create one business office and one set of employee contracts.
6. Use block scheduling at each high school to share staff more easily.
7. Share teachers between buildings where necessary and appropriate.

Since state statute allows for the prior boards to guarantee binding programs and building use for the first five years of a consolidation, it is determined best that each community get used to the consolidation slowly by keeping their buildings open. However, before the five years are up, it is recommended that a building be scheduled to close in order to gain efficiencies.

Financial Approach:

In reviewing the demographics of the Cornell School District and the Gilman School District the following recommendation would be best for the finances in relation to their sustainability.

1. Consolidate the School Districts.
2. Maintain the current buildings with the current students.
3. Maintain all academic and extra-curricular sports programs as is.
4. One Superintendent for the new district and one Principal in each community.
5. Create one business office and one set of employee contracts.
6. Use block scheduling at each high school to share staff more easily.
7. Share teachers between buildings where necessary and appropriate.

The only reason that it is recommended to leave all the buildings open in this scenario is that with the physical size of the districts and the location of the high school if one or the other is closed, it is projected that there would be more open enrollments out than what the savings would be from closing a building. It is not just that the schools are 17 miles apart, but there are students as far as 18 miles farther away which would make for some students traveling 35 miles to school.

Educational Approach:

In reviewing the demographics of the Cornell School District and the Gilman School District the following recommendation would be best for the education of students in relation to their sustainability.

1. Consolidate the School Districts.
2. Maintain the current elementary buildings with the current students.
3. Have one high school in the Gilman building and close the Cornell building.
4. One Superintendent for the new district
5. One Principal in Gilman and a Lead Teacher in Cornell.
6. Create one business office and one set of employee contracts.
7. Share teachers between buildings where necessary and appropriate.

The current academic problem for the school districts is that they do not have enough students to offer multiple sections of courses in the high school. Consolidated, there would be more sections of courses and thus more opportunity for students. There would also be more benefit in the teaching staff becoming specialized and having fewer classes to prepare for in a day. This should allow for better lessons and higher quality instruction.

Transportation Approach:

In reviewing the demographics of the Cornell School District and the Gilman School District the following recommendation would be best for the transportation of students.

1. Do not consolidate the School Districts.

The new district would be too big geographically with the Chequamegon National Forest and the Pershing Wildlife area along with multiple swamps, rivers, marshes, etc... that make for winding roads and extra mileage to cover. Some of the students would need to be on buses for nearly two hours since Gilman has many students already riding for nearly 1.5 hours.

Results:

The Gilman School District Board of Education voted 6-1 to discontinue talks of consolidation as the potential financial savings are minimized. If a building is closed, there are expected to be several open enrollments to other districts and transportation costs will go up. If a building is not closed, the only savings is a ½ time administrator. However, this savings is likely to be used up, and then some, through contract negotiations when the unions are combined into one.